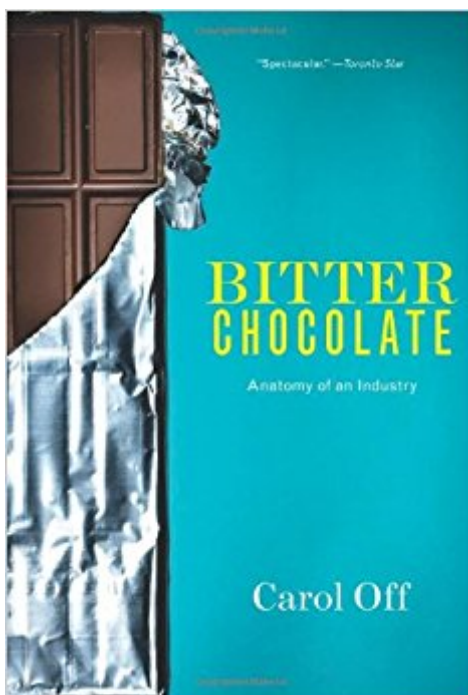


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Bitter Chocolate: Anatomy Of An Industry



Synopsis

Hailed in hardcover as “compelling” (Kirkus Reviews) and an “astonishing [and] wrenching story” (The London Free Press), *Bitter Chocolate* is an eye-opening look at one of our most beloved consumer products. Tracing the fascinating origins and evolution of chocolate from the banquet tables of Montezuma’s Aztec court in the early sixteenth century to the bustling factories of Hershey, Cadbury, and Mars today, investigative journalist Carol Off shows that slavery and injustice have always been key ingredients. The heart of the book takes place in West Africa inside the Ivory Coast “the world’s leading producer of cocoa beans” where profits from the multibillion-dollar chocolate industry fuel bloody civil war and widespread corruption. Faced with pressure from a crushing “cocoa cartel” demanding more beans for less money, poor farmers have turned to the cheapest labor pool possible: thousands of indentured children who pick the beans but have never themselves known the taste of chocolate. “An astounding eye-opener that takes no prisoners” (Quill & Quire), *Bitter Chocolate* is an absorbing social history, a passionate investigative account, and a shocking and urgent exposé of an industry that continues even now to institutionalize misery as it indulges our whims.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Chocolate is a wonderful product. It makes its consumer feel good and, at its most refined, is as capable of providing all the exquisite and subtle ranges of refinement and taste as fine wine. We associate chocolate with happiness, and yet all is not sweetness and light in the chocolate industry.

With this book Canadian investigative journalist, Carol Off, digs beneath the surface of the industry's smiling public face to expose the exploitative side of the business, in particular with regard to the growers of cacao, who often struggle just to live so low are their incomes. First providing a brief history of chocolate, Off then examines the historical and current behaviours of the major chocolate industry companies as well as the government and politics of the major cacao producers. It is not a pretty story. Corruption, violence and exploitation (including some child slavery) at country level are rife (and appear always to have been) in the industry. The author uses Cote d'Ivoire, the world's number one cacao producer, as her main case study, and risks her safety to travel into its cacao and political heart. Everyone involved in the industry gets criticised by Off, but this is not a book that just targets big corporations for the misery of cacao producers (the argument always being that they should simply pay cacao farmers more); the situation is much too complex for that and Off makes that crystal clear. If anything, the book is most condemnatory of the corruption and brutality of regime's such as that of Cote d'Ivoire. How to improve the lot of the cacao farmer is a difficult question to answer. At its root must be honest and stable governments in the major cacao producing countries. After that there is the question of how much companies should pay for cacao.

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