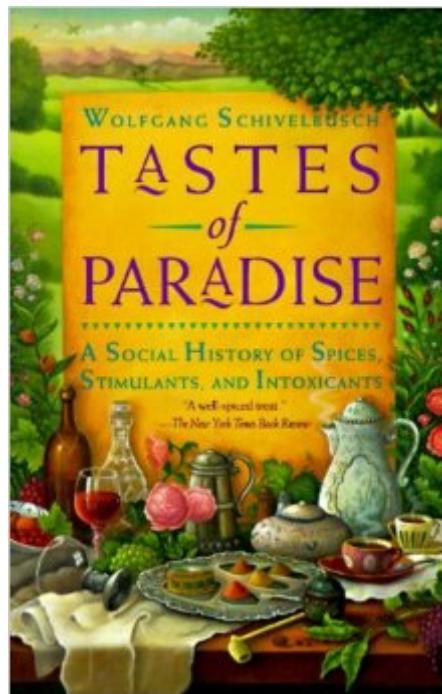


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# Tastes Of Paradise: A Social History Of Spices, Stimulants, And Intoxicants



## Synopsis

From the extravagant use of pepper in the Middle Ages to the Protestant bourgeoisie's love of coffee to the reason why fashionable Europeans stopped sniffing tobacco and starting smoking it, Schivelbusch looks at how the appetite for pleasure transformed the social structure of the Old World. Illustrations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This just had to be a subject right up my alley. Spices? I live in Texas where Tabasco is a condiment (and not a spice) and jalapenos are considered vegetables. Stimulants? I have a coffee cup surgically attached to my hand and Brazilian music runs constantly through my head.

Intoxicants? I worship beer. What could be better than a book about all three subjects? *Tastes of Paradise* considers the social use of and social importance of spices, stimulants, and intoxicants largely from a Western point of view. It covers the use of spices, the coffee-related ethic of the middle class, chocolate, the rise of smoking and snuff, alcohol and the industrial revolution, and the rituals and places surrounding our drinking. What more could we talk about? Turns out there's a lot more we could talk about, and what would be better is a book that really covers all three subjects. My disappointment boils down to three basic complaints against the book. The first is by far the broadest. In including "a social history" in the title, Schivelbusch focuses almost exclusively on the social effect of the use of the particular stimulant or intoxicant. Nowhere does he discuss the broader history of the item or the impact of the item on society (read "The True History of Chocolate" for a broader and more thorough presentation on chocolate, for example). My second

complaint regards his treatment of specific subjects. Spices get remarkably short shrift (twelve pages total; less space than the discussion of drinking rituals; "Nathaniel's Nutmeg" is a better presentation on spices as a whole), and tea is only considered from the point of view of England (I'm pretty sure that the Chinese and Japanese drank tea, and that there's some social history there).

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