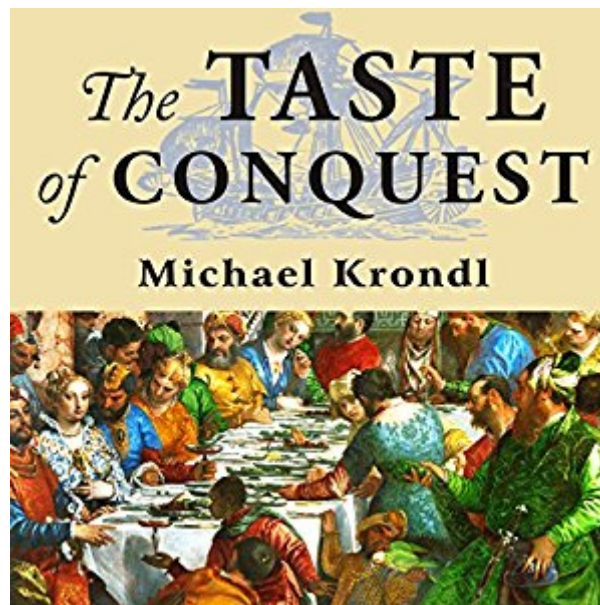


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# The Taste Of Conquest: The Rise And Fall Of The Three Great Cities Of Spice



## Synopsis

In this engaging, anecdotal history of food, world conquest, and desire, a chef-turned-journalist tells the story of three legendary cities-Venice, Lisbon, and Amsterdam-that transformed the globe in the quest for spice. Written in a colorful style that will appeal to fans of Mark Kurlansky and Michael Pollan, this ambitious yet accessible book travels effortlessly from the Crusades to the present day. Michael Krondl explains that it was the desire for spices that got international trade up and running on a scale that had never occurred prior to that time. This explosive growth of the spice trade led to the successive rise-and fall-of Venice, Lisbon, and Amsterdam. Krondl, a gifted food writer, travels to each of these great cities and begins his visit with a great meal. Gradually, he merges the menu he's enjoying with the city's colorful past, and readers are off on a gastronomical tour that teaches them not only about food and spice but also about history and commerce. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How many people just aren't aware of how the innocuous pepper tucked neatly into paper packets at the local fast food eatery represent an interesting journey through history fraught with blood shed, conquest and economic disparity? This book is an informative look at the spice trade's impact on economies, countries and the ever so changing palates that dictated conquest and control in an ever so expanding web across the globe. It goes on to explain how we are now unknowingly consuming more spices, as a result of modern manufacturing. From the book, "One of the things

made graphically clear in McCormick's spice chamber is that people don't cook anymore. They assemble. ... For good or ill, the decisions about what your food will taste like are made at corporate headquarters. ... Processed food is where the future lies. The tastes in that food are often cooked up in McCormick's Technical Innovation Center. Even food processors don't want to come up with their own seasoning. A food manufacturer doesn't want a truckload of ginger; they want a container load of a ready-made flavoring mixture, the corporate communicator informs me. Which is why he keeps emphasizing that McCormick now wants to be seen as a "flavor company" rather than a spice company. "It's actually a depressing trend, but one that we have led ourselves to. I thank the author for taking the time to research to the present. The future of the spice trade is now in the hands of biochemists creating flavors.

I wish I could give this book 5 stars, but I can't. I sometimes wish I could give it 0 stars too. Here is why: From Venice, to Lisbon, to Amsterdam, this book takes you on a tale to learn about the origins of spices. That is obvious in the book, but it's wonderful to understand that the author really needs to do his research to do a good job here - perusing customs logs to understand quantities of spices imported, looking through the recipes of friars of years past to understand how they spiced their veal. But, the author is in love with his words, and loves to string words together that lack underlying substance. So he takes many digressions. You will read that in other reviews, and when you do see it enough in the book it kind of makes you sick and angry. But, that is mostly limited to VENICE. As we proceed to Lisbon and Amsterdam, the digressions actually become more relevant - a minichapter on the spread of chili pepper and how its misnomer has been lost on generations: the difference between Sri Lankan Ceylon and Ceylon cassia - these nuggets of history and science are wonderful. This is why I got this book. If not for the excessive embellishment which could have cut this book in half, this would have gotten 5 stars!

What surprising things you'll learn! What a feast of delicious facts! Most enjoyable. Fabulous history as well. You won't be able to put it down. The epilogue was as much fun as the main story.

Sometimes, one can tell a book by its cover. Michael Krondl's "A Taste of Conquest" features a banquet, the snowy linen tablecloth covered with what might be a rijsttafel of platters, the diners opulent in brocades and satins, the attendants revealing the conquests of the wealthy country in

which this feast is celebrated. Listen, and one can hear the lively discussion, probably about latest opportunities in the spice trades. Inhale, and the mingled aromas of cloves, cinnamon, mace, ginger may transport you. But wait! Two men, somewhat older, look coolly on the proceedings. Who are they? What's going on? Such is the scope and thoroughness of Krondl's research, he probably could tell their names, their significance in this painting, what dishes were on that table (using period cookbooks) and at what human cost to the peasants in far-away Banta or Tindoor. "The Taste of Conquest" is one of several books on the spice trade between about 1400 and 1800 that have appeared recently. Each has its merits, but this is by far the best of the best for scholarship, for superb writing, for a sense of a very good mind thinking independently rather than gathering citations, for an exuberant joie de vivre enthusiasm for the way in which paintings, archival reports, tax information, stories, architecture inform us about the world of not so long ago. From the spice trade, three cities---Venice, Lisbon, and Amsterdam---grew to enormous wealth; and from avarice, from changing fashions, from the plant thieves in the night--and more---they subsided. As a few examples--Philip II's (Queen Mary of England's spouse and the spouse of several other profitably chosen princesses) obsession with world domination and conversion led to the wars that sent merchants flying from Antwerp to Amsterdam; his oppressions eventually led the Dutch to rise against the Spanish----so Krondl tells us & vividly too. The newly independent Dutch formed one of the first joint venture capitalist crowd-sourcing companies, selling a few shares for a few guilders to the shoemakers and seamstresses. Their ships, unencumbered by purposes other than profit-making and captained by an accountant with a heart of flint, took off for the Spice Islands. What happened next is told in swift detail, page-turning reading.--Dousing spoiled meat with spices arguably was not the reason people used pepper and mace and cinnamon and cardamom and more in such quantities. Rather, as Krondl convincingly shows, the arguments were healthier eating: the medical paradigm was balancing the four humors through dietary adjustments, and books on this from the new printing presses flew out of the booksellers' shops. The enthusiasm for sustaining Venus, for increasing longevity, for other dietary marvels was as high as it is now which can be saying a lot. Besides with plentiful sugar from the new world, it tasted good---very good indeed. Laudably, "The Taste of Conquest" includes appropriate & clear illustrations & maps. There is an excellent index as well as a fine bibliography/reference list. Magna cum laudably, there's a splendid epilog on the spice trade today in Venice, in Calicut in the Indian Institute for Spice Research, and in that international hub of spices for prepared foods as well as our kitchens, in Baltimore. The story begun way back in time is brought in a fine concluding arc to the present. Summa cum laudably, Krondl is a cook, a writer, and the Random House editors did him proud.

there isn't a dull sentence, an ungrammatical sentence, an awkward sentence in this book. One caution: the descriptions are so mouth-watering (oh, those Amsterdam Sinterklas cakes!) one with less than perfect self-control can gain weight well before the last page is reached. Another: this is about spices and the world of which they were a commercially dominant part. Those seeking a cookbook featuring spices will find inspiration but not recipes here. However, with such a splendid read, what's a pound here and there?

It's a nice over view but focuses on the board trends and movement s of history and lacks the details. Lots a great obscure details about little corners of the spice trade.

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