Aventuras y desventuras de los alimentos que cambiaron el mundo
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Aventuras y desventuras de los alimentos que cambiaron el mundo (The Adventures and Misadventures of the Foods that Changed the World)

This is literally a cornucopia of a book! The menu has fifteen ingredients, from wheat and rice to chili peppers and chocolate and it takes us on a gastronomic expedition across the world and through history to uncover the origins of some of our staple foods and the processes of exploration and exploitation that have made them so indispensable. As the prologue says: every time you eat a biscuit, think of the millions of adventures hidden inside it that went into making every tea-time so much more interesting! This book introduces some of these adventures and gives a thought-provoking cultural and historical background to many of the foodstuffs we now take for granted.

The book is organised in terms of foods which originated in the "old world" (Eurasia and Africa) and those that originated in the "new world" (the Americas). Each food item is given four pages packed with information about its origins and nutritional properties, its legends and the traditions that surround it. We also learn about how each ingredient travelled across the world and the trials and tribulations it suffered along the way and how it is faring today – the effects of global climate change on areas where it is cultivated and the pests and diseases it faces for survival.

The book is written in a very accessible style. Alongside the main text there are inserts containing "factoids", quotes from well-known authors and even recipes. This gives the book an added dimension – you can dip in and always come out with something interesting. Every page is beautifully illustrated in a way which complements the text and really brings its stories to life. The combination of form and colour is joyful and there is a great deal of fine detail despite the apparent simplicity of the design. Together, the text and the illustrations work extremely well and it is an undiluted pleasure both to read and simply, look, at this book

I think this book would be an excellent addition to any library – either at school or at home. I also feel that it would appeal to a wide age range. The illustrations make the content accessible to quite young children while the level of detail and rigour within the text means that even adults will find it interesting… I believe that that the authors have done a great job of giving the book broad appeal… I would thoroughly recommend this book.

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