

(Download free ebook) Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe

Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe

Piero Camporesi

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Piero Camporesi : Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Roots of Food Supply InstabilityBy JulyScheinFamine left our European ancestors addled, hallucinating, and mentally compromised, striking in regular waves across the population and through time. Diseased or compromised food supply was far more common in Europe than we might have ever realized. This is a fascinating study in how lack of access to food impacted early modern Europeans and their culture. The reader is left to extrapolate how it must have impacted religion, economy, and health. Camporesi sets the scene and presents the argument poetically and holistically. A must-read for anyone thinking that a manipulated food supply is a new experience in human history.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy david matthewsGreat book on history from a new perspective. Some parallels in how our modern society uses food.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Worth Your DoughBy Dr. Michael A. RinellaThis is a fascinating work. You don't see history like this written in the Anglo-American world, where there is a focus on reason, progress, sobriety, etc. Serious research into "material life" has only recently emerged as a source of interest to scholars in the English speaking world; it's been a staple elsewhere for decades. Even where Anglo-American scholarship has addressed the theme there is a tendency to "play it safe" and discuss aspects of life that would seem ordinary to a contemporary reader. So in other words nothing about pharmacology, intoxication, irrationality, and the like.This work is the flip side. It's a look at the dark, dreary, desperate existence of ordinary folks, where lives were still in close

contact with the earth and knowledge of plants circulated in informal channels "on the ground." When life was nasty, brutal, and short you didn't mind going through it in an often hazy drug-induced dream-like state. It is true the chapters seem more episodic, and thematic, than part of a linear argument building in support of some larger thesis or observation. It is also true that the work is predominantly about Italy, with only occasional references to other countries. Nor is the focus of the work always about grains and breads. For example, there are digressions into how hunger led to cannibalism. A better title might have been "Hungry in Southern Europe." As someone who studies ethnopharmacology the references to various plants are a bit scattered and not very systematic. Many of the references are to sources published only in Italian so unless you are versed in Italian you are pretty much out of luck when it comes to tracking the documentation [the translator does, however, helpfully indicate when an English translation of a source is available]. Still, this work is worth the investment. Four stars.

In a rich and engaging book that illuminates the lives and attitudes of peasants in preindustrial Europe, Piero Camporesi makes the unexpected and fascinating claim that these people lived in a state of almost permanent hallucination, drugged by their very hunger or by bread adulterated with hallucinogenic herbs. The use of opiate products, administered even to infants and children, was widespread and was linked to a popular mythology in which herbalists and exorcists were important cultural figures. Through a careful reconstruction of the everyday lives of peasants, beggars, and the poor, Camporesi presents a vivid and disconcerting image of early modern Europe as a vast laboratory of dreams. "Camporesi is as much a poet as a historian. . . . His appeal is to the senses as well as to the mind. . . . Fascinating in its details and compelling in its overall message." Vivian Nutton, *Times Literary Supplement* "It is not often that an academic monograph in history is also a book to fascinate the discriminating general reader. *Bread of Dreams* is just that." Kenneth McNaught, *Toronto Star* "Not religion but bread was the opiate of the poor, Mr. Camporesi argues. . . . Food has always been a social and mythological construct that conditions what we vainly imagine to be matters of personal taste. Our hunger for such works should tell us that food is not only good but essential to think and to read as if our lives depended on it, which they do." Betty Fussell, *New York Times Book Review*

Language Notes
Text: English, Italian (translation)
From the Back Cover
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