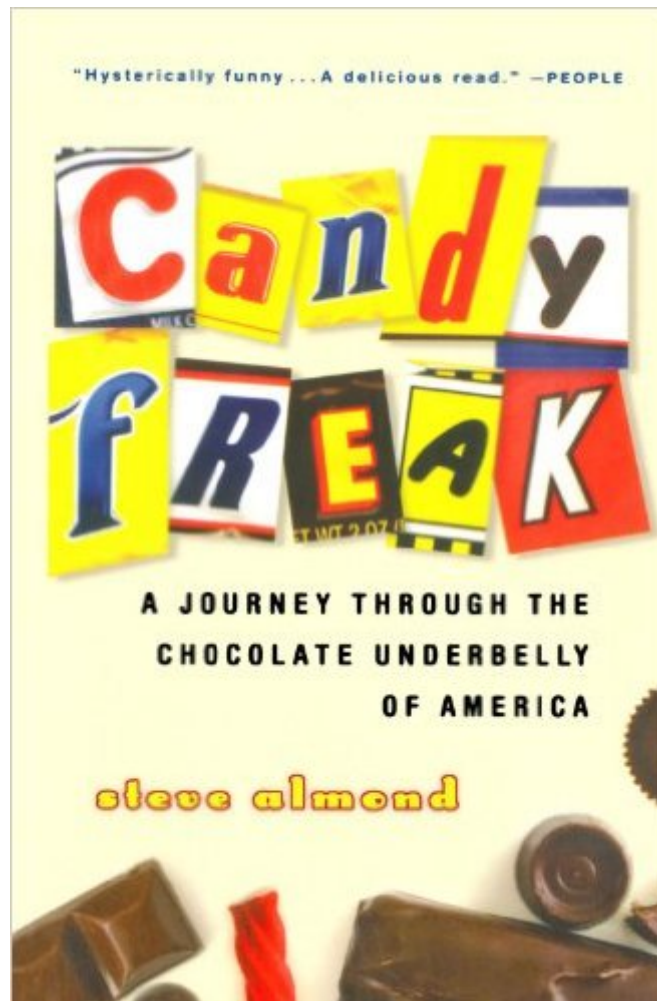


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Candyfreak: A Journey Through The Chocolate Underbelly Of America



Synopsis

A self-professed candyfreak, Steve Almond set out in search of a much-loved candy from his childhood and found himself on a tour of the small candy companies that are persevering in a marketplace where big corporations dominate. From the Twin Bing to the Idaho Spud, the Valomilk to the Abba-Zaba, and discontinued bars such as the Caravelle, Marathon, and Choco-Lite, Almond uncovers a trove of singular candy bars made by unsung heroes working in old-fashioned factories to produce something they love. And in true candyfreak fashion, Almond lusciously describes the rich tastes that he has loved since childhood and continues to crave today. Steve Almond has written a comic but ultimately bittersweet story of how he grew up on candy-and how, for better and worse, the candy industry has grown up, too. Candyfreak is the delicious story of one man's lifelong obsession with candy and his quest to discover its origins in America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If Steve Almond is a candyfreak, then I'm a candywhore. I'll take it where I can get it and I'm not half as discriminating about its origins. That said, you can't help but laugh outright at the sugar-fanaticism of a man who gets faint with joy witnessing the birth of chocolate bunnies and is rendered speechless at the thoughtless waste of even one piece of chocolate, recalling, "I stood there in a cloud of disillusionment...I'm someone who has been known to eat the pieces of candy found underneath my couch." Goaded by the disappearance of his adored Caravelle bar, Almond (yes, he talks about the name) tours independent candy companies (read: anyone other than Mars, Nestle,

or Hershey) to, "chronicle their struggles for survival in this wicked age of homogeneity, and, not incidentally, to load up on free candy."The best laughs are all in the first five chapters. I giggled, chuckled and guffawed my way through the author's confessions of freak-like candy-hoarding, reveling in the kind of sweet self-effacing wit only a candy junkie could muster.From there, it's mostly an historical tour of the four candy companies he visited, fascinating and richly detailed, yet interspersed with progressively more disturbing moments of personal crisis. At one point the author himself notes, "I realize that I am oversharing," a phrase that, in a work of humor especially, should be immediately followed by the words, "so I'll quit while I'm ahead." No such luck.

Review: From Small Spiral NotebookIn Candyfreak, Almond parlays his own obsession with chocolate into a quest to seek out the sources and practices of today's chocolate confection, as well as to learn about the forces that have overwhelmed the artistry and pluck of individual chocalatiers into the mechanized behemoth of American mass culture. Throughout, Almond tempers his political urgencies with his own disarming awe and glee at the industry and its products, and he also deals with unfolding family tragedies. His grandfather is dying, while at the same time Almond realizes his lifelong zeal for chocolate both saved his life and "broke his spirit." If it sounds like too much to cram in, perhaps you've not read Almond's ambitious book of sort stories, My Life in Heavy Metal, a book that will give you faith in Almond's ability to multi-task, regardless of genre.Almond's prose packs a sensory wallop at all times. It is also candid, direct, and muscular- he wastes no space. Because of his economy, his writing is akin to the best candy: all good stuff, no fill or the useless air that puffs up the wretched Three Musketeers bar. When he rattles off the names of regional candybars now gone to mass marketers, he says their names are "incantatory poetry." When he says he doesn't like coconut, he says it's like "chewing on a sweetened cuticle." The writing says it: candy, chocolate in particular, for Almond is a passion, a "freak." And like all freaks, Almond has his rage, and the loss of a particular candybar, the Caravelle, and his subsequent despondency and rampage after any sign of it led him to consider the book.Almond meditates on the sources of his "freak," including its lineage.

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