



Packaged Pleasures: How Technology and Marketing Revolutionized Desire

Gary S. Cross, Robert N. Proctor

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From the candy bar to the cigarette, records to roller coasters, a technological revolution during the last quarter of the nineteenth century precipitated a colossal shift in human consumption and sensual experience. Food, drink, and many other consumer goods came to be mass-produced, bottled, canned, condensed, and distilled, unleashing new and intensified surges of pleasure, delight, thrill—and addiction.

In *Packaged Pleasures*, Gary S. Cross and Robert N. Proctor delve into an uncharted chapter of American history, shedding new light on the origins of modern consumer culture and how technologies have transformed human sensory experience. In the space of only a few decades, junk foods, cigarettes, movies, recorded sound, and thrill rides brought about a revolution in what it means to taste, smell, see, hear, and touch. New techniques of boxing, labeling, and tubing gave consumers virtually unlimited access to pleasures they could simply unwrap and enjoy. Manufacturers generated a seemingly endless stream of sugar-filled, high-fat foods that were delicious but detrimental to health. Mechanically rolled cigarettes entered the market and quickly addicted millions. And many other packaged pleasures dulled or displaced natural and social delights. Yet many of these same new technologies also offered convenient and effective medicines, unprecedented opportunities to enjoy music and the visual arts, and more hygienic, varied, and nutritious food and drink. For better or for worse, sensation became mechanized, commercialized, and, to a large extent, democratized by being made cheap and accessible. Cross and Proctor have delivered an ingeniously constructed history of consumerism and consumer technology that will make us all rethink some of our favorite things.

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