

Reaktion Books Press Release

DATES

A Global History

Nawal Nasrallah

Publication: 24 May 2011 | hardback | £9.99

- an informative and enjoyable account of the date and the date palm, following its journey from ancient Mesopotamia to the places where it is cultivated today
- interwoven with stories, anecdotes and humour, touching on date etymology, history, culture, religion, myth and legend

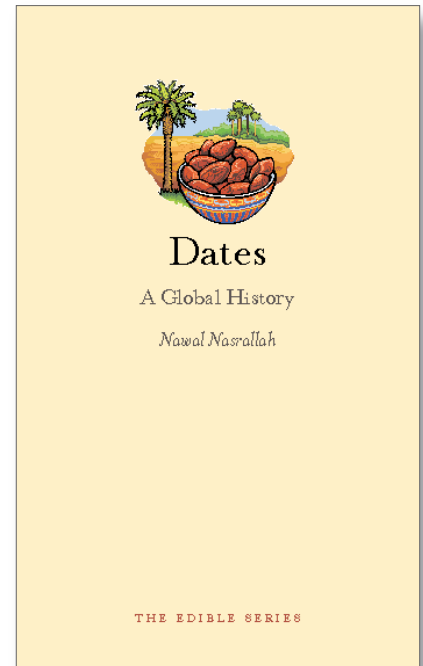
‘These are food memoirs, salacious and exotic, colourful, powdered, sweet, greasy and globe-trotting . . . sharp and speedy little reads, spotted with off-kilter illustrations’ – *Chicago Tribune*

Dates have an important role in their arid homeland of the Middle East, where they are a dietary staple. The fruit can be consumed fresh or dried, as a snack or a dessert, and are even thought to have aphrodisiac qualities.

In *Dates: A Global History*, Nawal Nasrallah draws on her experiences growing up in the lands of ancient Mesopotamia, where the date palm was first cultivated, to explore the history behind the fruit. The book describes the central role the date palm played in people’s economic lives, the inevitable elevated status it reached in their spiritual and religious rituals, as a divine gift and Tree of Life, as well as the festivals and celebrations it inspired. Nawal Nasrallah gives an informative and enjoyable account of the date palm’s story, following its journey from the land of origin to the places where it is cultivated today. *Dates* is interwoven with fascinating stories, anecdotes and humour, which touch on etymology, history, culture, religion, myth and legend. Nawal Nasrallah explains how the tree came to be associated with the fiery phoenix, the famous ancient goddess Ishtar and the moon, and how the famous *medjool* date acquired its name.

Dates is generously illustrated with many beautiful images, and supplemented with more than a dozen delicious recipes for savoury dishes (Cupid’s Omelet is not to be missed), sweets and wine. This delightful book is the first of its kind and will appeal to lovers of food and history alike.

Nawal Nasrallah is an independent researcher and food writer who resides in Salem, New Hampshire. She is a member of the Culinary Historians of Boston, and her recipes have featured in publications such as *New York Times*, *Boston Globe Magazine* and *Food and Wine*. Her cookbook *Delights from the Garden of Eden* (2003) is regarded as the definitive source on the cuisine of Iraq, and her English translation of the tenth-century Baghdadi cookbook *Kitab al-Tabikh, Annals of the Caliphs’ Kitchens*, was awarded ‘Best Translation in the World’ and ‘Best of the Best of the Past 12 Years’ at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards 2007.



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For further information
please contact
Maria Kilcoyne
Publicity Director
email
maria@reaktionbooks.co.uk

Reaktion Books
33 Great Sutton St
London EC1V 0DX
tel: 020 7253 1071
fax: 020 7253 1208
www.reaktionbooks.co.uk