



The Duchess of Malfi's Apricots, and Other Literary Fruits

Robert Palter

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The sensuous richness and bawdy ridiculousness of fruits are a regular feature of literature, from the Bible and ancient Greek plays to Arabic court poetry and medieval and modern prose and verse. This attractive and substantial volume revels in the luxurious fruity metaphors of the past with chapters dedicated to particular fruits and their literary double meanings through the ages. Palter begins with apples and figs and picks his way through strawberries (and cream), plums, bananas, peaches, apricots, pomegranates, pears, pineapples, citrus fruits, melons, cherries, grapes and berries. He also looks at wine, orchards and gardens and the enemies of fruit. The volume is full of poetry and prose, demonstrating how authors have used fruit to describe much about the human experience, particularly sex, love and desire. The chapters also look at the place of each fruit in kitchens through the ages, as they evolved from being an exotic to a more everyday food, and their perceived medicinal properties. This is a lovely book, well worth a dip.

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