



Chocolate Wars: The 150-Year Rivalry Between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers

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With a cast of characters that wouldn't be out of place in a Victorian novel, *Chocolate Wars* tells the story of the great chocolatier dynasties, through the prism of the Cadburys. Chocolate was consumed unrefined and unprocessed as a rather bitter, fatty drink for the wealthy elite until the late 19th century, when the Swiss discovered a way to blend it with milk and unleashed a product that would conquer every market in the world. Thereafter, one of the great global business rivalries unfolded as each chocolate maker attempted to dominate its domestic market and innovate new recipes for chocolate that would set it apart from its rivals. The contest was full of dramatic contradictions: The Cadburys were austere Quakers who found themselves making millions from an indulgent product; Kitty Hershey could hardly have been more flamboyant yet her husband was moved by the Cadburys tradition of philanthropy. Each was a product of their unique time and place yet they shared one thing: they want to make the best chocolate in the world.

Chocolate Wars: The 150-Year Rivalry Between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers Details

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From Reader Review *Chocolate Wars: The 150-Year Rivalry Between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers* for online ebook

Josie says

[Audiobook]

Interesting in places, but at times very dry. I liked hearing about the history of Cadbury's, but got annoyed at the author's repeated description of the Quaker brothers as "patronising" and "patriarchal". If my boss decided to build a village, including an orchard and a swimming pool, where I could buy my own house and own it within 12 years, and took me and my fellow employees on days out (trips to the country, the seaside, etc.), then you wouldn't find *me* turning my nose up and sneering at his patronising and patriarchal ways. I mean, I would rejoice if I was treated that way in this day and age! If I'd lived in a Victorian slum, sharing one toilet and one water pump between six families, I'd have been in paradise.

So yeah, it did rile me that the Cadbury brothers' genuinely good-hearted attempts to improve the lives of their workforce and wider community were written off as being a product of their era and religion. I think the world would be a much better place if every organisation behaved in the same way they did, and held the same principles: namely, that wealth gained from a successful company should be used to improve the community, not kept as personal profit for the benefit of a few.

Gwen says

I *loved* this book. (Even though I ate a ridiculous amount of chocolate while reading it.) I can understand the criticism other reviewers have left: there's a lot more focus on Quakerism and business ethics than you would expect from the title and blurb. But as a Quaker with an interest in conscious capitalism, it was pretty much perfect for me!

It was great on a number of levels. Fun to hear about the formation of the big chocolate companies that are still around today, interesting to hear their stop-and-start formation stories, really fascinating for me personally to hear about the interplay of Quakerism with very successful business.

Definitely recommended. This is another one I'm going to have to get copies of to give to people.

terpkristin says

I tried, I really did. But I gave up.

This might very well be a good book. I have no idea. I got it on a sale at Audible and after listening to it for about 2 hours, realized I could not take the narrator (who also happens to be the author). Oddly, I seem to have had more issues with female narrators than male. Anyway, that was just a random aside.

Narrator aside, I couldn't get into this. Easily half (if not more) of what I actually listened to was history of or information about Quakers, and why they're so righteous (or so I've been told). I also learned that Kraft is

evil (probably so). The rest of what I listened to was a confusing litany of what I think was the start of the Cadbury chocolate company. But the story jumped back and forth in time, and many of the people in the Cadbury family share first names.

So I gave up. I wouldn't recommend it, but who knows, maybe one day I'll give it a go in Kindle or dead tree format and will have better luck.

Tatiana says

Great book as it brings another view of a company which almost toed the line of being termed a social enterprise.

The most surprising aspect of this book was the way it viewed the growth of the largest European and American confectionary company's (Hershey's, Mars, Nestlé, Cadbury's, etc). It outlined some surprising mergers and even more interesting beginnings.

Furthermore, it's a great read for those looking to find an old school blueprint of what to do and what to avoid when creating a business with a social core, examples of how to potentially protect a company getting taken over through an aggressive acquisition and one way to ensure that the company's values are kept in check, even with a new Board.

Most interestingly was the last chapter on how M&A work and how they can push the ethos of a business to the sidelines when original shareholders are diluted and a company does not protect its interests like Nestlé did.

Stacy says

I was interested in what the history was behind the big names in chocolate so picked up this book. I was surprised by how much I enjoyed it. It was very well written and arranged in a way that not only provided the reader with the major players, but took us through the history logically and clearly. I found the chocolate history fascinating and am impressed with the men who made these businesses.

The main focus of the story was Cadbury, which makes sense as Deborah Cadbury is a member of that family. She did an amazing job recounting the history of her family and how they got to where they are today. As she moved through the past 150 years, she added and included the other major players in the chocolate industry.

Things that stood out to me (in no particular order) was that chocolate originated as a drink; something that you would mix in. From the sound of it, it wasn't all that great at first. I would be so curious to visit a Cadbury factory and get to sample it. To see how far chocolate has come. The second thing of interest to me was that Cadbury (and Rowntree and Fry) were all Quakers. They brought their faith into their companies. They cared little about personal wealth and focused on how to make their workers lives better and how to help the poor. They created towns centered around their factories with homes, schools, churches (all kinds of churches, not just Quaker), recreation, etc. At the time, living in Bournville (Cadbury's town) was highly desirable.

I found it interesting that Nestle created infant milk (powdered milk) and sold his business with his name attached. Unless I missed something, that was his entire involvement in the 'business' yet his name is so synonymous with chocolate now. For his powdered milk was one of the main tools used to create a successful milk chocolate. Hershey failed over and over at making a successful business. His family was wealthy and kept bailing him out, until they finally said no. But he hit upon chocolate, became a success, and after seeing Bournville he also decided to create his own town in Pennsylvania. He married a woman named Kitty who sadly couldn't have children and became very sick. He focused on providing for orphan boys and left his factory to a trust.

Mars came across as a profit focused entrepreneur. Unlike Hershey and Cadbury, he cared about the bottom line, not about the entire 'package'. Which makes me sad as who doesn't love a snickers! But the corporate take-overs at the end was a bit surprising, and sad. Cadbury doesn't paint Irene Rosenfeld in a positive light. Rosenfeld came from Kraft to buy out Cadbury and ultimately succeeded. But other than an initial making of money, long term this does not seem like it will necessarily be successful. Almost immediately Kraft closed a Cadbury factory. And Kraft is in a ton of debt.

Anyway, interesting read. I would really love to buy a box of all the different types of chocolates and drinks referenced throughout the book (small, bite-sized chocolates, of course). I think tasting the different chocolates throughout history and comparing the different brands would be fun. I admit I'm sad Cadbury didn't stay in the family. I understand why they did what they did.

Richard Thompson says

Jesse highly recommended this book, and I had thought it might be a good read-aloud, but by half way through the introduction we found ourselves ranting and fuming about the evils of late twentieth century capitalism and decided that this might not be the pleasant light read that we hoped it would be. It is an interesting story — a bit tangled with all the various players: Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree, Nestle, Hershey, and Mars as well as other minor players — but they writing isn't all that engaging. The Quaker connection is interesting given our family link to Quaker culture. The Quaker version of capitalism as embodied by the big English chocolate manufacturers of the late 1800's and early 1900's is much more human, socially responsible and forward looking than the current model, and, of course, by the end of the book stock market greed mongers and short-termers have cannibalised all the ethically oriented family firms like the Cadbury's. Interesting, but kind of depressing in the end.

The book would probably have been much more engaging if I had been allowed to sample some of the products of the companies profiled, but alas...

Sleepover137 says

Very interesting and informative. It's not only the history of Cadbury but also allows for a more general view on the history of chocolate companies.

Jennifer (JC-S) says

‘Business was not an end in itself; it was a means to an end.’

In writing this book, Deborah Cadbury set out to understand ‘the journey that took my deeply religious Quaker forebears from peddling tins of cocoa from a pony and trap around Birmingham to this mighty company that reached round the globe.’ It’s an interesting story, peopled with some fascinating characters, and spans almost 200 years from the beginnings of the business in 1824 to the takeover of the Cadbury chocolate business by Kraft in 2009.

In addition to members of the Cadbury family, the people we meet in the book include Henri Nestlé, who experimented with baby formula before becoming an internationally known chocolate magnate, and Daniel Peter (whose baby daughter Rose benefitted from Nestlé’s baby formula) who successfully making a milk chocolate bar after experimenting with milk and chocolate for many years. We also meet Rodolphe Lindt, Domingo Ghiradelli, Milton Hershey and C.J van Houten (inventor of the cocoa press).

In the middle of the 19th century, the cocoa bean was almost invariably consumed as a drink. And not a particularly appealing drink: it was gritty and visibly oily. The first chocolate bar did not appear in Britain until 1847 (made by the Fry brothers) but it wasn’t particularly appealing either.

The Cadbury brothers, George and Richard, were the third generation of Cadbury tradesman in Birmingham. Their grandfather Richard Tapper Cadbury had sent his son John to London to learn about the cocoa bean. A generation later, George and Richard had created a chocolate company. The Cadbury family were Quakers, as were the other British chocolate families of Rowntree and Fry, and their focus on worker welfare saw a number of innovative workplace reforms. Under George Cadbury’s direction, workers were provided with housing, education and training. There were also medical facilities and pension schemes for employees. In 1878, the Bournbrook estate on the outskirts of Birmingham was acquired by the brothers. The new factory, at what was renamed Bournville, was completed in 1879. There was room for landscaped parks, including rose gardens, and for organised recreation, including cricket.

Cadbury’s Dairy Milk chocolate became a household name after its invention in 1905, and mass production began in earnest after World War I. A merger with J S Fry and Sons in 1919 and the development of products such as Cadbury’s Milk Tray and then Roses placed Cadbury’s at the forefront of world chocolate manufacture.

It’s all here in this book: a history of the Cadbury enterprise and of chocolate manufacture during the 19th and 20th centuries. The history involves exploration and innovation and, occasionally, espionage. The hostile takeover by Kraft saw the end of an era, of a Quaker company that had flourished on the principle of altruism and had taken over 180 years to build.

The book is interesting as well because of the information it includes about the role that Quakers played in English business and banking during the 18th and 19th centuries. By the early 19th century, some 4,000 Quakers were running English banks and companies, this was because their rules forbade them from entering Parliament, the Armed Forces and some professions (such as the law). Companies such as Bryant & May (matches), Clark (shoes), Huntley & Palmer (biscuits) and Wedgwood (chinaware) were all significant. In accordance with their own strict standards, the Quakers believed that wealth creation should fund social projects, that quality was paramount and that reckless debt was shameful.

I picked up this book on the basis of another review, and I'm glad that I did. Cadbury's chocolate has been part of my life for over 50 years, but I knew little of the history of the company or of the chocolate making process. This book brings both to life, as well as providing interesting information about the role of Quaker-run companies during the Industrial Revolution and beyond.

I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the history of chocolate, in aspects of the manufacturing industry during the 19th and 20th centuries and in the growth of advertising. It's sad, too, to see how the appetite for profit has starved notions of social welfare.

Jennifer Cameron-Smith

Carin says

I love chocolate. With a couple of exceptions (key lime pie), I do not understand desserts that don't include chocolate. They seem pointless to me. I have been on a chocolate tasting tour in NYC (and I highly recommend it), and I published a book about chocolate, when I was an acquiring editor. This book was right up my alley. I particularly was interested as this book seemed like it would be the British counterpart to *The Emperors of Chocolate* about Hershey and Mars, and it was!

The author, Ms. Cadbury, can't exactly be unbiased. Yes, she is one of THE Cadburys. And naturally, the story of the British chocolate industry is told from their point of view, but they seem (from our biased perspective) to be a great centerpiece of the story, as the Cadburys were pretty great guys. Although the author makes a point that a lot of them were pretty great, particularly those who were Quaker. The Quaker religion meant they had to consider their workers' home lives and general living situation in ways no one else did. So even in Dickensian London their working conditions were pretty decent, and the Cadbury brothers set out to make them even more so. They moved the factory out to the country, off a major train line, but they didn't just expect everyone to commute to the country--they built an entire town with affordable houses, parks and greens and other public buildings and free health care, for the workers. Pretty cool. Most of the British chocolatiers were Quakers so this didn't put them at a disadvantage. Even Hershey in the United States was raised a Mennonite, which has some similar theories about responsibility (and he started a school for orphan boys and an orphanage and donated a lot to charity.)

Mostly though this is a story about innovation. Chocolate is a difficult product to work with. In its natural state it is bitter and tends to separate and can be grainy. Before tempering and milk chocolate techniques were developed, chocolate often had lots of additives such as flour and concrete mixed in. It was considered a luxury, but also unhealthy and just a generally bad product. The Cadburys made their name on their chocolate being pure. As each innovation was developed, it spurred all the other chocolate manufacturers to work twice as hard to try to replicate what others were achieving, all the while trying to put their own stamp on it.

The book is fairly dry and there isn't much gossip or juicy detail, but it's a well-written, well-researched history of the British (and occasionally European) chocolate industry. If you are a chocolate fancier like I am, this book will be right up your alley. Warning: you will eat more chocolate than usual while reading this book. And you will feel guilty if it is American or of inferior quality.

Alice O'herin says

The book appealed to me on a personal level because a) I love chocolate and b) I'm very interested in the idea of social entrepreneurship (trendy as it is now) and ethical business. I learned a lot about the history of chocolate as it came to the Western world.

However, I was frustrated by the misrepresentation of what the entire book is about! The book is called: "Chocolate Wars: The 150-year Rivalry between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers."

1. "Wars" or "Rivalry" is a stretch. For the first half of the book, the different chocolate makers/sellers are in different parts of the world without very much contact with one another. (Not much conflict there.)
2. "The World's Greatest Chocolate Makers" is true only if you mean the Cadburys are the world's greatest chocolate makers. With the focus very much on the Cadbury family specifically, only cursory mention is made of the Swiss or American companies or larger conglomerates. Whereas with the Cadburys we learn about personalities, family vacations, illnesses, and habits, we only hear about other companies in very broad strokes.
3. "Chocolate Wars" should probably be called "The Cadbury Family History" (but nobody would pick that up to read). The author goes into great detail in the war exploits, personalities, marriage history, and children of the Cadburys, which aren't directly relevant to the chocolate business (except to show how much of a family-run business it was).
4. The subtitle should probably mention something about Quaker business. The author spends a lot of time describing the ethos, content, and deep belief of the founders. In fact she ends the book not reflecting on chocolate but reflecting on "the Quaker message...shut out from the boardrooms in the City of London." I actually very much admire (and to some degree share) those beliefs, but I felt that the book's cover and jacket completely omitted a central thesis of the book. As a result, every time she would go on about Quakerism, I felt like she was going on a tangent... whereas by the end I finally realized it was part of her main point.

Conclusion: Interesting read and well written. However, pretty terribly misrepresented in its marketing.

Kim says

A life long chocolate fan and as an Australian who grew up with the number 1 chocolate being Cadbury I really enjoyed this book. It was fascinating to see where it all started and how it got to where it is today.

I agree with the author that there really is something missing from big companies today. It's too much focused on the dollar.

I know the main company the book focused on was Cadbury but I would have liked to have had more about Mars and the European companies like Lindt. I know there were sections on each but I'd have liked more.

Overall though it was a great read on a once mighty company that has succumbed to the perils of globalisation.

Nathalia Borghi says

This is a very interesting book, nicely written and with a fast pace. The only reason I gave it four stars it

because, at times, that pace is interrupted and goes slowly as hell. Maybe because it wasn't much of my interest, but I would've summarised more the part about slavery and cut short some of the business details. The religious part, however, some thought it was too long or detailed (based on some reviews here), but I think it's what adds so much emotion and humanity into the book and into food history.

Highly recommended.

Carl Williams says

How much of history is the story of individuals (or families) and their efforts and struggles to change the world? How much of it is the sweeping nature movements and ideas, culture—their coming together, clashing, synthesizing?

This is the story of the Cadburys written by a Cadbury. It's the story of the growth of the chocolate industry in Britain, America, and Europe. It's told from the point of view, largely, of the kind of individual perseverance that is sometimes considered part of the American Dream and more broadly of the capitalist ethos.

Back in the day in jolly old England, Quakers, along other non-conformists, were banned from attending college, law, and a host of other professions. Common understanding is that many of the creative and bright types were attracted to business, where indeed they did very well. The first iron bridge was constructed by a Quaker (read *The Iron Bridge* by David Morse). Not a bad time travel/historic fiction novel). They were big names in banking. And candy.

The Cadburys, along with Hersey in the United States looked to do well with their money and the establishment of a “model village” is a part of the story told with reverence.

‘Twas an okay book, not great. If you like history told through the eyes of an individual or a family you'll like this. If you've any interest in candy, or the story of rich kids getting richer by combining their sweat with their parents it's worth a quick read. It lost a number opportunities to make broad or interesting connections.

Joyce Yee says

Do you ever wonder how your chocolate bar got to the store you bought it from? This book by Deborah Cadbury, a descendant of the Cadbury chocolatiers of England, describes the modern history of how chocolate was developed by companies such as Cadbury, Rowntree and Nestle's. What I found was that some of the major chocolatiers in England such as the Cadbury company, was founded and run by Quakers. Their principles included an emphasis on treating their employees in humane ways, including building housing for them and their families, making sure the factory was located in an area in which fresh air and water were readily available - they felt that people shouldn't work in smelly unsafe urban factories.

Deborah shares the absolutely fascinating stories of the technical issues involved in creating drinking chocolate, then candy bars from the cocoa bean plant. Interwoven with these stories are the histories and

perspectives of the major chocolate manufacturers in England, Holland and the U.S. Reading about the strong social values of the Quaker chocolatiers such as the Cadbury brothers and the Rowntree company founders made me long for more corporations who value the well being of their employees, and who have a social conscience. She on the other hand is also candid about the Cadbury brothers' use of cocoa beans harvested by slaves in Africa, and the resulting public reaction against them.

After reading this book, I don't regard my chocolate bar and drinking chocolate the same way anymore - how much underlies the development of these products, and how they have evolved over time.

Dawn says

When people say, "You never know where a good book will take you," they're usually talking about fiction. However, this Cadbury-centric book about the ins and outs of the world's major chocolate companies took me to places involving Quakers, the British Labor movement, illegal slavery, and ended up giving me a better understanding of international finance. All that, plus chocolate.

Although I found it absolutely fascinating, I'm not sure who I'd recommend this book to. Possibly to business owners, since that's where the Cadbury company began, and it's certainly a cautionary tale about taking your company public. Corporations are beholden to the elusive "stockholders" (mostly via mutual fund managers), not to the people who work for them, or even to the customers who buy their products. If you're a chocolate fan, this book might be a little depressing, since it shows how big corporations have literally chewed up and spit out so many small chocolate companies. Reading this has certainly made me read the labels of my chocolate very carefully, and think twice about what company I'm supporting.
