



Sherbet and Spice

Mary Isin

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One hundred sculpted sugar lions, baklava the size of cartwheels a thousand layers thick, helva made in memory of the dead, rose jam in a hundred pots of Dresden china, violet sherbet for the sultan and parrots addicted to sugar...the stories behind Turkey's huge variety of sweets and puddings, valued not only for their taste but as symbols of happiness, good fortune and goodwill, are as fascinating as their flavour. This riveting exploration of their history and role in Turkish culture is a voyage of adventure, taking us from the sultan's palace to the homes of ordinary people in Turkey's villages and towns, and beyond to Central Asia, Persia, Arabia and Egypt. This is the land of Turkish delight perfumed with rosewater and musk; rose jam whose praises were sung by the mystic philosopher and poet, Rumi, in the 13th century; asure, whose roots go back to harvest rituals of the Neolithic period; zerde tinted with saffron; baklava filled with nuts, clotted cream or cheese; milk puddings and helvas of a myriad types; strings of nuts dipped in grape syrup; lollipops in the shape of animals and model gardens built of sugar carried in wedding processions. Turkey has been celebrated for its sweets and puddings since the 16th century. Rice pudding, sherbet and fondant are just some of the sweets and puddings that originated in Ottoman Turkey and spread to Europe over the centuries. The first study of Turkish confectionery to ever be published, Sherbet and Spice offers a rare look at the evolution of sweets, based on many Turkish sources little known outside Turkey that lend a new dimension to the subject.



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