



Calories and Corsets: A history of dieting over 2,000 years

By Louise Foxcroft

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"At last, a book on dieting that is sensible, and better still, entertaining."—*The Independent*

Today we are urged from all sides to slim down and shape up, to shed a few pounds or lose life-threatening inches. The media's relentless obsession with size may be perceived as a twenty-first-century phenomenon, but as award-winning historian Louise Foxcroft shows, we have been struggling with what to eat, when, and how much ever since the Greeks and the Romans first pinched an inch.

Meticulously researched, surprising, and sometimes shocking, *Calories and Corsets* tells the epic story of our complicated relationship with food, the fashions and fads of body shape, and how cultural beliefs and social norms have changed over time. Combining research from medical journals, letters, articles, and the dieting bestsellers we continue to devour (including one by an octogenarian Italian in the sixteenth century), Foxcroft reveals the extreme and often absurd lengths people will go to in order to achieve the perfect body, from eating carbolic soap to chewing every morsel hundreds of times to a tasteless pulp.

This unique and witty history exposes the myths and anxieties that drive today's multi-billion dollar dieting industry—and offers a welcome perspective on how we can be healthy and happy in our bodies.

Louise Foxcroft has a PhD in the history of medicine from the University of Cambridge. Her book *Hot Flushes, Cold Science* was the winner of the 2009 Longman-History Today Prize.

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Editorial Review

Review

A compelling history of mankind's peculiar and often perverse relationship with dieting ... like a grown-up version of Horrible Histories ... her style is pacy and she has a wonderfully light touch The Times Immensely readable and very enjoyable, brilliantly researched and filled with fascinating, often hilarious facts -- Arabella Weir This witty history of dieting is full of interesting facts ... a great reminder that the basic principles of weight loss never change Elle Elegantly written and full of tasty morsels -- Jemima Lewis Mail on Sunday Astutely researched ... amusing, alarming and poignant by turns. Nature Meticulously researched, Calories And Corsets is packed with intriguing details - some jaw-dropping, others laugh-out-loud funny - that make it an easy and enjoyable read. -- Susan Swarbrick Herald Anybody with an appetite for such unwholesome [dieting] texts should opt instead for Foxcroft's a slim and sensible history. -- Helen Brown Daily Telegraph Put down the diet book and pick up Louise Foxcroft's history of dieting... by the time you're finished you might see the weight-loss industry in a very different light... Foxcroft takes a briskly sceptical line on the global dieting phenomenon. -- Jane Shilling Daily Mail A book of such relentless good sense that I must recommend it - especially if you're considering a post-festive binge diet -- Natalie Haynes Prospect Entertaining ... Foxcroft's book is full of startling anecdotes, but she also has a serious purpose -- Joan Smith Literary Review Amusing [and] illuminating -- Daisy Goodwin Sunday Times Foxcroft - whose writing recalls the late father of medical history, Roy Porter - tells what is essentially a grim and visceral tale with wit and sprezzatura. -- Michael Bywater The Week An authoritative history... There are plenty of good stories and she is good on Lord Byron... -- Cressida Connolly Spectator A catchy title and a great subject... -- Katie Law Evening Standard A welcome addition to the fields of food and body histories... an engaging synthesis of existing research and delves into a number of original sources... There is some substantial scholarship here... -- Peter Atkins BBC History Magazine Fascinating Daily Express 'fascinating... Foxcroft does this (dispels dieting myths) admirably, and with wit. This short volume would be a wise investment for anyone tempted to sign up to the (screamingly fashionable) high-protein diet of Dr Dukan, or to the (previously hip, now less so) regime of the low-carb king Dr Atkins. -- Isabel Berwick FT At last, a book on dieting that is sensible, and better still, entertaining... a lively history. -- Christopher Hirst Independent Entertaining and colourful -- Stephanie Cross The Lady Mixing science with fashion and celebrity, this enlightening book gives the full skinny on lean, fat and in-between. -- Iain Finlayson Saga Brilliantly researched and highly entertaining. -- Sally Morris Daily Mail

About the Author

Louise Foxcroft has a PhD in the history of medicine from the University of Cambridge. Her most recent book, Hot Flushes, Cold Science [9781847081711] was the winner of the Longman-History Today Prize, 2009. She writes for the Guardian and the London Review of Books.

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