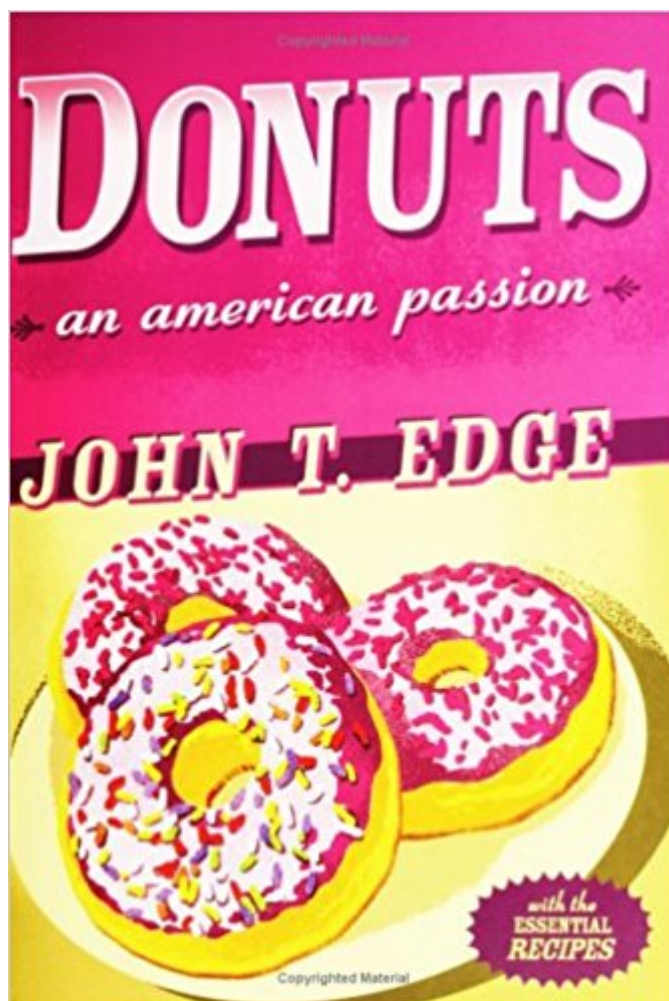


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# Donuts: An American Passion



## Synopsis

Acclaimed food writer and cultural historian John T. Edge conjures nostalgia by revealing portions of our history through our most cherished foods. Donuts is the cap on a scrumptious series toting comfort food, belying calorie-counting, and embracing those cornerstone, iconic dishes that have come to define American cuisine and customs over the years. In Donuts, Edge walks us through the donut's inception as Dutch fare, the Salvation Army's wartime donuts, the invention of the donut machine, the 1950s donut-shop craze, the Krispy Kreme revolution, the appropriation by other ethnicities, and the fanatical chefs that take donuts to a new art form. Nothing encourages our sweet-tooth cravings like the donut. It is honest. It is satisfying. It is a national symbol that has survived the low carb-diet dogma and the death of the local donut shop, and it is making a comeback into the hearts of Americans.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This, the final of four volumes in food writer Edge's series about the "small-d democratic foods that conjure our collective childhood" (following fried chicken, apple pie and hamburgers), is a tour through donut-loving America that stops at unique donut shops and offers a handful of recipes for the ubiquitous ring of deep-fried and sugared dough. After quickly acknowledging donuts' nutritional bankruptcy, Edge explains how the Salvation Army made the consumption of donuts a patriotic necessity in World War I; how every culture has a donut-type pastry (including the Italian zeppole, the Lebanese awwamaat, the Croatian krafne and the South African koeksister); how New Orleans

stalwart Café du Monde is still serving up beignets post-Katrina; and how an innovative Chicago chef has conjured up donut soup, for which Edge presents an alternate, though no less caloric, recipe. On the trivia end, readers will learn that Henry David Thoreau was once served a breakfast of "eels, green beans, and donuts," and Cambodian refugees "may own as many as 80 percent of the independent donut shops in Los Angeles." This is a warm-hearted appreciation that, like its subject, is hard to resist. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

John T. Edge's work has appeared regularly in *Gourmet* and *Saveur* and has been featured in the 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 editions of *Best Food Writing*. He is currently the director of the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi. His cookbook, *A Gracious Plenty*, was nominated for a James Beard Foundation Award. In 2003, he was named "One of Twenty Southerners to Watch" by the *Financial Times* of London, and he was a finalist for the 2004 M. F. K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award from the James Beard Foundation.

Fun, small coffee book table for myself - a donut lover! Content isn't overwhelmingly impressive but for the few bucks I paid for it - it sure is fun! Love the cover, and love that it's hardback.

good recipes

Take some dough, fry it, and then douse it in sugar. You now have the donut (doughnut). A favorite breakfast (or anytime) treat of many, the donut can actually be found in many cultures all over the world and by different names. But the concept is the same. Sweet fried dough. And this book is part of a series on American food by Edge. But you don't have to read them in any particular order. "Donuts" is what you'd expect. It's a book about donuts. There's some history, mentions of different types of donuts by culture or country, and some explorations of famous donut shops. Edge also includes a few recipes for certain types of donuts. Edge visits a lot of different donut shops, but they seem to mostly be centered on the West Coast. There is a vast majority of shops in Seattle and California, and quite a few in Hawaii too, which for the purpose of this book I'm going to consider "west coast" instead of the island that it is. Sure we do get down to New Orleans for some beignets, but the east coast only has a few mentions, and the south is dominated by Krispy Kreme. Now, granted, Krispy Kreme is popular and what started the doughnut revolution, so it does have its place in this book. All of the donut shop owners though don't really offer a whole lot about themselves or

their products. Or at least Edge doesn't write about them very much. He does make note that they were mostly secretive, but I would have thought there would be more than there actually is in this book. In fact, most of this particular book is about the different donuts Edge tries at all these places. When compared to the other books I've read in this series, it just isn't as impressive on giving the whole picture of the food. It does the travelogue thing, but the history and lore of the food just isn't very prominent in this book. This was actually the first book of his that I had trouble keeping my attention on. I kept wandering off to more interesting things. And considering it's not that long of a book, that was surprising to me. But I made my way through it and learned a little more about the donut. Although he tantalized with mentioning things like Ny-Quil donuts but never actually saying what they were. I'd give this book two and a half stars. There was some interesting information contained within it, but largely it didn't have enough interesting things to make it an excellent food book. Donuts Copyright 2006 174 pages Review by M. Reynard

I had heard that John T. Edge, with his big league connections to top food publications and as director of the respected Southern Foodways Alliance in Oxford, Miss., was a leading writer on Southern food, but this little trifle was campy, insubstantial and, frankly, a huge disappointment. I hope that this book on donuts is an exception that proves the rule and that his other books and scriblings are much better. The recipes in *Donuts, An American Passion*, border on the ridiculous, not a single one of which I'd be interested in trying, and the main narrative on donuts, while seemingly well researched, is as sad as a pasture full of diseased black locust trees in North Carolina.

Next time I read a John T. Edge book, I'll remember to wear protection. A bib, to avert the Pavlovian swirls that are sure to follow. Prepare yourself for a sweet thrill-jaunt in his wake as he flavor-plows North America, accompanied by the usual suspects (sugar & cinnamon), and more than a few surprises. I knew I was a fan when I read his line "I would shout down anyone who dared dispute the goodness inherent in oil-singed orbs of fruitcake." If you want to know where to find me, I'll be the guy on all fours propped behind his poor victim's knees to facilitate smooth sailing in his backward trajectory. You'll read about why it's patriotic and even possibly healthy (this would be in the "history" part of the book) to indulge your donut fixation. Different ethnic takes on fried dough weigh in. Artistry is in full flower, no ingredient is sacred. Everybody gets into the act, and even "uberchef" Thomas Keller gets a mention. This book gives you everything you could want in a donut book; history, comedy, personality, machinery, and especially, recipes. There are resources that

you could use to start a donut business yourself. Pretty smart kid he's got helping him out, too.

get it from the library. I found a copy on the street. it had a pink cover. I like pink. I love donuts. I love great writing and food-related information. I love learning the history of something through the people who were there...I was hoping for a cross between ed behr and studs turkel. instead what I got was five recipes (haven't tried them yet) and a lot of bad filler for prose. you don't get the history and facts so much about donuts as you hear about how mr. edge went here and ate that. I started thinking maybe he wrote this book so he could justify a tax deduction on his driving and eating.edge talks to several donut makers but ends up with very little information about them to write about. it seems no one likes mr. edge enough to open up to him. he seems unable to relate to them. he doesn't really present much by way of new information about donuts in general. when he describes a special donut he is eating, he does so with empty soundbites and not good writing.maybe, if you are a cop, this could be a good summer beach read. otherwise there is better and more well-written stuff out there.save your money!

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