



# Citrus: A History

*Pierre Laszlo*

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Walk into your local grocery store and down the produce aisle, and you'll find a dazzling array of citrus, from navel oranges and clementines to grapefruit and key limes—and sometimes even more exotic fare like the Japanese yuzu or the baboon lemon. Nearly 100 million tons of citrus are produced globally every year, but where did these fruits first come from? How did they find their way into the Western world? And how did they become both a culinary and cultural phenomenon?

Pierre Laszlo here traces the spectacular rise and spread of citrus across the globe: from Southeast Asia in 4000 BC through North Africa and the Roman Empire to early modern Spain and Portugal, whose explorers introduced the fruits to the Americas during the 1500s. Blending scientific rigor with personal curiosity, *Citrus* ransacks over two millennia of world history, exploring the numerous roles that citrus has played in agriculture, horticulture, cooking, nutrition, religion, and art—from the Jewish feast of the Tabernacles through the gardens and courts of Versailles to the canvasses of Vincent van Gogh to the orange groves of southern California and the juicing industry of today.

“Laszlo . . . has approached the lore of citrus fruit with the élan of a master chef (the man is French, after all), mixing history, economics, biology and chemistry to produce a book that will bring a smile to readers of every taste.”—*Natural History*

“Altogether charming, eccentric, erudite, and definitely worth the price.”—*Times Higher Education Supplement*

“Stimulating. . . . Laszlo shows that the citrus fruit ‘is a treasure trove of chemicals that are highly useful to humankind’—which also happens to taste wonderful.”—*Sunday Times* (UK)

“A short but brilliant account of 6,000 years of citrus fruits that should be devoured with fervor.”—*Financial Times*

“Did you know there are a billion citrus trees under cultivation, or that grapefruit juice may potentiate the effects of Viagra? *Citrus* mines over two millennia of history to explore the spread of these fruits out of Asia, their commercialization in the United States, and enduring symbolism the world over.”—*New Scientist*

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