



Title: Drink: A Social History of America

Author: Andrew Barr

Description:

In this shrewd cultural history of drink in America, Andrew Barr considers the significance of alcohol, historically and socially, symbolic and real, in the evolution of a nation born of a rebel spirit and intoxicated by liberty - and sometimes by rum or raw whiskey, which the colonists preferred to their royally taxed British tea. While Americans have both asserted and celebrated their freedoms with alcohol they have also, in Barr's perceptive historical view, put it to more insidious use; in suppressing native American populations in the country's expansion west, for instance, or in controlling acculturation of immigrants. Blending his candidly opinionated take on history with a lively bit of cultural anthropology, Barr examines not only the social influences that determine what, where, and why we choose to drink but also the social ills that have been attributed to alcohol, from the supposed decline in national values to the dipsomaniacal state of our national health. Barr argues, however, that the scapegoating of alcohol by moral alarmists, the medical establishment, and platform politicians has more often produced dubious cures and moral hypocrisy than it has accomplished social good.

Reviews

Food & Wine:

A witty, highly opinionated ... well-written sociological opus that covers everything from the Pilgrims to Prohibition.

The New Yorker:

Witty, wide-ranging.

Newsday:

Provocative, entertaining.

Library Journal:

Barr employs the fields of history, cultural anthropology, pharmacology, religion, economics, nutrition, law, technology, and psychology in his consideration of alcohol consumption in the United States. A *Sunday Times* writer in London, Barr brings a unique perspective and biting satirical commentary to his work ... thought-provoking and impressively researched.

The New York Times Book Review:

Picks up some taken-for-granted assumptions and gives them a workthwhile shaking. Reading this book makes you feel as if you were putting his advice into practice, enjoying a rambling, mildly intoxicated dinner conversation with a lively companion.

Forbes FYI:

A diligently researched history, a rousing read and a feisty challenge to modern-day puritans.

Choice:

A sprightly, well-informed, and quarrelsome book filled with fascinating detail, interpretive insights, and the author's self-confident judgment.

Publishers Weekly:

This cheerful mixture of polemic and social history ... is briskly engaging and full of wondrous lore.

Time Out New York:

[A] provocative point of view in an increasingly sober climate.