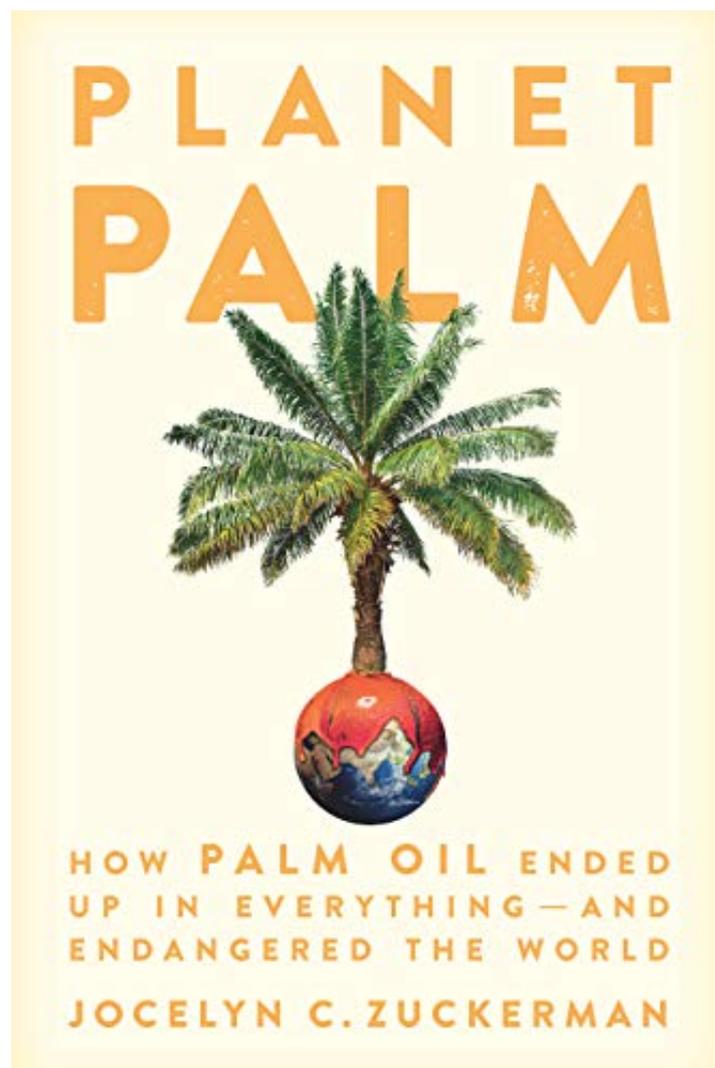


Planet Palm: How Palm Oil Ended Up in Everything—and Endangered the World

by

Jocelyn C. Zuckerman



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Synopsis

Finalist, Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism
In the tradition of Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation*, a groundbreaking global investigation into the industry ravaging the environment and global health—from the James Beard Award–winning journalist
Over the past few decades, palm oil has seeped into every corner of our lives. Worldwide, palm oil production has nearly doubled in just the last decade: oil-palm plantations now cover an area nearly the size of New Zealand, and some form of the commodity lurks in half the products on U.S. grocery shelves. But the palm oil revolution has been built on stolen land and slave labor; it's swept away cultures and so devastated the landscapes of Southeast Asia that iconic animals now teeter on the brink of extinction. Fires lit to clear the way for plantations spew carbon emissions to rival those of industrialized nations.
James Beard Award–winning journalist Jocelyn C. Zuckerman spent years traveling the globe, from Liberia to Indonesia, India to Brazil, reporting on the human and environmental impacts of this poorly understood plant. The result is *Planet Palm*, a riveting account blending history, science, politics, and food as seen through the people whose lives have been upended by this hidden ingredient.
This groundbreaking work of first-rate journalism compels us to examine the connections between the choices we make at the grocery store and a planet under siege.

Sort review

About the Author
Jocelyn C. Zuckerman is the former deputy editor of *Gourmet*, former articles editor of *OnEarth*, and the former executive editor of *Whole Living*. Her stories have appeared in *Audubon*, *Fast Company*, the *American Prospect*, *Vogue*, and other publications. She is the recipient of a James Beard Journalism Award for Feature Writing. She lives in Brooklyn.
Review
Praise for *Planet Palm*:
“Crisscrossing four continents, Zuckerman presents a spirited and disarming exposé of the insidious way this one tree species has endangered cultures, economies, and ecosystems.”—*Booklist* (starred review)
“[A] definitive, damning account of the history of palm oil production and the ecological destruction it causes.”—*Kirkus Reviews*
“Vividly describing people and places damaged by the palm oil industry, Zuckerman establishes a through line connecting 19th-century imperialism to the exploitative practices of today's multinational corporations. This deeply reported account sounds the alarm loud and clear.”—*Publishers Weekly*
“An extraordinary work of investigative journalism that will make the discerning reader rush to look differently at the items stacked in her kitchen and bathroom.”—*The Hindu*
“For readers looking for a good primer on palm oil's field of battle and how it was set, *Planet Palm* is an illuminating read, as engrossing as it is informative.”—Ashoka Mukpo, *Mongabay*
“[*Planet Palm*] takes readers into the heart of Palm Oil Nation for a fast-paced and detailed look at the destruction the commodity has sown.”—*Civil Eats*
“Zuckerman's book is a timely call to heed [the] reminder . . . to finally set right screw-ups such as the palm oil industry.”—

South China Morning Post“Jocelyn Zuckerman has crossed the globe and looked back in time to show us how much the appetite for palm oil profit has cost us in human suffering, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity. This extraordinary work of investigative journalism will make you cry and gnash your teeth. It will fill you with rage. Essential reading for everyone who wonders if their food choices matter.”—[Ruth Reichl](#), bestselling author of *Tender at the Bone* and *My Kitchen Year*“Most of us are familiar by now with how commodities like cotton, sugar, and gold have defined the course of empire and exploitation. In this lively and intriguing book, Jocelyn Zuckerman adds to the list something that, remarkably, 99 percent of the time we don’t even know we’re consuming. Planet Palm will make you look very differently at the items in your kitchen and bathroom—and at the persistence of poverty and hunger in parts of the world that should be enjoying plenty.”—[Adam Hochschild](#), [author of King Leopold’s Ghost](#) and *Bury the Chains*“Jocelyn Zuckerman takes us on a troubling, time-traveling adventure that follows the journey of what will become the indispensable ingredient. Today, palm oil, with its intrinsic links to colonization and slavery, has become ubiquitous in our consumerist culture. Sadly, its exploitation, a mere reflection of our global food system, has had terrible consequences.”—[Pierre Thiam](#), Senegalese chef and co-founder of *Yolélé Foods*“Man-eating pythons, rogue elephants, armed gangsters, corrupt politicians, murderous executives, modern-day slave owners. Zuckerman encounters them all in this, the first exhaustive investigation of the world’s most environmentally damaging product—something most of us use every day without even knowing it.”—[Barry Estabrook](#), author of *Just Eat* and *Tomatoland*“I’ve always thought of palm oil as just another best-to-avoid food ingredient for its high level of saturated fat, but I can never look at it the same way again after reading *Planet Palm*. I now understand that oil palms represent the darkest underside of late-stage capitalism. This is an ugly story, compellingly told. It needs to be read.”—[Marion Nestle](#), professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health, emerita, New York University, and author most recently of *Let’s Ask Marion*--This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition.

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What people say about this book

Richard Ellsasser, "Important read. Educational and gripping content. If you're at all curious about the hidden truths about palm oil, or if you're simply looking for a good primer on the global effects of palm oil then you'll appreciate reading this book. Planet Palm is an excellent and eye opening read, shedding light on how this red oil has stained so much of the world's map. Informative from start to finish."

william Sertl, "If you care about the Earth. An eye-popping account of private greed and governments working together to destroy the globe. Palm oil is as bad as big oil. It's processed with slave-like labor and cruelty, going back to the Colonial era in Africa and Asia. As a product, it's in too much of our food. A must-read exposé."

Tardigrade, "Important book. How is it possible that in 21. century there is a commodity that is so harmful and yet so ubiquitous? Palm oil is destructive to the natural environment (mostly peat swamps and rain forests and their biodiversity), to the people who produce it (often as virtual slaves, breathing and touching poisonous chemicals) and live nearby (losing their homes and livelihoods), and finally to the consumers (who often unknowingly ingest it in copious amounts, detrimental to their health). Who benefits? A handful of unscrupulous businessmen and corrupt officials. It is a pretty well written and interesting, but above all - important book. It investigates all of this and more, providing detailed and colorful picture of the oil palm business from colonial history to the present day, and revealing many ugly truths that we, global consumers, don't like to think about. Regarding the critics, I agree that the problem with "eco-colonialism" is real - I think that the expectations of the West, where all old forests were cleared long ago and many native species were led to extinction, towards the developing countries are often hypocritical and unfair, as the author acknowledged in the epilogue. Nonetheless, it is true that something has to be done for the sake of both local communities and the global environment. I am not sure activism is a proper solution but it surely helps to build awareness. Thanks to the publisher, The New Press, and NetGalley for the advance copy of this book."

ChefEmily, "A worthy read about a serious subject. "Planet Palm" by Jocelyn C. Zuckerman is an absolute must read for anyone who is or has begun to question where their food and/or cosmetics come from. Zuckerman's research is meticulously detailed throughout the book, and she is able to portray the people and places effected by the Palm Oil industry with stunning authenticity. Using her own in personal experiences on the ground along with the native people in affected areas, Zuckerman's reporting about the perilous conditions and alarming devastation Palm Oil plantations have wrought on the local and global population is eye opening. Zuckerman wove historical fact with recent data in such an effortless way, making the weight of the Palm Oil situation simple to comprehend."

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