



Calories and Corsets: A history of dieting over two thousand years

Louise Foxcroft

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Today we are urged from all sides to slim down and shape up, to shed a few pounds or lose life-threatening stones. 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 pound dieting industry - and offers a welcome perspective on how we can be healthy and happy in our bodies.

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