Sugar and Spices
- sugarcane
- sugar beets
- spices

Sugar cane (Saccharum officinarum)
- native to Indonesia, member of Grass family (Poaceae)
- grown from ancient times in India and China ~over 3000 years B.C.
- originally chewed on the cane, the process for crystalline sugar was known in India by 2700 B.C.
- Columbus is known to have introduced sugar cane into New World on his second voyage
- require rich soils and tropical climates
- vegetatively propagated by "setts" – part of the stem
- crop with greatest biomass production (1.4 billion tons annually)

Honey was first sweetener in Egypt and Europe
- Sugar was virtually unknown outside of India and China until ~650 A.D when it came to the Middle east and Egypt
- the first sugar arrived in Europe ~1300
- sugar was not widespread until 1800

Cave paintings from La Arana, Spain ~7000 B.C.

Monks tended bees, not for honey, but for beeswax

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"girl with sugarcane"
Nigerian oil painting
The Triangular Trade was largely responsible for the establishment of slavery in the New World.

- British traded guns and other products for slaves in west Africa
- Slaves were transported to the sugar plantations to work the sugarcane
- Sugar and rum from the cane was transported to England

The burning of the H.M.S. Gaspee to protest the duty placed on sugar in 1772 and predated the Boston Tea Party (1773)

American Triangular Trade was important to the economy of New England

- British imposed tax on sugar, which led to a lucrative smuggling trade
- When British began to patrol harbors, local citizen were outraged

Sugar Beets (Beta vulgaris) provide ~40% of the World Sugar

- Andras Margraff (1748) demonstrated sugar from beets identical to cane
- British Blockades of French ports resulted in Napoleon decreeing that French farmers should grow sugar beets
- By 1813 France was producing 3,000 tons
- Today sugar beets are grown throughout temperate climates

World Production of Sugar Crops: Sugar Cane and Sugar Beets

- Sugar cane dominates in tropical growing regions
- Sugar beet is grown in more temperate regions

All Ancient Cultures used Spices

- Spice desired by all rulers
- Expense precluded pheasants from using them (although they used local herbs)
- Ancient Egyptian rulers were embalmed with spices
- Many of the spices used by Egyptians were not native to that region
- Egyptians established important trade routes across Middle East to China and India

Spice Trade was Lucrative

- Early Greek and Roman cultures actively traded for eastern spices
- Roman cookbooks contained references to over 60 different spices and herbs
- The most exotic were extremely expensive
- Arabs were the middlemen, who brought and traded spices from China and India
- To protect sources of spices, Arabs made up fanciful tales about their origin
- Greeks generally bought the stories, perhaps to justify high cost of spices
Venomous snakes guarded cinnamon
Bat-like creatures protected cassia
Fish eating troglodytes guarded ginger
Pepper protected by dragons

Ancient Trade Routes that provided the Mediterranean Region with spice and silks from about 4000 B.C.

Next time:
Spices that Changed the World
Old and New World Spices