



The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars

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Corporate candy giants Milton Hershey and Forrest Mars built business empires out of one of the world's most magical, sought-after substances: chocolate. In **The Emperors of Chocolate**, Joël Glenn Brenner--the first person to ever gain access to the highly secretive companies of Hershey and Mars--spins a unique story that takes us inside a world as mysterious as Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. Packed with flavorful stories and outrageous characters that give the true scoop on this real-life candyland, **The Emperors of Chocolate** is a delectable read for business buffs and chocoholics alike. Start reading and you'll soon be hungry for more.

The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars Details

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From Reader Review The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars for online ebook

Dayla says

Anxious to get to the end, I was unappreciative of the final few chapters--even thought the last 25 pages were notes and an index. This book had moments of greatness, especially the parts that were biographical about the families, but that seemed secondary to business strategy, management style and marketing. Some of this was interesting, but most of it was not.

As I said, the biographical sketches were the best. The history of Forrest Mars, Sr. and Milton Hershey were stories right out of "Ragged Dick" stories, where men came to this country and then made themselves millionaires. I also liked learning about Milton Hershey's benevolence and graciousness towards all his employees. And then later, the employees picketing against him--which broke his heart.

From people, to situations, to taste sensations, that left me not only feeling like I wasn't experiencing it myself, but even unsure whether the author herself ever had. If "Emperors" had just been a description of the the early history of Mars and Hershey's, that would have made for a much more entertaining tale.

I was interested to find out that it was Valerie Mars, the eldest daughter of Forest Mars, that is currently (as of 2014 info) running the business. Also noted Ms. Mars' philanthropy focuses on Darwin initially, then the Galapagos Islands. Also in 2008, Mars bought Wrigley, re-stating the family's Five Principles: Quality, Responsibility, Efficiency, Mutuality and Freedom.

The one literary juxtaposition was starting the book, with John Mars who clocks in and starts work at 6:30 am, and ending the book with Forest Mars, Sr. cashing in on a confectionary made of liquor-infused chocolate, that has taken off like wild fire in Las Vegas.

Margaret says

I found this book fascinating but for me, I think the most interesting parts were the history of chocolate in America prior to World War II, the differences in chocolate preferences by country and the amazing facts about the Mars & Hershey competitiveness, product research, development and manufacturing. LOL, well that pretty well covers the entire book!

I have learned so much - I couldn't contain myself and have been spouting out factoids to hubby-dog who listens with an interesting but sometimes slightly glazed over expression (he is not the chocoholic I am but just wait till we visit Hershey in a month!)

Like glade1 I think I kind of sympathize with Hershey, the underdog company partly because they have (at least in the past) shown some benevolence towards their local community. I thought it particularly interesting that other countries/cultures find Hershey's chocolate gritty & sour. I have always liked almost anything with even the slightest chocolate taste a taste test may be in order here!

Schmacko says

Crazy candy makers – Roald Dahl created the quintessential sweet-toothed loon in Willy Wonka of Charley and the Chocolate Factory. Wonka seems supremely batty, but Dahl wasn't too far from the truth. Candy-making is nutty, in more ways than one!

In *The Emperors of Chocolate*, biographer Joël Glenn Brenner takes on the history of American's two largest chocolate making families, the Hersheys and the Marse. These are names we grew up with, stuffing Hershey Kisses or the famous Mars Snickers Bars into our collective gullets. (And they both make so much more - over 50% of the candy we have access to.) Yes, here's a tale filled with madness and Mafioso-like behavior. It's clear from the get-go that author JGB has certainly done her research!

First of all, the history of chocolate – who knew it was such a difficult substance to work with? Even the invention of milk chocolate seems like a fluke. I was flabbergasted to find that it took YEARS to figure out how to combine these two substances (they don't chemically really go together!) The different methods that were finally discovered for combining chocolate with milk account for much of the different tastes between Hershey's products and Mars' (I don't want to "spoil" the surprise by telling you the reason – read the book!)

What's even more telling in *Emperors* are the personalities behind the companies. These days, the companies are in an all-out war with each other. At one time, however, they considered each other friends; one even helped the other, rescuing it from eminent failure a couple times. Both company "families" know each other well, and they keep each other's confidences while still planning to dominate the marketplace. (It's like the sugary version of *Dynasty*!) Both the Hershey family and the Mars family share qualities of obsessive-compulsive behavior, paranoia, secrecy, fancy and tyranny. What separates them seems to be heart – one company is very philanthropic and traditional in values; the other psychotically self-interested and cold but very progressive. Want to know which is the "more successful" company? Read the book; make up your own mind.

What most caught my attention? The "evil" company has so many good qualities, and the "good" side has some really stupid or strange ideas that, of course, fail. Since I am a consultant to corporations, I find this fascinating. I want the nefarious group to be totally evil. Yet I find myself impressed with their drives for efficiency and self-improvement while they successfully motivate employees. I certainly still hate their mistrust and fascism.

The "good" company has a similar paradox. They do so much, but even their outreach has an ugly side of egocentrism about it that I don't think the company realizes to this day. Long ago, their founder absolutely decided how to make the world a better place. He strove to put that narrow-minded stamp on everything around him. Only when his grand schemes backfired did the man even seem to question whether his ideas were selfish and limited.

I understand that author JGB had a lot of trouble getting information from Hersheys and Mars; both companies are manically secretive and distrustful. Spying still happens to this day. (Remember Slugworth from *Charley and the Chocolate Factory*? It's true!) So, it's quite impressive that she created such an engaging and thorough book.

Consultants like me have a field-day with books like *The Emperors of Chocolate*. We argue incessantly

about the battle between the bottom line and valuing employees. There is also the conflict of companies selling childlike imagination while they must also efficiently operate in response to their shareholders. The ugliness, the pettiness, the weirdness, the secrecy are amazing, partially because they often succeed! It's these conflicts that drawn me to the work I do; it's these battles between individuals and groups that informs my consulting as well as my playwrighting. (And I have discovered in talking with friends who are employed at Disney, Lockheed, Universal, Darden Restaurants and other places that these are questions every one of us asks ourselves daily. Even small local theaters ask themselves these sorts of tough questions.)

None of us are supposed to think about any of this when we pop chocolates into our mouths. The companies fight long and hard to make sure we don't have to worry ourselves with their unique eccentricities and barbarisms. But I can promise you, after reading *The Emperors of Chocolate*, you'll never look at that next bite of candy the same.

Craftnut - says

Without a doubt the BEST non-fiction book I have ever read. The amount of detail and interesting storylines that are the history of chocolate, chocolate makers and the titans of Hershey and Mars are amazing. It reads so well, it is hard to put down! I learned so much about the industry and the process of making chocolate. For instance, did you know that chocolate has over 1200 compounds, and attempts to synthetically duplicate it have failed for decades? The family dynasties of Hershey and Mars started out as friends, with Hershey giving Mars the technology to make the candy coating for M&Ms. The 'M's stand for Mars, and the executive at Hershey named William Murrie. But later, they became such rivals that they tried to destroy each other. Secrecy abounds in this industry anyway, but paranoia is present too, so much so that parts of the manufacturing process are divided up, so no one person on the line knows how the whole candy is made. Read this fascinating book, and have some chocolate nearby, you'll want some!

Bruce says

I've got a backlog of reviews, alas, from a summer spent in academic pursuits. So this one will have to be a bit lame. I can't really improve on the comments made in *BusinessWeek*, so I won't.

I will add to them, however. First, to say that it is a shame that Ms. Brenner has not seen fit (or perhaps had opportunity?) to continue her website or keep the information she provided up-to-date. This book ping-pongs the reader delightfully through the entire history of the Mars and Hershey companies... up to 1999. It does so delightfully that it left me wanting an epilogue. What's happened in the last decade? Has Hershey made inroads on the international might of Philip Morris (Kraft Foods/Baker's), Cadbury, Nestle, and Mars? What of the Mars legacy? Have the Mars sons retired and if so, has Frank II come into his own? What's the present status of the Mars-Hershey US rivalry? Why does beer enjoy microbrew popularity these days, while chocolatiers increasingly seem dominated by megafoodcorps? I want to know!

Despite this journalistic void, I did not see the gaps in Brenner's work that *BusinessWeek* did, caught up as I was in the ever-surprising, always engaging narrative. Who knew that Milton Hershey built his confectionary success on caramels not chocolate? Or that Mars' recipes for Milky Ways, Snickers, and Three Musketeers,

each kept persnickety letter-perfect to recipe and design, nonetheless deliberately mix bits of defective product pulled from the line into the nougat to limit waste? Or that cocoa butter is nearly chemically unworkable for purposes of making soap (far too creamy and luscious)?

This review must stop. It's making my mouth water in a way that the chocolate-obsessed book itself did not.

Annie says

Many of my GR friends will know I have developed a penchant for reading nonfiction books about a niche topic. Here goes another!

It's pretty decent history of the two chocolate giants, Mars and Hershey, and an examination of the chocolate industry (from innovation, to marketing, to company culture, etc.). I saw a review that said this was the most engaging nonfic they'd ever read. That's definitely not true for me, but it was pretty interesting nonetheless.

A quick note: this book was written in 1999, so it's probably dated in some of its information.

That's all I really have to say about the book, so let's take a look at some interesting things contained herein.

-----MARS-----

>> The Mars Family. Repressed. Obsessive. Kind of sad. No joy in their work. Founded by Frank Mars, but expanded by Forrest Mars, Sr., who was a rotten human. All he cared about was expanding, expanding, expanding. Not because he wanted the money or because he loved the business. He just liked building an empire for the sake of building an empire. He shouted and swore at his employees, and was an abusive, belittling dad. I'm pretty sure his kids—Forrest, Jr., John, and Jackie (who now run the company)—have PTSD from him. The sons (who are CEOs; Jackie is just a VP because she's a woman) aren't much better. To quote an executive who quit because of them, "They are the seagull management team: they swoop down, shit, and fly away."

>> Frank Mars got into the candy business because, having contracted polio shortly after birth, he spent much of his childhood hanging out in his mother's kitchen instead of playing outside.

>> Ethel Mars, the widow of Frank Mars and heir to the company, had a Thoroughbred farm called Milky Way Farm and actually raised a Kentucky Derby winner, Gallahadion (1940). (I'm a horse racing fan and I did not know this).

>> Mars, Inc. asked the CIA for intelligence on chocolate imports in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1981. And they got it. However, they also have their own dedicated intelligence unit that keeps an eye on political events that might affect Mars sales (like the Persian Gulf War).

>> The Mars family is psychotically secretive. If Mars needs outside workers to fix something in a factory, they blindfold the workers and escort to the place in question; when they're done, they do the same on the way out. Furthermore, John Mars has not been photographed since college, and often wears disguises to meetings with outsiders.

-----HERSHEY-----

>> Unlike the Mars family, Milton Hershey was fun-loving, generous, enjoyed traveling, and was very in love with his wife. Wasn't interested in making money, but loved experimenting with candy to see what he could make.

>> When Milton Hershey asked someone's opinion about his dream of creating a utopia town with his fortune, they told him, "My opinion would be that your friends should go into court and have a guardian appointed for you."

>> Thanks to Milton Hershey's trust, the company funds the wealthiest orphanage of the world (it has literally billions of dollars).

-----MARS & HERSHLEY-----

>> Hershey is a publicly traded company. Mars is private and family-owned. This is directly reflected in company culture.

>> Absentee fathers are kind of a theme in Candyland. Frank Mars's wife divorced him when he couldn't feed her or their child, Forrest, and Forrest did not meet his father until he was an adult (they entered into business together shortly after).

Then Forrest moved to Britain and was so misery that his wife, tired of having no food or heat, left and took their first child (Forrest, Jr.) to her parents' home in the US.

On the other side, Milton Hershey's father was absent during his childhood, too. Though his parents were Mennonites and therefore didn't divorce, his mother hated his father's pipe dream-chasing (she wanted him to settle down and farm, like a good Mennonite) and kicked him out.

Tl;dr: Apparently, growing up without a dad makes you want to make candy.

>> M&M stands for "Mars" and "Murrie." R. Bruce Murrie and Forrest Mars (son of Frank Mars, the founder of Mars, and father of John, Forrest Jr., and Jackie, who run the business now) created the candy together in 1940. Murrie was, strangely enough, part of the Hershey company (and the son of Milton Hershey's best friend, William Murrie, president of Hershey). The candy was originally a collaboration between the two rivals (at the time they were actually business partners; Mars bought chocolate coating from Hershey's to make their products), but Mars edged the out of the deal and did the candy by themselves.

>> Mars is very much a global company (who hasn't heard a Brit rave about Mars bars?) with international appeal; the appeal of Hershey chocolate and its slightly sour taste is pure American (even our close neighbors, Canadians, reject it in favour of British brands like Cadbury and Mars).

-----CHOCOLATE-----

>> The British like their chocolate sweeter, while Americans like "the harsher, grittier flavor popularized by Hershey."

>> That unique taste that Hershey's chocolate has is a result of how they cook the milk—it's slightly soured. Known in the industry as "cheesy" chocolate, it's a purely American love.

>> Chocolate is one of nature's most complex flavors; unlike vanilla, apple, lemon, or strawberry, it can't be

synthesized despite decades and decades of research attempting to do just that.

>> chocolate contains a “dash of a cyanide-based chemical”

>> In 1662, catholic church decided drinking chocolate didn’t count as breaking a fast, since it was a medicine good for curing everything.

>> Chocolate contains anandamide, which is similar to THC; it helps arouse emotions and heighten bodily sensation. It’s probably responsible for people craving chocolate, or eating it when depressed. It also contains phenylethylamine, or PEA, which occurs naturally in the body when good things happen (like falling in love).

>> It also keeps dementors at bay. :)

Karen says

The intrigue behind the innocent wrapper of a Hershey's chocolate bar is surprising. This book describes the story of the long-standing Hershey and Mars competition, along with all of the attendant commercial spying. You'll definitely need a chocolate fix after reading this book.

Danielle says

Phew! Finally! I've been truckin' through this one for way too long now. I was really happy to see that the last 25 pages were notes and an index, so I was done sooner than I thought I'd be.

Okay, this wasn't a bad book, really, you just have to know what you're in for. I was expecting more "chocolate" and "secret" and less "world of Hershey and Mars." This book was primarily about the "chocolate wars" of these two large corporations. Any discussion about awesome things like candy bars, developing chocolate recipes, and eating chocolate was secondary to business strategy, management style and marketing. Some of this was interesting, but having it continually in the context of candy kept making me depressed that this book wasn't more about candy and less about business.

One thing I did like was the history of Forrest Mars, Sr. and Milton Hershey. They were both compelling men, and I especially liked learning about Hershey's benevolence and the way he developed the town of Hershey, P.A.

Still, the interesting parts of this book were too few to make the dry spells worth it. Also, (and I'm not saying this out of any bitterness at being deprived of a figurative chocolate fix) Brenner was a surprisingly bad writer. She is a former Washington Post reporter, yet her writing was bland and unimaginative. She followed all the writing conventions we were taught in journalism school, yet with none of the finesse that could raise her writing to art. Her descriptions continually fell flat. I think this was especially noticeable after reading Candy Freak where Almond's descriptions of candy bars (ones you'd likely never tasted, no less) left you with the feeling of melting chocolate on your tongue and the scent of roasted peanuts in the air. Not so with Brenner's descriptions; from people, to situations, to taste sensations, that left me not only feeling like I wasn't experiencing it myself, but even unsure whether the author herself ever had.

Oh, and the information was painfully dated. Operation Desert Storm was treated practically as a current event, and the book ended with an unresolved lawsuit in 1998. If it were more about the early history of these two companies, that would be fine, but it was much more about their current business strategy...which

is less compelling when "current" was 12-15 years ago.

Anyway, don't read this book for the chocolate, but if you're interested in the big business of candy companies (particularly in the 90s) you'll probably enjoy this.

Carol says

Read quite some time ago but remember liking this one.

Kim says

The Chocolate Tale – It's Gripping!

Spoiler Alert: There is none! Read this review, and you'll still be able to enjoy the book.

I started reading this incredible book by the magnificent Joel Glenn Brenner last year. I had to put it aside to do my annual Christmas book marathon (my annual adventure in reading all Christmas-related books I can get my hands on from Thanksgiving until New Years or later). My colleagues were so very glad I set it aside because each day I would report at work each and every new bit of information I learned the night before. They needed a break!

I finally caught up on my book group books, so I was able to pick it up again a week ago. My colleagues are relieved I've finally finished so the litany of daily facts is done. We can now get to work by Noon.

This was an amazing book! I don't know why it isn't required for all sales, marketing, manufacturing, and business classes in colleges nationwide. What a remarkable history! The Emperors of Chocolate are the Mars and Hershey companies. This book covers EVERYTHING from where chocolate comes from to how it becomes a candy bar, how the companies started in kitchens and are now worth billions each, family owned business vs. not, and how to create a marketing plan ... or not.

I was addicted to this book just as my brother, an orchard man, is addicted to all things apple trees or my sister a chef is hooked on all things baked. The thrill of learning how everything works in building a factory from the ground up to the battle to be the #1 chocolate company in the US of A. I couldn't have been more intrigued.

I highly recommend you read this! When I like various points or quotes from a book, I use a sticky note to write it down later. However, by the time I set this book aside for my Christmas reading journey, I had at least 30 markers! I called my local bookstores to buy it but I was very sad to find that it's out of print. I know! Who would let such a thing happen? I don't have a clue. I hope your local library has it, as mine did. I was able to purchase a few copies from Amazon.com and transfer my markers to my own copy. I gave a few away for Christmas as well. You could borrow mine, but don't mess with my sticky markers, and you might have to put down a deposit so that I'm assured to have it back.

Here's the kicker: I really don't even like chocolate much! Oh, sure, I enjoyed it as a child. Yet over the years, it has appealed to me less and less, especially chocolate candy. Absolutely no dark chocolate, I find it bitter (unless it's accompanied by mint, then it's ALL good). Now chocolate cake, pudding, or cookies is a

whole other matter – those I enjoy. I’m turning into my brother and a cousin Vicky who find most chocolate icky. No matter, this book remains top on my list and it will for years to come! Come, join me in being a fan of this remarkable tale!

Michael Gerald says

I am not a fan of chocolate, but this is a fascinating and revealing book about two of the most popular brands of chocolate for the mass market, Hershey's and Mars. Here is the story of how a bitter fruit from the Americas became the sweet and energy-rich food and treat that the world loves and how the popular Hershey and Mars products were created.

Sue Anne says

I have spoken about the crazy stories contained within this brilliant book, with anyone who would listen, every single day since I picked it up. So totally fascinating.

Meredith says

I'll never look at chocolate the same way again. And I want a candybar.

John says

This history of the chocolate business in the United States is a page-turner, setting up an emerging rivalry of former collaborators as they each quest to dominate the candy industry. This book does a great job of setting up cliff-hangers, establishing narrative arcs and teasers that keep one pacing forward when the book needs to fill in backstory and establish context.

Milton Hershey and Forrest Mars Sr. are very compelling characters, and very different people. Hershey, the hands-off tinkerer who's first to the American chocolate market, is a stand-up guy who builds worker utopias with orphanages. Mars, who beats his wayward candy-making father at his own game with a candy suitable to "melt in your mouth, not in your hand", is a domineering control freak who builds perk-free work-spaces dedicated to cleanliness and quality. Both companies struggle with the long shadow of their founders but find a way to continue their legacies with neck-to-neck market dominance.

Overall, I found this book to be a quick and entertaining read, but also gave me some context into how consolidated the candy industry actually is. I feel like a more informed candy consumer as a result.

This book review is dedicated to my friend Patrick M. on his birthday.

Tifani says

I loved this book! The history of the two companies is facinating, and is well told by the author. She did a great job of making the history readable and interesting. Highly recommended. However, be sure to stock up on chocolate because you will crave it.
