



Victorian Pharmacy: Rediscovering Home Remedies and Recipes

Jane Eastoe , Ruth Goodman (Foreword)

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Providing hints, tips, recipes, and historical background, this book explains how many traditional remedies are still in use and how to make them at home

Here is the story of consumer medicine—how drugstore healthcare emerged in just 50 years and how consumers still rely on hundreds of formulations and products that can trace their origins back to the 19th century. Sun cream; treatments for insomnia, dandruff, or warts; perfumes; and soaps are all as important today as they were 100 years ago and are stocked by the local pharmacist. This book takes a look at which products were on offer, whether they were effective, and how they are used today, showing that while the names of products on the pharmacy shelf have changed over time, consumers' hopes and aspirations remain much the same as their Victorian predecessors. This is also the story of the growth of the drugstore, and how families have come to rely upon them as dispensaries of healthcare.

Victorian Pharmacy: Rediscovering Home Remedies and Recipes Details

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From Reader Review Victorian Pharmacy: Rediscovering Home Remedies and Recipes for online ebook

P.D.R. Lindsay says

For writers this is a wonderful reference book to give the correct details about what your Victorian characters would use.

For experimenters there are recipes to try - with care and due warnings!

For general readers there are a lot of interesting nuggets about people and their needs which might well raise a giggle or two as readers imagine their great great grandparents using some of these preparations.

The book is well written, nice and clear, an easy and pleasant read.

Ewa says

An interesting look at Victorian medicine.
I wouldn't have wanted to be sick in those times...

Wayne Farmer says

Excellent book detailing the history of the Pharmacy. Being a genealogist its interesting to read about the weird and wonderful so-called cures that were sold and probably bought by my ancestors, a lot of which seem likely to have caused more harm than good - I'm surprised any one survived to bring me into the world. Also interesting to read about those cures that actually worked and how certain famous brands came into being. Well worth a read by any one with an interest in the Victorian way of life.

Laura Lam says

The BBC has a series about Victorian Pharmacies, which I have not watched. Evidently they have one on farming as well. This book gives a general overview of pharmacies in the Victorian era, from drastically unregulated dispensing of drugs and poison, the rise of the pharmacy enterprises, like Boots, and how it transformed and became more regulated and based on science rather than folkloric nostrums.

Lana Glover says

Such an interesting read. I loved reading about the medicine practices during this time. I also loved that the book contained recipes for remedies for everyday ailments.

Jessica says

This was suprisingly my favourite of the series. So many recipes and things to try out! I think I will try to make my own perfume first!

Anke Bialas says

Loved the series, now I love the book. The history behind treatments and changes of medical beliefs over time, allow for a fascinating insight into our medical past.

Mickie says

Although this topic is fascinating, I think the book was confusingly organized (the story of the Boots department chain founder is interrupted with information and then the story of Boots starts back up) and frustratingly incomplete in parts.

For example, one illustration shows cupping as a treatment, but I didn't read anything about this treatment in the text. In another illustration, the gentleman in the photo is clearly wearing a wristwatch.

Often the recipes in the text and the sidebar didn't go together or make any sense juxtaposed in such a way.

It pains me to be critical, I love the history shows that BBC does, but this book feels rushed and poorly edited.

Helen says

Interesting and informative accompaniment to the television series of the same name, which I enjoyed enormously. If only I could get my hands on some controlled substances I could brew up some very useful concoctions! On the other hand, it's probably best I'm not allowed to play with arsenic, which was an ingredient in a surprising array of Victorian 'treatments'. There are, however, some safe alternative recipes you can try yourself at home.

As well as the medicines you would expect, the Victorian pharmacist also endeavored to provide cleaning products, pesticides, beauty treatments, contraceptives (primarily for the benefit of the Victorian 'gent'), curatives for animals, sweets, fizzy drinks and even fireworks. So many of the everyday products we now take for granted started life in the Victorian pharmacy.

I was also reminded of how grateful I am for modern medicine and dentistry, though some things perhaps haven't changed so much - there were lotions to 'treat' the unpardonable blemish that is freckles - today ladies who have the red-head gene are merely encouraged to spend money on concealing them, which I am quite happily far too lazy to do!

Deirdre says

An interesting look at the history of Pharmacies and how they came into their own in the Victorian era. One of the major players is Boots and this books talks about the development of the chain from humble beginnings.

It's not a deep book and most of the recipes in it are clearly marked with a skull and crossbones, today they would be considered to be way too dangerous to even try. I must admit there were a few where I played a game of spot the dangerous chemical (who knew having a background in chemistry could make you smile!)

This is a companion to the TV series, which I've seen a few episodes of, and as a companion it's good. As well as the dangerous recipes it also has some more usable sidebarred recipes. Everything from curry powder to hand cream.

As a starting point on looking at earlier medicine it's good, there's a pretty extensive bibliography in the back. Who knew that Boots had a subscription library until 1966?

Ellis Spicer says

Such an interesting read but not too heavy, loved it!

John Frankham says

A pleasant enough book to go with a television series. But over-produced for the content - thick paper, lots of photographs from the series, but the information is 'popular' rather than thorough. So, 2*.

Icy Sedgwick says

Fascinating book that explores the role of the druggist in Victorian society. The book accompanies a BBC series but it's an easy and informative read even if you haven't seen it. Discussions around disease, public health, medical advances and poisons are interspersed with recipes and photos from the series. The toxic recipes are marked with a skull and crossbones, although the rarity or illegality of the ingredients would make them difficult to concoct, while some of the other remedies sound remarkably familiar (e.g. dill water). The grammar occasionally leaves a bit to be desired and it could have used a last copyedit before publication but this a minor niggle for an otherwise interesting book.

Andrew says

Ok this is tricky one - the book states it is to accompany a BBC tv series which I followed and really enjoyed - you never really get to appreciate what they did what they had and what they achieved. BUT the book only really makes glancing references to the shows in the forms of images taken from the set. The book really is a basic history of Victorian pharmacies and they culture and social times that shaped both the shops and people

around them - its more of a companion book of further reading and references than anything else (hence the less than favourable rating).

BUT that is not to say that there is a lot of interesting details in the book and certainly encourages a lot of further reading - to me it made references to a lot of things I had heard of or read about but didn't connect to the "bigger picture" - so an enjoyable read just not what i was expecting.

Caitlin says

A lot of interesting content, but lots of weird 2-page spreads of photographs of modern day people in victorian garb posing as if for a stock photo???. The design is generally nice, just, wh...y. Would also have liked some more info on the recipes which are given as useable (read: nonpoisonous) -- are they effective at all, if so why, etc. This is more of a historical book than a scientific one.
