

# Sugar Coated

HOW THE FOOD INDUSTRY SEDUCED THE WORLD ONE SPOONFUL AT A TIME



## Media Kit

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## LOG LINE & SYNOPSIS

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### LOG LINE

How the food industry sugar-coated science, sweetened the food supply, and seduced a planet, one spoonful at a time.

### SHORT SYNOPSIS

How did the food industry get us to stop asking the question: is sugar toxic? It all starts with a secret PR campaign dating back to the 1970s. For forty years, Big Sugar deflected all threats to its multi-billion dollar empire, while sweetening the world's food supply. As obesity, diabetes, and heart disease rates skyrocket, doctors are now treating the first generation of children suffering from fatty liver disease. The sugar industry is once again under siege. They dodged the bullet once. Will they do it again?

### FULL SYNOPSIS

How did the food industry get us to stop asking the question: is sugar toxic? It all starts with a secret PR campaign dating back to the 1970s. For forty years, Big Sugar deflected all threats to its multi-billion dollar empire, while sweetening the world's food supply. As obesity, diabetes, and heart disease rates skyrocket, doctors are now treating the first generation of children suffering from fatty liver disease. The sugar industry is once again under siege. They dodged the bullet once. Will they do it again?

Today, industry is deploying its old tactics and pulling out the old adage "we just eat too damn much." This time consumers aren't buying it. The critics have gotten smarter, bolder, and madder and science is catching up.

Pediatric endocrinologist, Dr. Robert Lustig thinks we've all been 'frucked' by industry. He's evangelical, blaming sugar for a waiting room filled with obese kids with fatty livers. His flock of five million online followers grows daily. In the court of public opinion, he's part of a leading group of experts who are putting sugar on trial.

But Japan's not waiting for the verdict. For the first time in history, their children are burdened with lifestyle diseases that their parents never faced. To counter a health crisis that could sink their economy,



## SYNOPSIS CONT'D

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Japan's introduced a radical new law that takes aim at another 'bottom line': the girth of the nation's waistlines.

Pulling back the curtain on the sugar-coated tactics of an industry once again under attack, **Sugar Coated** provides a chilling feeling of déjà vu. Today the industry is back sweetening the message. But this time, history comes knocking.

When the doors closed at the Great Western Sugar Company in Colorado in 1976, someone forgot to sweep the floor. Gathering dust in the archives were 1500 pages of internal documents exposing how the sugar industry used tobacco-style tactics to dismiss troubling health claims against their products. Denver dentist turned postdoctoral scholar at the UCSF School of Medicine, Cristin Kearns, knew she'd stumbled on something big: the industry's secret playbook. Her mentor, Stan Glantz, the superstar professor from San Francisco who brought down Big Tobacco warns, it's going to get dirty.

While industry and science duke it out, are we sitting on a dietary time bomb?



## SUGAR FACT SHEET

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- In the past 30 years, obesity rates have doubled to 600 million. Diabetes rates have tripled to 347 million worldwide.
- The world daily consumption of sugar has increased by 46% in the last 30 years.
- In Canada, teenagers consume between 30 to 41 teaspoons of total sugars per day.
- WHO guidelines suggest to lower daily sugar intake to only 6 teaspoons
- Added sugar is hiding in 74% of packaged foods.
- Compared to people consuming less than one glass of soda per month, those consuming at least one glass of soda everyday show a 29% higher risk of developing diabetes, irrespective of the total calorie intake, weight, or diet.
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease was not described until 1980.



## NOTE FROM DIRECTOR MICHÈLE HOZER

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There is a moment in this film that is decidedly unscientific. But it's just so true. If you're a parent, as I am, you'll get it immediately. Gary Taubes, a very measured, methodical science writer who becomes our unofficial 'tour guide,' uncharacteristically veers off script to make a personal observation.

"When you have children, it seems like the world would be a much simpler place without sugar in it. Then I wonder if they would be much more...stable, if their mood swings would be much less volatile if they weren't consuming sugar."

I can relate. I would come home from work and see my son stretched out on the couch, groaning about how bad he felt. I'd ask him what he'd eaten. "A huge bowl of cereal and don't ask me which kind!! Please Mom," he'd say, "Can you make me some broccoli?"

I was born across from a chocolate factory in Belgium. I was too young to remember this myself, but my mom tells me you could smell the aroma of chocolate from morning to night on the street. Talk about a kid's paradise! I was addicted to those famous chocolates with the elephant stamps on them that even today, are a classic icon of the Belgian diet. But as we all know, too much of a good thing comes at a price. Today, obesity and diabetes rates are at unprecedented levels around the world. Something's going on. Can it really be sugar? As a filmmaker, I knew this was a story worth following.

I've been a career dieter all my life. I think most women are. I'm also a jogger. I count calories. But who knew that all calories are not created equal? I didn't. Not until I actually dug into the research for *Sugar Coated*.

It was only when our team uncovered two vintage documentaries that I had a personal epiphany. We've been through this whole debate before. Scientists knew, over forty years ago, that sugar contributed to heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. People were actually fighting to put tobacco-like warning labels on sugary foods. And then, somehow, the debate just faded away. Why? What happened? Do we all have collective amnesia? Then, the discovery by Dr. Cristin Kearns of the sugar industry documents from a defunct sugar factory convinced me: there is a much larger story to be told.

Almost everything we eat these days contains sugar, in one form or another. It's disguised with many, many different names. We are talking about an international, multi-billion dollar industry



## NOTE FROM DIRECTOR MICHÈLE HOZER

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that has refined a lot more than sugar. It's refined its messaging and its 'pitch' to the public, one spoonful at a time. In the end, I hope this film is an antidote.

Will there be change? I think back to a [YouTube video](#) I came across in which a tobacco executive states that some pregnant smokers would prefer to have smaller babies anyway. We laugh about that now. It's so outrageous. But that was only a few decades ago. Right now, we may be witnessing the beginning of real transformative change in the way we see sugar and the processed food industry. If that's so, you can thank the cast of characters in *Sugar Coated*.

If nothing else, through all this, somehow I've been the Mother Confessor for all my sugar-addicted friends. We all have guilty pleasures. I still long for those Belgian chocolate bites. But I've trained myself to walk away from the glass counter. I'm happy just to savour the aroma, just like I did on the streets of Brussels.



## THE SUGAR TRACKER APP

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Do we really know how much sugar we are actually eating? What about our kids? That's because sugar in all its various forms is in 74% of the foods we eat and we've never had a good tool to add it all up.

The producers of Sugar Coated are developing a sugar tracker app to answer the questions – How much sugar is too much? And, what does all that sugar look like? With our free iOS sugar tracker application for mobile phones and tablets, we will build sugar literacy and awareness that will make waves in the sugar conversation and nutrition policy. The app will help us find the sugar in our foods and add it up.

Sugar's role in our diet is a hot topic that's only getting hotter. Health Canada is currently deliberating how to improve the sugar information on the Nutrition Facts Table. The concern isn't about the sugar in a whole apple or a glass of milk - it's the sugar added by food processing as well as in fruit juices, concentrates and purees where the sugar in our diets is really piling up.

Keeping our sugar intake to between 5% and 10% of total daily calories is what the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) guidelines](#) on sugar consumption now recommend. Our app users will see how their diet measures up to these guidelines, which are geared to helping us maintain optimal health.

The app, available in English and French, will be fun and easy to use with shareable results that motivate users to stay within WHO guidelines. Our database will start with a core number of products available in the Canadian marketplace and grow with user interaction. Nutrition experts and the public will be invited to contribute additional food products to expand the database and keep it current.

With a clear definition of “[free sugar](#)”, daily recommendations and unique database, the app will be a crucial resource in filling a knowledge gap and inspiring change.

The sugar tracker iOS app is being created in consultation with nutritional health experts and developed by Plank Multimedia Inc., and is produced with the participation of TELUS Fund and TVO, in association with the Canada Media Fund. The app will be introduced at Hot Docs on April 25, 2015.



## THE EXPERTS

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### **GARY TAUBES | AWARD-WINNING WRITER ON NUTRITION AND MEDICINE**

*“The fundamental life blood of the (sugar) industry is holding on to the fact that there’s no definitive evidence sugar is a death dealing disease. So as long as they can hold onto that, as long as they can keep the evidence ambiguous, they get to stay alive. If the evidence gets definitive, they’re done.” - Gary Taubes*

**Gary Taubes** had a big hand in reigniting the sugar debate through his controversial 2011 New York Times article **“Is Sugar Toxic?”**. Since, he has co-founded **NuSi**, a not-for-profit organization to pursue serious scientific research into the health effects of sugar.

Taubes is a US-based, award-winning and *New York Times* best-selling science writer. He is the author of *Why We Get Fat* (2011), *Good Calories, Bad Calories* (2007), *Bad Science: The Short Life and Weird Times of Cold Fusion* (1993), and *Nobel Dreams* (1987).



### **DR. CRISTIN KEARNS | UNCOVERED SUGAR INDUSTRY’S SECRET PLAYBOOK**

*“Late sixties, early seventies, lots of controversy going on about the health effects of eating sugar, and it’s so similar to today...The same debates, the same questions, even the same research is...being repeated, and discussed.*

*History is repeating itself, absolutely. We’ve been through this before. Unless we truly understand the industry practices, this debate will continue to go on.” - Cristin Kearns*

**Cristin E. Kearns, DDS, MBA**, saw the effects of sugar on oral health at the Denver Inner City Health Center and knew she had to do something about the growing healthcare epidemic. She gave up her day job, spent two years conducting research and stumbled on the sugar industry’s secret playbook in the archives of Colorado State University. Her discovery landed her the posting of Postdoctoral Fellow at the School of Medicine at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) where she continues her research today.

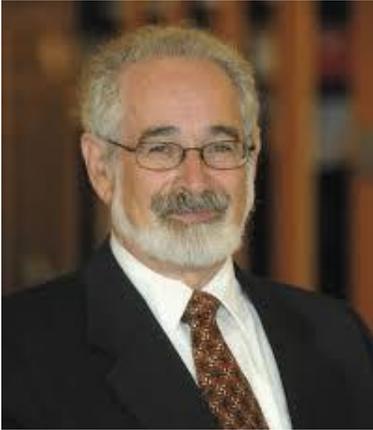
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Margaret Sirotych, Publicist, [msirotych@sympatico.ca](mailto:msirotych@sympatico.ca), 647.466.1746



## THE EXPERTS CONT'D

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### **STANTON GLANTZ | SUPERSTAR PROFESSOR WHO BROUGHT DOWN THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY AND MENTOR TO DR. KEARNS**

*“Where we are in the sugar debate is where the tobacco debate was in about 1960...the tobacco documents, and the sugar documents [Dr. Kearns] found show that they're all using the same playbook...In addition to really giving us a clear view of the strategies, it just shows how cynical and manipulative they are.”*

- Stanton Glantz

**Stanton Glantz, PhD**, is the American Legacy Foundation Distinguished Professor of Tobacco Control and Professor at the School of Medicine at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). His research focuses on a wide range of topics ranging from the health effects of secondhand smoke to the efficacy of different tobacco control policies. Often called the "Ralph Nader of the anti-tobacco movement," Dr. Glantz is an activist for nonsmokers' rights and an advocate of public health policies to reduce smoking.



### **DR. ROBERT LUSTIG | CHILDHOOD OBESITY EXPERT**

*“The thing that makes sugar so egregious is not its effect on weight, but its effect on chronic metabolic disease. It's the hypertension, the diabetes, the heart disease, and likely, the cancer and the dementia. Thirteen percent of normal weight children, and thirty-percent of obese children now have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. This is a disease that wasn't even described until 1980. It is the biggest epidemic in the history of the world.”* - Robert Lustig

**Robert H. Lustig, MD**, is a pediatric endocrinologist and believes that sugar is the fundamental problem in the modern diet. His controversial YouTube video, “**Sugar – The Bitter Truth**” (2009) went viral and had a big hand in reinvigorating the current sugar debate. The video continues to be popular today with over five million hits and growing. Dr. Lustig is a Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Endocrinology at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), Director of the Weight Assessment for Teen and Child Health (WATCH) Program at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and Board President at the Institute for Responsible Nutrition (IRN).



## THE EXPERTS CONT'D

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### DR. YONI FREEDHOFF | CANADIAN OBESITY EXPERT

*“There is no way we will be able to sustain our current level of health care with the growing burden of diet and weight related illnesses, especially Type 2 Diabetes...the cost is already staggering, and we're just at the tip of our iceberg.”*

- Dr. Yoni Freedhoff

**Dr. Yoni Freedhoff MD, CCFP**, has been referred to as Canada's most outspoken obesity expert and the Canadian Medical Association Journal once dubbed him a Canadian "nutritional watchdog".

Like Dr. Lustig, this charismatic physician found his biggest audience on YouTube, after getting unceremoniously dumped from the agenda of a breakfast conference on obesity sponsored by Big Food. The cancelled talk “**What a Food Industry Should Do**” got 250,000 hits after being posted on YouTube. Today, he has over 22,000 Twitter followers and his popular blog **Weighty Matters** has had over 10 million visitors.

Dr. Freedhoff is the Medical Director at the Bariatric Medical Institute and author of *The Diet Fix: Why Diets Fail and How to Make Yours Work*.



## THE CREATIVE TEAM

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### MICHÈLE HOZER | FILMMAKER, DIRECTOR, EDITOR, PRODUCER

*Sugar poison: Chocolate*

With two films on the Oscar shortlist, Emmy-nominated and Gemini-winning Michèle Hozer has been working as a filmmaker and editor in Canada since 1987. To date, she has worked on more than 50 documentaries. Her work has received accolades from the most prestigious film festivals in the world, including the Sundance Film Festival and the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam.

*Shake Hands with The Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* won both the 2007 Emmy for Best Documentary and the Audience Award at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival.

*Promise to the Dead* picked up her first International Emmy nomination as an editor. But her directorial debut with *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* won the coveted spot on the Academy Award short list as well as a Gemini for Best Biography. Since its premiere at TIFF in 2009, the feature length documentary has been seen by audiences in Britain, Australia, Japan, and across North America.

In 2012, The Director's Guild of Canada (DGC) awarded The Allan King Award for Excellence in Documentary to Michèle and team for *West Wind: The Vision of Tom Thomson*. At the same time, she picked up both the Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival Editing Award and top honours from her peers at Canadian Cinema Editors.

Michèle just completed her first solo feature length documentary in the combined roles of director, editor, and producer for *Sugar Coated* probing the role of sugar in a global healthcare epidemic. The film, in association with TVO and ZDF/ARTE, will reach international audiences in 2015.



## THE CREATIVE TEAM CONT'D

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### JANICE DAWE | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

*Sugar poison: Ice cream*

Janice Dawe has built a reputation as a trusted producer who provides business guidance and support to creative-minded filmmakers. She has 25-years of hands-on expertise producing documentaries, dramas and digital media projects for broadcast and distribution around the world.

Janice's Executive Producer credits include the award-winning *Fight Like Soldiers*, *Die Like Children* exploring the dilemma of child soldiers, and *The Experimental Eskimos*, which chronicles a Canadian social experiment gone wrong. She also pioneered digital media documentary storytelling with the Gemini-nominated *City Sonic* mobile application released just as the iPhone 3 came to market. As head of production at White Pine Pictures, Janice oversaw such Oscar shortlisted documentaries as *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* and *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman*.

Janice began working with Michèle Hozer on *Sugar Coated* in late 2012 when TVOntario expressed interest in the documentary. She worked closely with Michèle and Associate Producer, Nathalie Bibeau, to finance and create an important and definitive documentary, as well as an exciting iPhone app that will contribute to building Canada's first "free sugar" database.

## THE CUTTING FACTORY

The Cutting Factory is a Toronto-based production company specializing in the art of documentary storytelling. The company was founded in 2001 by Emmy-nominated and Gemini Award-winning filmmaker and editor Michèle Hozer, whose documentaries on social issues, history and art have screened theatrically around the world and at numerous international film festivals such as Sundance, IDFA, TIFF and HOT DOCS. Award-winning projects include *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* (shortlisted for the Academy Awards), *West Wind: The Vision of Tom Thomson*, *Shake Hands with The Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* and others. For more information, [www.thecuttingfactory.com](http://www.thecuttingfactory.com).



## THE DISTRIBUTORS

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### **Distributor International:**

Jan Rofekamp  
Films Transit International Inc.  
21 Place Epernay  
Ville Lorraine Quebec.  
Canada J6Z 4K9  
Phone 514.844 3358  
E: [janrofekamp@filmstransit.com](mailto:janrofekamp@filmstransit.com)

### **Distributor Theatrical Canada:**

Steve Ord  
White Pine Pictures  
822 Richmond Street West, Suite 301  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1C9  
Phone: 416.703.5580  
E: [sord@whitepinepictures.com](mailto:sord@whitepinepictures.com)



## CREDITS

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Director, Producer, Editor.....Michèle Hozer  
Executive Producers.....Michèle Hozer and Janice Dawe  
Executive Producer, TVO.....Jane Jankovic (TVO)  
Co-Executive Producer.....Jan Rofekamp  
Associate Producer.....Nathalie Bibeau  
Director of Photography.....Neville Ottey  
Composer.....Russell Walker  
Writer.....Roxana Spicer

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