



## SUGAR

# Not Just Rice & Peas

Celebrating Windrush in Devon



### Sugar's Origin

Sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) is a highly productive tropical perennial grass native to Asia. It originated in New Guinea where it has been cultivated for over 4,000 years, and it is believed the process for manufacturing sugar from sugarcane was developed in India.

### How it arrived in the Caribbean

In 1493, Christopher Columbus sailed from the Canary Islands, introducing sugarcane to the New World. The first sugar mills began operating in 1506 on the island of Hispaniola, now Dominican Republic and Haiti.

In the 1640s, English planters began growing sugarcane in Barbados, using convicts from the British Isles and enslaved Africans. Sugar agriculture was very profitable, meeting demand for sugar in Europe; in fact sugar was the leading commodity imported into Britain at the time. Sugar plantations were built throughout the Caribbean islands and sugarcane cultivation became an important activity after the British took control of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the island became the major producer and leading exporter of sugar in the world. The sugar industry grew so rapidly that the 57 sugar estates on the island of Jamaica in 1673 had grown to nearly 430 by 1739.

### How it's cooked and prepared



Sugarcane is cut and harvested then sent to the factory to be crushed to extract the juice. It is purified by heat and filtered, followed by a series of

crystallisation processes to create golden crystals of raw sugar. This raw sugar is then transported to the refinery to be transformed into the various sugars we know and love.



### Interesting facts

Sugarcane plants are 2-6 metres tall with stout, jointed, fibrous stalks that are rich in sucrose, which accumulates in the stalk internodes. They are native to the warm temperate and tropical regions of India, Southeast Asia, and New Guinea. The plant is also grown for biofuel production, especially in Brazil, as the canes can be used directly to produce ethyl alcohol.

Though brown and white sugars are identical in terms of chemical composition, brown sugar is a healthier option than refined white sugar. It is processed in a completely natural way to maintain as much of the sugarcane's natural nutrition as possible, including vitamins and minerals.