

1. Record Nr.	UNISA996466703203316
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Titolo	Extreme States of Matter in Strong Interaction Physics [[electronic resource]] : An Introduction / / by Helmut Satz
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Berlin, Heidelberg : , : Springer Berlin Heidelberg : , : Imprint : Springer, , 2012
ISBN	3-642-23908-0
Edizione	[1st ed. 2012.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (XIII, 239 p. 116 illus., 20 illus. in color.)
Collana	Lecture Notes in Physics, , 0075-8450 ; ; 841
Disciplina	539.7548
Soggetti	Nuclear physics Heavy ions Elementary particles (Physics) Quantum field theory Statistical physics Dynamical systems Astrophysics Nuclear Physics, Heavy Ions, Hadrons Elementary Particles, Quantum Field Theory Complex Systems Astrophysics and Astroparticles Statistical Physics and Dynamical Systems
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	The Analysis of Dense Matter -- The Physics of Complex Systems -- The Limits of Hadron Physics -- From Hadrons to Quarks -- Statistical Quantum Chromodynamics -- Broken Symmetries -- The QCD Phase Diagram -- The Quark-Gluon Plasma -- The Little Bang -- Probing the Quark-Gluon Plasma -- The Fireball Paradigm -- The Event Horizon of Color Confinement -- Outlook.
Sommario/riassunto	The thermodynamics of strongly interacting matter has become a profound and challenging area of modern physics, both in theory and in experiment. Statistical quantum chromodynamics, through analytical as well as numerical studies, provides the main theoretical tool, while in

experiment, high-energy nuclear collisions are the key for extensive laboratory investigations. The field therefore straddles statistical, particle and nuclear physics, both conceptually and in the methods of investigation used. This course-tested primer addresses above all the many young scientists starting their scientific research in this field, providing them with a general, self-contained introduction that emphasizes in particular the basic concepts and ideas, with the aim of explaining why we do what we do. To achieve this goal, the present text concentrates mainly on equilibrium thermodynamics: first, the fundamental ideas of strong interaction thermodynamics are introduced and then the main concepts and methods used in the study of the physics of complex systems are summarized. Subsequently, simplified phenomenological pictures, leading to critical behavior in hadronic matter and to hadron-quark phase transitions are introduced, followed by elements of finite-temperature lattice QCD leading to the important results obtained in computer simulation studies of the lattice approach. Next, the relation of the resulting critical behavior to symmetry breaking/restoration in QCD is clarified before the text turns to the study of the QCD phase diagram. The presentation of bulk equilibrium thermodynamics is completed by studying the properties of the quark-gluon plasma as new state of strongly interacting matter. The final chapters of the book are devoted to more specific topics which arise when nuclear collisions are considered as a tool for the experimental study of QCD thermodynamics.
