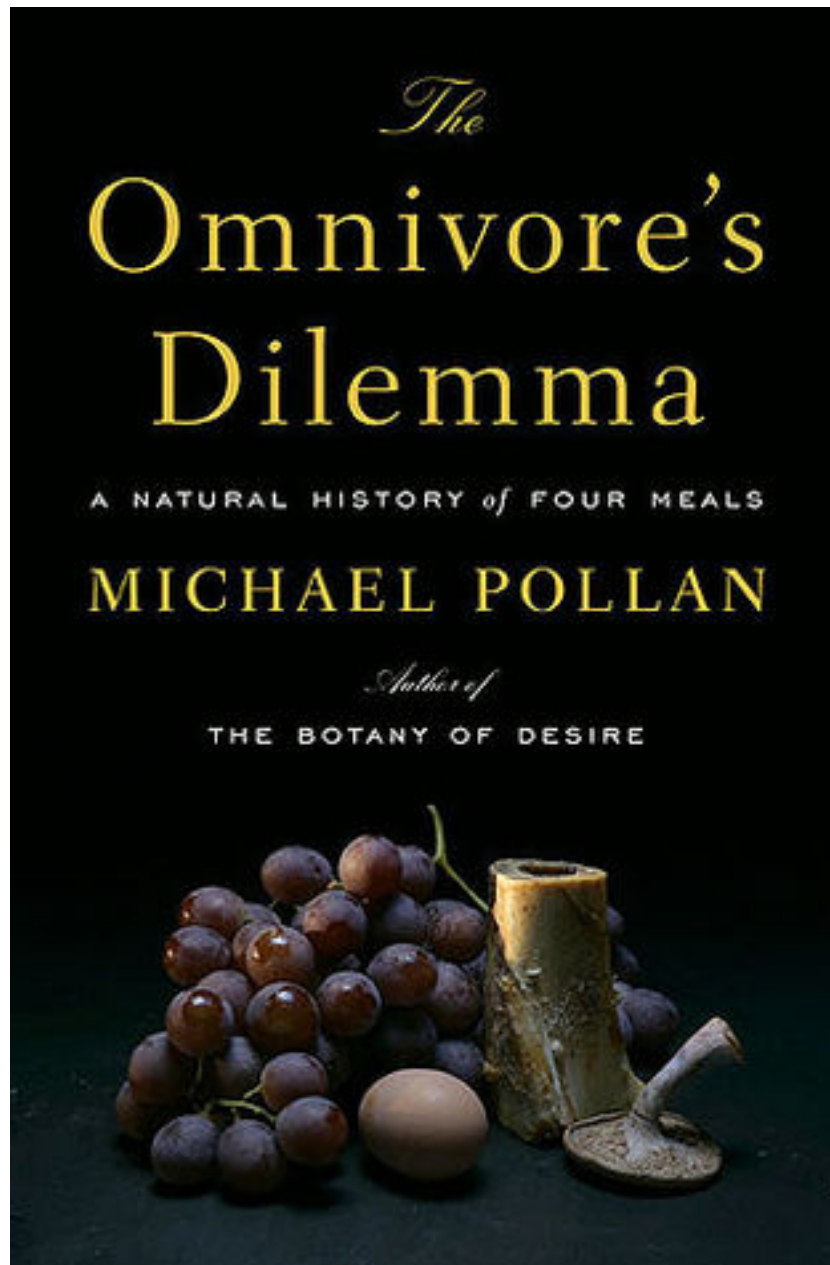


The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals Book PDF Download



By:
Michael Pollan

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What people Say:

Anita

Michael Pollan is a journalist, and an omnivore, curious about where the food he puts in his mouth comes from. In the book he follows four meals from the very beginning of the food chain to his plate. What he finds is that the food we put in our mouths turns out to be a big decision- a moral, political, and environmental one.

Part One- CORN

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Part One- CORN

The discussion begins with CORN. Part one of this book is shocking. I knew corn was the main crop grown in America and that farmers growing it are in big trouble, requiring government subsidies just to stay afloat, but Michael Pollan unravels how it got to that point.

After leaving the farm, most of the corn finds its way to the Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) where it is fed to cows, pigs, chicken, turkey, and now even fish. This is problematic due to the fact that cows aren't built to eat corn. They eat grass. This unnatural diet leads to various health problems for the cow that must be countered with a cocktail of antibiotics and hormones, creating more health problems for us.

He follows the corn from the field to the supermarket, where it now infiltrates virtually every processed food on the shelf. I had no idea that corn is broken down and recombined into hundreds of different forms, most notably oils, high fructose corn syrup, and xanthan gum (never knew what the hell that was). Just take a look at the food label of any processed food and your probably eating some scientific form of that kernel of corn.

He followed the corn all the way to his meal at McDonald's. Between Pollan, his wife, and his son they packed in 4,510 calories for lunch. The items that contained the highest proportion of corn turned out to be the soda (100%), milk shake (78%), salad dressing (65%), chicken nuggets (56%), cheeseburger (52%), and french fries (23%). And we thought we were eating such a varied diet. As Pollan points out, we are simply industrialized eaters surviving on corn.

Part 2- GRASS

Lisa Vegan

I was resistant to reading this book because I'm not an omnivore, and also I thought that Pollan's book *The Botany of Desire* was brilliant and I suspected I would not feel as fond of this one, which is certainly true. He does write well, but I didn't find that this book had the eloquence or elegance of the other.

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The sub-title of this book could read: *It's Really Ok To Eat Dead Animals, Really It Is*. Which I realize for most people it is. But eating flesh foods and other foods made from animals such as dairy and eggs is simply what the vast majority of this book's readers and the population as a whole do; it's not an unique argument.

But, I loved the fungi chapter and the corn section. The chapter on mushrooms I'm sure I enjoyed so much because a close friend of mine has told stories of her rural Indiana upbringing and of the very small morel patch they have on their property. So it was really fun for me to read about the foraging/hunting of the mushrooms, including local morels. (The author lives about 30 minutes drive from me and I recognized many of the locations in the book.) The corn section (about the deliberate infusion of corn products into just about every processed food) made me determined to cut way down on the processed foods that I often eat: the one real way this book changed me, not an insignificant one.

A good part of this (apparently beloved) book seemed to me to be the author's belabored argument that it's perfectly fine to eat animals. His treatise looked like his attempt to avoid cognitive dissonance (his term although I was already thinking of it like that) so that he could continue to eat in peace as an omnivore, along with about 97% of the U.S. population; being omnivorous is the dominant paradigm. Anyway, his waxing poetic over the glories of killing and eating animals did not sway me. It's interesting that Pollan continually rebuts his own arguments, but I wasn't convinced his questioning was as honest as he wanted it to appear, as it seemed to me he already knew the answers he wanted to arrive at about being omnivorous. And I

wouldn't be surprised if he would agree with me about that.

Some of his facts and figures were off. When he talks about tens of millions of animals killed for food in the U.S. for instance; actually, the latest figures I've read are 11 billion every year, not including fish. Even the call to eat locally, which I usually subscribe to, is not to be so simplified. One contradictory example I can think of (this issue is not addressed in the book) is the consuming of products (chocolate, coffee, dried fruit, nuts) from the distant rainforest, which, in my opinion, is much preferable to continuing to cut down rainforest trees, and which the natives will allow if they can make their living from the rainforest in other ways.

I know my philosophy is shared by a relative few, but the fast food meals, the description which was intended to highlight the large amounts of corn products in all the foods, while I found that surprising and unfortunate, it was the cow and chicken parts of the meal that disturbed me the most. And, as far as the Polyface Farm, I truly wonder what they could do 100% plant products grown.

Ryan

I liked Michael Pollan's

so much that I searched goodreads reviews for reasons not to like it.

Let me explain.

Whenever a really influential book like this comes out, there's a pretty reliable pattern that follows. There's the newspaper "toast of the town" effect, followed by bland and ubiquitous morning TV interviews, and, if you're lucky, an innocuous appearance on Oprah, probably followed by a massive boost in sales. However, there is usually a fairly large group of people

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interviews, and, if you're lucky, an innocuous appearance on Oprah, probably followed by a massive boost in sales. However, there is usually a fairly large group of people absolutely pissed off by the book (or film) because it simplifies or overlooks some crucial matter or matters.

I'm aware that Pollan made it all the way to Oprah, and I didn't want to be what some call an "Oprah sheep," but I just couldn't hate

no matter how hard I tried.

Tien

This is a really good book that gets only two stars because it gets annoying. He starts by taking a fascinating look at corn and our very odd decision to be continually dependent on it. And then he walks through Whole Foods and dissects its philosophy and discovers that, surprise, the foods there aren't as organic and local as they advertise. (But he still shops there, of course. It's still Whole Foods.). And then it goes a bit downhill from there. Will a foodie please, please write about how to

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Imogen

Wow, it seems like a lot of people didn't notice that this kinda sucked! Weird. It read to me like he wrote

, decided that that framework- a loose structure in which he can just talk alternately interesting and totally self-serving shit for a whole book- and figured he'd give it another go, but this time as his MAGNUM OPUS. And I was pretty into it, for the most part, but in a lot of the parts where he thinks he's being super even-handed, he's actually often being a boring mi

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, decided that that framework- a loose structure in which he can just talk alternately interesting and totally self-serving shit for a whole book- and figured he'd give it another go, but this time as his MAGNUM OPUS. And I was pretty into it, for the most part, but in a lot of the parts where he thinks he's being super even-handed, he's actually often being a boring middle-aged white liberal dude with boring tenured college professor politics. I mean, have you read the part in this book where he decides that animals shouldn't be killed, declares himself a vegetarian, gets stressed out, decides that being a vegetarian is stepping on your friends' toes, then says a bunch of total fucking nothing for twenty minutes (I listened to the audiobook- which, by the way, makes this book sound super preachy even if it isn't, because of the narrator's tone of voice) and decides that vegetarianism isn't a viable way of life? Even though, I don't know, something like a million billion people have been living that way for pretty much forever? Just admit it, Mike: you like eating meat, don't want to make the effort to stop, convinced

to concede that, sure, if you're going to eat meat, it's better to eat meat that's been ethically raised and slaughtered (aduh), and decided that that settles it: Pete Singer said you don't have to be a vegetarian, so let's just-

OH MAN after the vegetarian part- we are about three quarters of the way in at this point- Mike decides that he's going to be a hunter, so he writes two hours (it is a trip for me to listen to a book because I do it so rarely, but I am driving across the country and it is a wide country) of the most florid, masturbatory prose I have ever had the privilege of consuming in any medium. ON and ON and ON and ON about the great natural dance, and how probably when you shoot an animal it releases THC (the active ingredient in marijuana; a cannabanoid, which is a science word!) into your brain, 'cause it sure feels like getting stoned. And the beauty of how time slows down when you look through a rifle sight, and how now he is better than people who hunt in their real lives. Thanks for that, Mike. Also thanks for your total lack of solutions for people who can't afford or don't have access to organically grown local fuckin cows that got to play dress-up whenever they wanted up until

killed them. Actually, thanks for your total lack of solutions to anything (besides 'get your friend to clean the pig you shoot,' SPOILER).

It's just...

was pretty fun! You do better when you tell me about Johnny Appleseed,
, than you do when you try to tell me how to eat. Also I know you did it first but