



In Defence of Food: An Eater's Manifesto

A review by Sally Yip

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Food is a simple four-letter word. It is also a crucial part of life in which we consume to survive on a daily basis. Before you take every bite of your breakfast, lunch or dinner, have you ever wonder how food on your plate is made?

With our ever-increasing busy work and family schedules, many people overlook what they are actually consuming as food. In the book of "In Defence of Food: An Eater's Manifesto", Michael Pollan opens up the world of food industry and the Western diet to allow consumers to rethink what type of food they are purchasing and eating from their local supermarkets in reality. Instead of understanding the science of all the processed food readily available, Pollan wants people to focus on and learn from our eating traditions in the past. This means we should look into the old-fashioned ways of consuming food which our great-grandparents or ancestors would have practiced. He suggests that we should "eat food. Not too much, but mostly plants" (Pollan, 2008: 1).

Pollan also outlines the problems of the Western diet. He believes the current consumption of food in America is the main factor in major health issues such as diabetes. He portrays food companies as a nation of scientific food creators that lead to the diabetes epidemic (Pollan, 2008: 61-62). One of the main leading causes of this health phenomenon is the cheap value of large quantity food, which is easily found in every supermarket of a typical American neighbourhood. He recommends purchasing food outside of

supermarkets, and suggests people should return to local markets to purchase food grown on local farms. Americans are too used to spending only a small portion on food expenditures. Pollan recommends people to spend more money and time on food. He believes families and individuals need to opt out of fast convenient

food. Instead, he recommends the practice of traditional cooking like slow food movement.

Another important point described in the book is about nutritionism (Pollan, 2008: 27). We have been educated to read too much into nutrients that leads to the fountain of youth on every food label. Instead, Pollan asks us to forget about reading these nutritional information and health claims on the food packaging. In his perception, the food industry has used packaging as their marketing tool to misguide Americans into buying popular processed food products over real food since the '80s (Pollan, 2008: 36). He urges people to seek for real grown food over processed food that has been reformulated to fit on a shelf.

Overall, Pollan introduces many insightful facts for food consumers to re-examine their food diet. In terms of food science, he has brought in some new perception for the food industry. However, he does not make comparisons with the diet of the rest of the world. He focuses solely on the way American eats, which have easy access to fast food and big box chain store on every street corner. This book offers a good read and provides some useful advice for people who have a habit of purchasing processed food. Go pick up "In Defence of Food" and judge for yourself.

Information about the author:

Sally Yip is a student at the University of Kassel, Germany.