



Eating Promiscuously: Adventures in the Future of Food

James McWilliams

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There is no shortage of radical food books on the publishing landscape, but *Eating Promiscuously* seeks to put all others to shame. In its introduction, the author boldly states that all agriculture is a mistake, farming as an idyllic and potentially beneficial way of life is a myth, and the only proper way for humans to live is by eating a wider variety of food than is typically available from large-scale farming systems. The book proceeds to explore several alternative models of food production, from foraging in a forest to foraging highways for roadkill—personally involving the author, when possible—in the quest for a better form of food.

McWilliams is diligent in doing his research firsthand, and this results in a kind of experiential journalistic approach that is reminiscent of the work of Jon Ronson (*The Psychopath Test*). The effect is wildly engaging, on par with the farming manifestos of which *Eating Promiscuously* is critical.

However, the book consistently gets sidetracked on ethical questions of veganism. While not completely unrelated to the topic, this addition to the book's scope narrows the book's audience to vegans, a group to which it often seems to be speaking specifically. Worse, its tone around meat eaters is at best dismissive; do not expect unconverted carnivores to come to vegetarianism after finishing this book. Combined with a nebulous conclusion—how *are* we to eat promiscuously?—the result is not nearly as convincing as it could be.

This lack of conviction is something of a tragedy. Witty, accessible, and very interesting, the book addresses topics that many Americans think about a great deal, including obesity. The concept of promiscuous eating by itself seems appropriate for a minor food craze. Freegans, dulce enthusiasts, and other radical food warriors will probably enjoy it. Others will need a strong stomach.

ANNA CALL (July/August 2017)

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