

No One Eats Alone: Food as a Social Enterprise

Michael S. Carolan

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Unlike many easy-fix food books touting local food as the answer, *No One Eats Alone* tackles both food and health from a systemic perspective. Its conclusions are likely to challenge eaters on all sides of the food conversation.

While it doesn't completely negate the individual's responsibility regarding food, Carolan's book emphasizes that packaging, marketing, economy, and a sea change in way of life are critical factors in the reason that people make poor diet choices. Furthermore, the book highlights that choices that can seem good, such as locally sourced food, may only squeeze the balloon of energy resources into another sector of society. In one memorable example, middle-class strawberry lovers were asked to spend a day picking strawberries, ultimately coming away understanding the disproportionate energy that goes into harvest as well as the harsh economic reality of a farm worker's life. The attention shown here to poverty, both financial and temporal, functions as an inescapable theme and touches nearly every aspect of food production and consumption. Though the book is nominally about systemic food health, it provides a valuable perspective on socioeconomics as well.

Carolan performed the majority of his interviews with Big Food insiders, including food scientists, marketers, and reformers. Some of these have repented of their efforts to promote monoculture and manipulate eaters through marketing, but others stand by their work. While *No One Eats Alone* is unapologetic about the author's own perspective, it generally gives those guests a fair shake. This dramatically expands the book's potential audience. Do not be afraid to hand it out to skeptical foodies and organic food flagbearers alike; it will likely challenge both groups.

No One Eats Alone is a singular specimen: a well-researched, thoughtful, and ultimately optimistic book on a popular subject that presents, and successfully defends, the point of view it expresses.

ANNA CALL (May/June 2017)

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