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Fast Food Nation



Synopsis

Fast food has hastened the malling of our landscape, widened the chasm between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled American cultural imperialism abroad. That's a lengthy list of charges, but here Eric Schlosser makes them stick with an artful mix of first-rate reportage, wry wit, and careful reasoning. Schlosser's myth-shattering survey stretches from California's subdivisions where the business was born to the industrial corridor along the New Jersey Turnpike where many fast food's flavors are concocted. Along the way, he unearths a trove of fascinating, unsettling truths -- from the unholy alliance between fast food and Hollywood to the seismic changes the industry has wrought in food production, popular culture, and even real estate. He also uncovers the fast food chains' disturbing efforts to reel in the youngest, most susceptible consumers even while they hone their institutionalized exploitation of teenagers and minorities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this book knowing I was not going to learn any new and cheery anecdotes about how Ronald McDonald got his start..... instead I read this to solidify the notion that fast food was not a healthy choice. And boy, did this book give you reasons it is not, and I'm not just talking nutritional value here. I found this book fascinating for the detail was great, well researched, and given to the reader straight. It was an eye opening book. Who knew that due to the meat industry being run just by a few corporations, essentially we are eating the same meat from the same feedlots and slaughter houses whether we buy it at a fast food chain or the local supermarket, and perhaps even the nicer restaurants. I also found some of the content appalling. Cattle are fed cats, dogs, other cows, even

old newspaper! If this doesn't outrage you enough, just wait to you get to how these same meat conglomerates treat the low paid, low skilled employees of the slaughterhouses. This book is insightful and unbelievable, and will make you question how the fast food giants sleep at night.

Muckraker or hero? Schlosser has been called both by reviewers of this book. Personally, I think Schlosser has written a book that long-needed writing and confirms the truths we already knew but didn't want to admit: our comfort is killing us. This book isn't *just* about fast food and the perils of The Golden Starches: it is an indictment of our entire "gimme now, gimme cheap, gimme easy" culture. No one is exculpated: we are all in some fashion part and party of the McDonaldization of America. Schlosser looks unblinkingly at the meat packing industry; the impact of the fast food industry on our environment, economy and social custom; our gradual and apparently inexorable return to the "Robber Baron" days. Much of what he writes is uncomfortable to read. I know I revisited just about every Big Mac I've ever eaten while reading this book. Having done so, I can tell you that I will never eat another Big Mac, Whopper, Biggie Fry, Chicken Bucket or Taco Grande again. Ever. Neither will my kid, until he can buy his own Super Size Bucket o' Crud with his own money and by his own choice. I hope he makes better choices than that. As disturbing as the meat packing and food handling details are, the bit that resonates the most with me is the imperialist attitude of these corporate giants towards their workers. I was astonished to learn that these companies get tax breaks in the hundreds of millions of dollars under the aegis of "job training" when their goal is to have full automation in their kitchens. The only "job training" done in most of these places consists of knowing what button to push when a buzzer rings. Even basic literacy isn't a requirement for one of these jobs. Fabricated food is supplanting whole food in our nation's diet. The values embodied by fabricated food -- easy access, inexpensive, plentiful, homogenized -- are evident in every strip mall on every roadside nationwide. Is this what we really want? Is this what we truly value? What are the long term consequences? In short, what do we trade off in exchange for easier, cheaper, more? If we are more readily identified globally by Ronald McDonald and Mickey Mouse than by our ostensible values of freedom, democracy and individual liberty, what becomes of our credibility? Hats off to Schlosser for his book. If only it could be required reading for school kids and parents. If only the United States would start treating obesity with the same seriousness it does tobacco addiction, there might be hope for change. Ultimately, though, it comes down to you and me. What are we going to do about it?

The excerpt from this book on food additives which appeared in "The Atlantic" was by itself an

incentive to read this book. However, it is far more comprehensive and fascinating. I was "pleased" to find this a thorough, scholarly, and also quite interesting overview of the history and impact of fast food upon American society. I found myself continually reminded of Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle", Ruth Ozeki's "My Year of Meats" and, more pleasantly, David Halberstam's "The Fifties". Schlosser provides a fascinating history of the fast food industry and food notes to relevant agricultural and related labor history and legislation. The irony of the later, however, is overpowering. Clearly the issues of food safety are the most terrifying aspect of this book. I was left chilled by how particularly critical it is to protect my children from consuming fast food. However, one is left with an incredible sense of outrage, and impotence, about the recidivism of American corporate practices in terms of minimal fair labor practices and its lack of fundamental social conscience regarding consumer safety. It is too reminiscent of Sinclair's seminal work and ironically the impact of Schlosser will probably be the same -- to raise concern about food quality alone rather than the egregious exploitation of those in fast food production and service. It leaves you increasingly cynical about the corporate lack of business ethics, and failure of politicians to act as guardians of the common good. This book will terrify, enrage, and depress you. It is not sensational; the validity of the basic facts is inescapable. The author has performed a great service to society -- regrettably, it seems unlikely to result in any call to action.

A fascinating, important book for everyone. Fast Food Nation doesn't take easy shots at the fast food and beef industry, it shows the whole story, shifting back and forth between intimate details of real people (a meat packing plant worker, a franchise owner, several cattle ranchers), and the larger, global markets created by the fast food restaurants. The book achieves a kind of epic flow to it, full of interesting and infuriating information. Splendid reading.

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