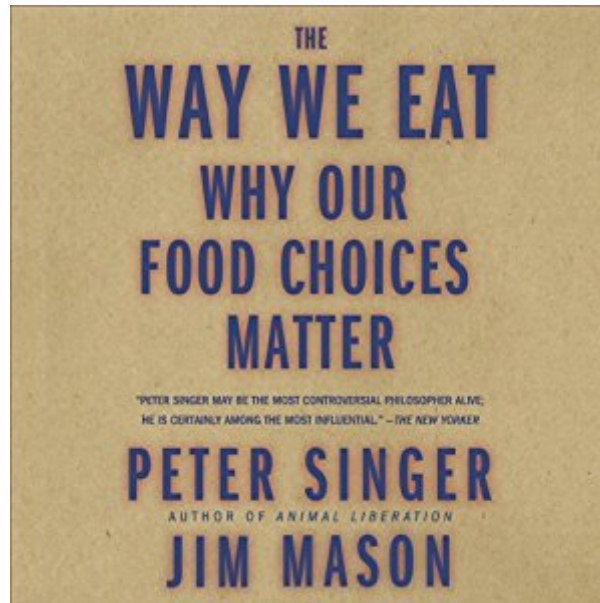


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# The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter



## Synopsis

A thought-provoking look at how what we eat profoundly affects all living things and how we can make more ethical food choices. Five Principles for Making Conscientious Food Choices.

1. Transparency: We have the right to know how our food is produced. 2. Fairness: Producing food should not impose costs on others. 3. Humanity: Inflicting unnecessary suffering on animals is wrong. 4. Social Responsibility: Workers are entitled to decent wages and working conditions. 5. Needs: Preserving life and health justifies more than other desires.

Peter Singer, the groundbreaking ethicist who "may be the most controversial philosopher alive" (The New Yorker), now sets his critical sights on the food we buy and eat: where it comes from, how it's produced, and whether it was raised humanely. Teaming up once again with attorney Jim Mason, his coauthor on the acclaimed *Animal Factories*, Singer explores the impact our food choices have on humans, animals, and the environment. In *The Way We Eat*, Singer and Mason examine the eating habits of three American families with very different diets. They track down the sources of each family's food to probe the ethical issues involved in its production and marketing. What kinds of meat are most humane to eat? Is "organic" always better? Wild fish or farmed? Recognizing that not all of us will become vegetarians, Singer and Mason offer ways to make the best food choices. As they point out: "You can be ethical without being fanatical." --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Philosophy has rarely considered the ethics of what we eat, because until very recently, we largely

ate food grown on family farms and two generations ago most people were still pretty well acquainted with where their food came from. (Most grandparents or at least great grandparents have churned butter, plucked a chicken, etc.) In today's world everything is pre-packaged and because we no longer have to think about it, we don't. The truth is we probably don't like or want to think about how the food gets to the supermarket. After all, it's tough enough to try and plan and shop for meals and then throw together something after a long day at the office. Add in trying to think about health concerns, trying to manage on a budget and hey, we have enough to worry about, right? But it bothered me that I knew full well that if I had to kill my own food I would be a vegetarian...yet I love meat and just didn't want to give it up. So the last few years I bought organic and grass fed and cage free...and yet, I wondered, given all the articles about the meaninglessness of labels and the lack of real standards, am I paying more just to feel like maybe the animals are treated better, when in fact there is no difference? How bad have things gotten? Basically, bad enough that I feel I have to invest energy in changing my habits, or ok enough I can continue trying to focus on organics and grass fed/cage free meat and dairy, and that's enough for me? I was hoping this book would help me answer that question. The truth is, I didn't look forward to reading it - I didn't want something preaching or someone trying throughout to get me to go vegan (great goal, don't know that I'm up for the task though).

Disclosure: Peter Singer and I corresponded extensively during his writing of *The Way We Eat*, and his new book favorably references both of my books. Right now, Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is already well on its way to becoming the top-selling book on food politics released this decade. Peter Singer and Jim Mason's new book, *The Way We Eat* has the profound misfortune of being released just three weeks later, and this new title finds itself the grape to Pollan's steamroller. This chance situation is a terrible shame, since *The Way We Eat* is the better researched and more carefully thought-through book. Both of these titles are excellent, but if you're only going to read one I'd urge you to read Singer. For two books that trace the origins of our food, these titles have surprisingly little overlap. Read both of these books and you'll know more about food than 99 percent of Americans -- and if you grew up eating the standard American diet it's almost inconceivable that you'll continue eating in this fashion. If you decide to read both books, be sure to read Singer first. As I've noted in my .com review of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Pollan makes some ill-informed arguments in favor of including animal products in the diet. The trouble is that Pollan is such a gifted writer that he ends up being highly persuasive even when he's on very thin ice with his facts. Reading *The Way We Eat* is a wonderful way to prepare for *The*

Omnivore's Dilemma\_ --- you'll be in a prime position to critically analyze both the strengths and weaknesses of Pollan's flawed but vitally important book.

Few facets of human existence affect our health and the environment as much as what we eat, and surely none has a greater impact on animals. Thus, the time seems perpetually ripe for good books on human food choices. The authors of this one, both vegetarians and probably vegans, succeed in presenting a well-reasoned and reader-friendly discussion of their subject. The book is built around the food habits of three American families, one who subscribe to the traditional "meat and potatoes" diet, another who are conscientious semi-vegetarians, and the third who are vegans. Each serves as a base from which to examine food production and its consequences. We travel from factory farms to farmers' markets, from kitchens to ocean trawlers to dumpsters. We hear from people who work in all of these environments. And the authors provide analyses without sermonizing. Several trends emerge. Large meat corporations talk of educating the public about modern meat production, but fail to return phone calls and flatly deny access to their meat processing facilities. We learn of "the law of gravity of big business"--with big corporations buying up organic brands then cutting corners to maximize profits. We meet farmers who move their animals from intensive indoor confinement to outdoor pasture situations. One such, a pig farmer, describes how many hassles he now avoids by letting his pigs run outside on pasture: no more tail-amputation, no antibiotics, no special weaning feed (his piglets wean naturally at 8 weeks instead of artificially at 2 weeks), and "scouring" (diarrhea) is replaced by "pasture poop" that doesn't stink (I can attest to this, as a regular visitor to a sanctuary with free-roaming pigs).

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