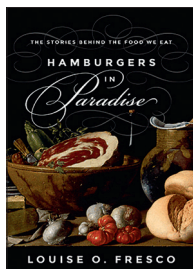


Out of Hours Books

Hamburgers in Paradise: The Stories Behind the Food We Eat

Louise O Fresco

Princeton University Press, 2015, HB,
560pp, £29.95, 978-0691163871



FASCINATING FOOD

Whatever you're eating right now, from a supermarket sandwich to a 10-course Chinese banquet, from a cassava root to a Bleep and Booster-style nutrition pill, or especially an apple, it has been comprehensively and painstakingly deconstructed by Louise Fresco. Who grows, or makes it, how, where, why, and how it gets to our table: 'farm to fork'. The revelations she describes are sometimes critical, often passionately favourable, but never amount to an evangelistic rant about industry, climate change, or fast food: always balanced. Fresco quotes the evangelist John Wesley: 'Catch on fire with enthusiasm and people will come for miles to watch you burn', which aptly describes other best-selling authors such as Greg Critser (*Fat Land: How Americans Became the Fattest People in the World*), Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*), Nina Teicholz (*The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat*

and Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet), and even Robert Lustig (*Sugar: The Bitter Truth*), but the problem with evangelists is often that their cause is shouted loud, but no counterargument can be entertained.

This is a trap that Fresco elegantly avoids; every argument has a counterargument, for example, Italian supermarkets have forced smaller family-run businesses to close, but stock a wonderful range of beautiful foods. The book is at its brilliant best when it tells stories. 'In 1894 the Times predicted that by 1950 the streets of London would have disappeared under three meters of horse dung'. 'Acute hunger can drive people insane. Rotting meat, tulip bulbs, tree bark, soil, leather.' Many are personal, giving an autobiographical resonance, approaching voyeuristic at times. Fresco has led a fascinating life, living, working, preparing food and eating it, the world over, and it's a privilege to witness them: 'in Dharavi, the largest slum, I've seen eggplant and onion fields no bigger than a bath towel, on either side of the railroad tracks'. She sometimes reveals a little too many of her own cultural proclivities: 'Is organ transplantation a form of cannibalism?' and has a clear sympathy with vegetarianism, but as a soul-bearing exercise this can be forgiven.

The most fascinating story is of Paradise; the descriptions, history, symbolism, art, literature, and cultural aspects are compelling, with references to the 'erotic' Eve of Autun, Lucas Cranach the Elder's famous image *Adam and Eve*. Descriptions of Adam and Eve's banishment from Paradise into the wilderness are evocative, and copiously illustrated, marking the time

when humanity started to rely on hard work, hunting, and ultimately agriculture to survive, after the easy life in Eden.

The abiding and remarkable lingering taste of the book is optimism. This isn't the anticipated rant about food, retail, petrochemical industries, GM farming, climate change, and every political hot potato, but an enjoyable collection of stories, recollections (and statistics) with an ultimately uplifting tone.

David Haslam,

Chair of the National Obesity Forum.

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The Diet Myth:

The Real Science Behind What We Eat

Tim Spector

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2015, PB, 336pp,
£14.99, 978-0297609193



CHERISH YOUR GERMS

We cannot simply attribute obesity to gluttony and sloth. Some people really can eat more freely than others. Identical twin adults differ

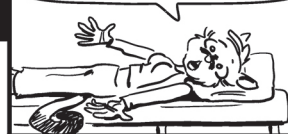
THIS IS JUST A QUICK ONE, SO I WON'T WASTE YOUR TIME, BUT AND THIS IS LIKE SO GROSS 'CAUSE MY COUSIN'S STAYING OVER FOR THE FINALS AND MY NOSE HAS BEEN LIKE KILLING ME FOR LIKE MONTHS... WHAT? MY NOSE, IT KILLS! LIKE I'M SO OVER IT, YOU KNOW IT'S ORDINARY.



AND LIKE ANYWAY SUDDENLY IT'S ALL "BANG"... WHAT? YEAH, MY NOSE, IT HIT ME AND ANOTHER THING MY LIVER WHERE IS IT BY THE WAY? ANYWAY I'M LIKE WHOA! HEY? OH IT WAS THE OTHER DAY, HANG ON...NO IT WAS THE OTHER DAY, ANYWAY I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE SICK AND THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.



AND SHE'S LIKE YOU SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR AND I'M ALL NO WAY AND SHE'S WAY. AND I GO LIKE I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT AND SHE GOES YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT, YOU KNOW? AND... YEAH... THAT'S IT. SO HERE I AM.



I cannot confirm communication established, but patient apparently satisfied by end of consultation.



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