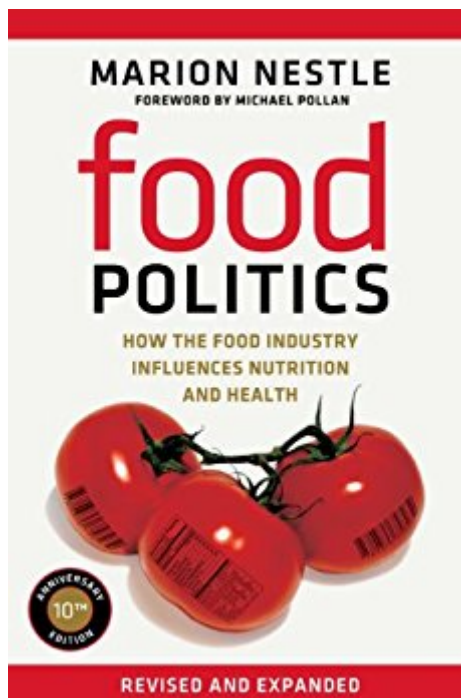


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Food Politics: How The Food Industry Influences Nutrition And Health (California Studies In Food And Culture Book 3)



Synopsis

We all witness, in advertising and on supermarket shelves, the fierce competition for our food dollars. In this engrossing exposé, Marion Nestle goes behind the scenes to reveal how the competition really works and how it affects our health. The abundance of food in the United States--enough calories to meet the needs of every man, woman, and child twice over--has a downside. Our over-efficient food industry must do everything possible to persuade people to eat more--more food, more often, and in larger portions--no matter what it does to waistlines or well-being. Like manufacturing cigarettes or building weapons, making food is big business. Food companies in 2000 generated nearly \$900 billion in sales. They have stakeholders to please, shareholders to satisfy, and government regulations to deal with. It is nevertheless shocking to learn precisely how food companies lobby officials, co-opt experts, and expand sales by marketing to children, members of minority groups, and people in developing countries. We learn that the food industry plays politics as well as or better than other industries, not least because so much of its activity takes place outside the public view. Editor of the 1988 Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health, Nestle is uniquely qualified to lead us through the maze of food industry interests and influences. She vividly illustrates food politics in action: watered-down government dietary advice, schools pushing soft drinks, diet supplements promoted as if they were First Amendment rights. When it comes to the mass production and consumption of food, strategic decisions are driven by economics--not science, not common sense, and certainly not health. No wonder most of us are thoroughly confused about what to eat to stay healthy. An accessible and balanced account, Food Politics will forever change the way we respond to food industry marketing practices. By explaining how much the food industry influences government nutrition policies and how cleverly it links its interests to those of nutrition experts, this path-breaking book helps us understand more clearly than ever before what we eat and why.

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Customer Reviews

At times you might be forgiven for thinking that surely food can be left free of politics, when so much else in the world is tied up with political string. Sorry, but politics plays a big place here too! Whether it is public policy and politics dictating what we should eat and drink on health grounds, or should that be "health" grounds, geopolitics with us being encouraged to favour produce from country X instead of country Y for various reasons or just plain business politics, with companies lobbying politicians to help further their own means, food and politics are tied together. Depressing reading, for sure, but this book provides a good non-hectoring read of this subject in a tenth anniversary edition of a classic work. The food industry is big business and yet this academically-minded book does a good job in opening our eyes to what is actually going on in the wider world, without it sounding like there is a conspiracy behind every door. Written from a U.S. perspective the reader should not, however, be under the misapprehension that things are only an "American problem". It is just that perhaps their own country is less open and thus more things are hidden out of view. Will you be able to look at things again in the same light? Making food is big business and we are encouraged to consume more than we need. Cutting costs to maximise profits often leads to the food that we eat is not necessarily good for us. Convenience foods sound oh-so-convenient until you notice the chemical soup that often accompanies them. There is a reason why various "corners can be cut", totally legally, that maximise profits and waistlines alike. Ah, but there are pesky government regulations that get in the way of free trade and protect the customer, aren't there?

The well-known academic author is no stranger to the food safety literature. She has written three popular accounts, *Safe Food* (2003), *Pet Food Politics* (2008), and *Food Politics* (2013). As a food insider her exposés are comprehensive, authoritative and uniquely informative. And Greg Palast

fans will be well aware of the corporate malfeasance milieu in the US and as it turns out two of the most egregious and foul government offenders are the FDA and the USDA, each charged with aspects of food safety. Based on past performance there is NO reason to believe any statement, proclamation or promise from these agencies to be anything other than the position statements of industry lobbyists. Big Money will always assure that Big Food and Big Pharma will have their wallets open when any officeholder in Washington knocks on their door. This level of overinfluence, which in most civilized nations would be considered criminal, leaves the lives of millions of US eaters in the balance and ready for corporate abuse. An Economist review says that her book argues "that America's agribusiness lobby has stifled the government's regulatory power,... and hampered the government's ability to offer sound, scientific nutritional advice." The industry goal is clearly to encourage eaters to consume more and more, food that is deadlier and deadlier, and regulated less and less. The food wars are much more about how to shave a few pennies off of the price of food no matter what the cost in disease and death. One author called the industry-inspired policy machinations Death by Food Pyramid. Marion Nestle's book "What to Eat" is also a classic and is frequently cited by Michael Pollan in his writing.

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