

Food, Glorious Food

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What should we eat and how should we eat it? How can we grow food sustainably? In this article I am going to sample two sources that suggest ways we can approach food and agriculture with our health and the health of the planet in mind.

The first perspective comes from Michael Pollan's book "Food Rules: An Eater's Manual". He asks and answers three questions, beginning with "What should I eat?" His answer is "eat food". Some of the rules in this section include:

- Avoid edible food like substances (highly processed concoctions designed by food scientist, containing ingredients no normal person has in the pantry.

- Avoid products containing high-fructose corn syrup.

- Avoid foods that are pretending to be something they are not. Imitation butter—aka margarine—is the classic example.

- Avoid foods you see advertised on television.

- Eat only foods that will eventually rot.

His second question is "What kind of food should I eat? Simply stated he says "Mostly plants." The more detailed answers include:

- Eat your colours. Eat lots of leaves.

- Treat meat as a flavouring or special occasion food.

- Eat animals that have themselves eaten well and plants that have grown in healthy soil.

- Eat fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, soy sauce, kimchi, and sourdough bread.

- Eat sweet foods as you find them in nature.

- Eat all the junk food you want as long as you cook it yourself.

Finally, Pollan looks at "How should I eat?" His answer is "Not too much." The following list provides more detail.

- Stop eating before you're full.

- Eat when you are hungry, not when you are bored or stressed.

- Spend as much time enjoying the meal as it took to prepare it.
- Serve a proper portion and don't go back for seconds.
- Plant a vegetable garden if you have space, a window box if you don't.
- Cook.
- Break the rules once in a while. Obsessing about food is bad for your happiness and probably for your health too.

Food isn't just about eating. It is crucial to look at sustainable farming practices. The following insights are from Mark Bittman's book "Animal, Vegetable, Junk: A History of Food from Sustainable to Suicidal", available in our church library.

Sustainable agriculture involves the following practices:

- rotating crops and embracing diversity
- planting cover crops
- reducing or eliminating tillage
- applying integrated pest management
- integrating livestock and crops
- adopting agroforestry practices
- managing whole systems and landscapes

A very interesting documentary film that follows this process is "The Biggest Little Farm" by FarmLore Films, available on YouTube [here](#).

Bittman concludes that the journey will be challenging and painstaking but "Thankfully we don't need to know how to get to the end of this road to embark on it." Small steps taken by many individuals add up to huge changes.

If you are interested in learning more about sustainable food, I'd love to start a group where we can share knowledge and support each other. We can change our eating habits and encourage better agricultural practices.

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