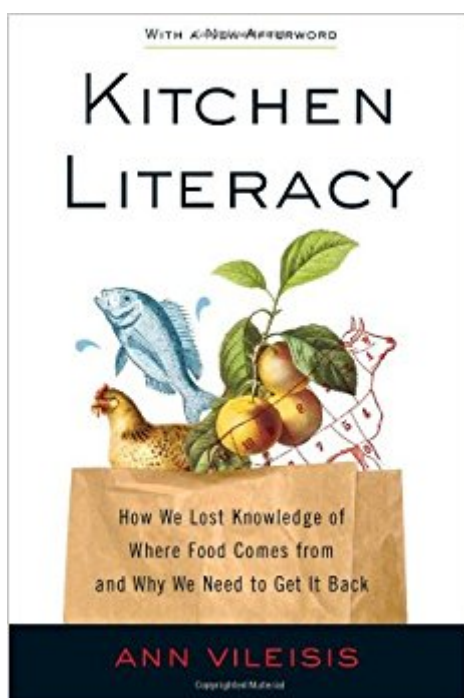


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# Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge Of Where Food Comes From And Why We Need To Get It Back



## Synopsis

Ask children where food comes from, and they'll probably answer: "the supermarket." Ask most adults, and their replies may not be much different. Where our foods are raised and what happens to them between farm and supermarket shelf have become mysteries. How did we become so disconnected from the sources of our breads, beef, cheeses, cereal, apples, and countless other foods that nourish us every day? Ann Vileisis's answer is a sensory-rich journey through the history of making dinner. Kitchen Literacy takes us from an eighteenth-century garden to today's sleek supermarket aisles, and eventually to farmer's markets that are now enjoying a resurgence. Vileisis chronicles profound changes in how American cooks have considered their foods over two centuries and delivers a powerful statement: what we don't know could hurt us. As the distance between farm and table grew, we went from knowing particular places and specific stories behind our foods' origins to instead relying on advertisers' claims. The woman who raised, plucked, and cooked her own chicken knew its entire life history while today most of us have no idea whether hormones were fed to our poultry. Industrialized eating is undeniably convenient, but it has also created health and environmental problems, including food-borne pathogens, toxic pesticides, and pollution from factory farms. Though the hidden costs of modern meals can be high, Vileisis shows that greater understanding can lead consumers to healthier and more sustainable choices. Revealing how knowledge of our food has been lost and how it might now be regained, Kitchen Literacy promises to make us think differently about what we eat.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The rise of commercial farming and processed foods has given shoppers a tremendous variety to choose from, but this convenience has also fostered a "covenant of ignorance" among consumers and manufacturers, historian Vileisis (*Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands*) posits in this meticulous chronicle of the culinary disconnect. Persuasively arguing that manufacturers have prevented shoppers from knowing "unsavory details" about their foods and shielded producers from inquiry and public scrutiny, Vileisis highlights key events in this evolution. The booming populations of major cities, a reliance on servants or others to prepare meals and the ease and speed of rail transport were early contributors, she asserts, with the Industrial Revolution and two World Wars forever changing the way Americans bought and consumed food. Though the chapters covering developments since the 1970s feel rushed, Vileisis's well-researched treatise will give those interested in local and organic foods, food processing and American culinary culture plenty to chew on. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Vileisis's well-researched treatise will give those interested in local and organic foods, food processing and American culinary culture plenty to chew on..." (Publishers Weekly)"This book...gave me encouragement to keep on doing what I can to make our food world a happier, wiser, more truly sustainable one." (Deborah Madison *Real Simple*)"Kitchen Literacy provides a cautionary tale of how we got so far off the eaten path in the first place." (eatingwell.org)"Kitchen Literacy brings home just how essential it is for eaters to cultivate knowledge of their food." (American Scientist)"Vileisis gathers it all in one place, weaving a clear, easy-to-read tapestry whose meaning is plain by the end of the book: you are what you eat, so think about what you've been eating." | This important and eye-opening book uncovers the machinery behind the modern food industry." (Library Journal)"It is no exaggeration to say that the single most vital connection any of us has to the natural world is the food we eat. And yet the paradox of modern life is that over the past century, most of us have become profoundly ignorant about where our food comes from and the myriad ways it affects us. In her wonderful new book *Kitchen Literacy*, Ann Vileisis explains how we came to forget so much about the food we eat...and how much we gain by remembering the journeys it makes to reach our tables." (William Cronon, author of *Changes in the Land and Nature's Metropolis*)"Kitchen Literacy goes to the heart of our

disconnection from one of the most vital and intimate aspects of our lives—how we feed ourselves and our families. Accessible, entertaining, and enlightening, Ann Vileisis's new book has given us the historical context to understand what we have lost and how to bring food back to where it belongs—at the center of our families and communities." (Michael Ableman farmer and author of *Fields of Plenty*) "A 'must-read' for modern-day consumers in the post-family farm era." (Midwest Book Review) "[Kitchen Literacy by Ann Vileisis] performs a valuable service in reminding readers that we were not always so clueless when it came to making food choices." (The Washington Post)

This was a fantastic book. As an academic specialising in agribusiness, this book gave me a great history of today's agribusiness system. It put the current trends that we see into its appropriate historical context. In some ways, it felt like she didn't know how to end the book, but that will be because history is still happening, so it is difficult to draw a line. I would very highly recommend this book.

What's behind the label? You're about to find out, and you may not like the answer. *Kitchen Literacy* is an adept analysis of the transition in how and what people eat that covers the nineteenth century to the present day. And it reveals some of the many regulatory problems with the USDA and FDA, problems that keep unhealthy products on our kitchen tables. In the end, it is up to the consumer to regulate his/her own kitchen. I loved it.

Incredible account of our history of food knowledge. Adds illustrious detail to overarching themes and conceptual arguments for our loss of understanding of our consumption.

I bought this book on my Kindle fire. It has some great insights to things that we do not think about today at all. I highly suggest reading this book because it will change the way you look at grocery stores and the food you eat on a daily basis. It should be taught in schools to educate people about where their food actually comes from and not to trust everything that the marketing con artists want you to believe.

This is not one of those depressing, pedantic rants that assume all progress is bad that are too typical of literature on the topic of food distribution. Instead, this book is actually a fun read. Facts are presented in an even, civilized tone with perspectives understanding of the losses and gains

that are inherent in all change in human endeavor. Further, the language is sensual, even succulent, with a dry twist of irony and humor on every page. While some who have read extensively on this topic might wish for more depth and breadth, that is not the stated purpose of this book. The footnotes, which are extensive and fascinating, provide plenty for those who seek detail and direction to further investigation. As an enjoyable, thoughtful, and polite summary or introduction to the topic of food production and distribution, this work could well prove more influential in educating (or even "converting") the general public about a serious topic than the sour and dour stuff we have come to be wary of.

Interesting but too stretched

good

Very well researched. Interesting stories .

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