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The Omnivore's Dilemma: The Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan, Penguin 2006

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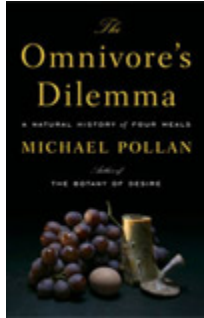
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Recommended Readings



The Omnivore's Dilemma: The Natural History of Four Meals

by Michael Pollan, Penguin 2006

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

According to Michael Pollan's book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, this simple question has a complicated answer, fraught with ethical and social implications as well as the standard health and safety concerns.

Pollan, a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine* and a journalism professor, traces the history of four meals and how they were produced: McDonald's take-out from the "big business" food complex; two organic-chicken meals, one originating from the national organic industry and one from a local organic farm; and a wild-pig feast, made with ingredients the author hunted or gathered himself. Along the way, Pollan indicts the government and the agribusiness industry for treating animals inhumanely, creating an unsustainable food production system, subsidizing the production of certain crops, corn in particular, and wreaking havoc upon the environment.

The phrase "omnivore's dilemma," coined three decades ago by psychologist Paul Rozin, refers both to the fact that as humans we can ingest and digest almost any food or food-like product and to the fact that in today's world our choices have consequences reaching far beyond what we might expect. Therein lies the rub - what ought we humans eat when our choices are so vast? Pollan doesn't offer much in the way of a solution to the dilemma, leaving that to his subsequent book, *In Defense of Food*, but his exceptional research and clear, comfortable writing style will make you ponder your own choices.

-Judi Morrel is associate professor of mathematics and associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler University.