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# The Ethics Of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter



## The Ethics of What We Eat

Why Our Food Choices Matter

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AUTHOR OF *ANIMAL LIBERATION*  
and **JIM MASON**

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## Synopsis

Peter Singer, the groundbreaking ethicist whom *The New Yorker* calls the most influential philosopher alive teams up again with Jim Mason, his coauthor on the acclaimed *Animal Factories*, to set their critical sights on the food we buy and eat: where it comes from, how it is produced, and whether it was raised humanely. *The Ethics of What We Eat* explores the impact our food choices have on humans, animals, and the environment. Recognizing that not all of us will become vegetarians, Singer and Mason offer ways to make healthful, humane food choices. As they point out: You can be ethical without being fanatical.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“An absolutely indispensable book for anyone who thinks about what they eat ... I cannot recommend it highly enough.” Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, author of *When Elephants Weep* and *Raising the Peaceable Kingdom* . . . vital, urgent, and disturbing. Dorothy Kalins, *New York Times* . . . clear and persuasive. Susan Salter Reynolds, *Los Angeles Times* “A no-holds-barred treatise on ethical consumption.” Publishers Weekly

Peter Singer, the renowned philosopher and bioethicist, is the author of *Animal Liberation*, the classic work that helped launch the modern Animal Rights movement. He teaches at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

A powerfully written discussion about food production, food choices, and the importance of consciously considering how our food is grown, treated, and delivered. Singer's opening line: "We don't usually think of what we eat as a matter of ethics" (p. 3). Gulp. He's right, I was, still am sometimes, an unconscious purchaser and consumer. I was convicted after reading this book to be more conscious, more educated, more deliberate in understanding what I'm eating, where and how it was grown, and the practices surrounding it. This is the power of this book! It's a tough commitment to live up to. Admittedly, there are days when I fail miserably (sigh). But I'm no longer unconscious and this is a start. Singer's device of using three families with three differing approaches (Standard American Diet; conscientious Omnivores, and The Vegans) was useful in illustrating a continuum of choices and awareness but also in illustrating the challenges of each, and the difficulties we have in making wise, informed food choices. The power of Singer's book is in the way he presents the complexity of decision making (for example - buy local but if their food practices are unethical, is it wise to buy local?!?) - these are not two dimensional easy choices, even when trying to pull the thread - it can be difficult to ascertain practices of food producers, and then there's the practical - at the end of a long work day, I just want to get supper on the table. While reading I felt as though Singer was trying to present information in a conversational way to get me to thinking, to raise awareness - the balance between information, questions, and sympathy with the challenges of ethical decision making when we perhaps don't have all the facts, it's not black and white, etc. was really helpful in being able to digest and consider the material (i.e., I didn't feel preached at and like a loser because I don't always know or consider...smile). The section labeled Where to Find Ethical Food included good URLs and additional reading on a variety of topics.

For quite some time I had been concerned about the effects of my eating habits, however I had been overwhelmed with all of the information and options that were out there. I had many questions: Are all animals wrong to eat? Is there anything wrong with milk and eggs? What does cage free, humane certified really mean? What are the reasons (other than health claims) for going organic? This book blends philosophical arguments, thoroughly researched evidence, and hands on experience to provide excellent insight into these questions.

I ordered this book for an English class I was taking at Cypress College in Cypress, California. It opened me up to the reasons why some of us are choosing a certain eating lifestyle. Also, some of our reasons behind our choices are unsupported. We make the decisions to "eat healthy" based on public perceptions and beliefs without digging deeper and verifying facts. Reading this book paints a

clear picture that a lot of our "healthy" choices may benefit us in the short term but be hurting the "health" of our surroundings in the future. A well-written read from Singer. I highly recommend.

The book is well researched and straightforward to read. If you are considering veganism and are partial to arguments concerning the suffering of animals, I would highly recommend this book. With a primary focus on factory farming, it covers a range of topics from the ethical treatment of animals, to environmental impacts, to fair trade. Arguments were generally well written, but sometimes fallacious (although not necessarily unsound) and often appealed to animal suffering even in claims that did not call for it. I was disappointed that it did not cover more ethical qualms about the types of plant based foods we produce and consume; focusing mostly on reasons to avoid animal products. The concluding sections were quite good, particularly on not being fanatical about veganism and resources linked.

Interesting read! This was recommended by a college professor and it opened my eyes. It inspired me to become a vegetarian (lasted about 9 months) but definitely worth the read.

This book was great in an informative aspect. Be cautious before reading, it'll make you change your way of eating and, make you look at food differently.

Thank you for the page numbers--it makes citations for class so much easier. I also enjoyed the use of family narratives to describe the American experience (even though it ranges much farther than these authors could possibly go).

I have read a lot in this area and was surprised to find new information and argumentation on this well-trodden ground.

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The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter  
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