



# The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter

By Peter Singer, Jim Mason

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**The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter** By Peter Singer, Jim Mason

*A thought-provoking look at how what we eat profoundly affects all living things?and how we can make more ethical food choices*

Five Principles for Making Conscientious Food Choices

1. Transparency: We have the right to know how our food is produced.
2. Fairness: Producing food should not impose costs on others.
3. Humanity: Inflicting unnecessary suffering on animals is wrong.
4. Social Responsibility: Workers are entitled to decent wages and working conditions.
5. Needs: Preserving life and health justifies more than other desires.

Peter Singer, the groundbreaking ethicist who "may be the most controversial philosopher alive" (*The New Yorker*), now sets his critical sights on the food we buy and eat: where it comes from, how it's produced, and whether it was raised humanely. Teaming up once again with attorney Jim Mason, his coauthor on the acclaimed *Animal Factories*, Singer explores the impact our food choices have on humans, animals, and the environment.

In *The Way We Eat*, Singer and Mason examine the eating habits of three American families with very different diets. They track down the sources of each family's food to probe the ethical issues involved in its production and marketing. What kinds of meat are most humane to eat? Is "organic" always better? Wild fish or farmed? Recognizing that not all of us will become vegetarians, Singer and Mason offer ways to make the best food choices. As they point out: "You can be ethical without being fanatical."

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## **The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter** By Peter Singer, Jim Mason Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1046348 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Rodale Books
- Published on: 2006-05-02
- Released on: 2006-05-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 233.93" h x 32.26" w x 6.24" l, 1.30 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 288 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ethicist Singer and co-author Mason (*Animal Factories*) document corporate deception, widespread waste and desensitization to inhumane practices in this consideration of ethical eating. The authors examine three families' grocery-buying habits and the motivations behind those choices. One woman says she's "absorbed in my life and my family...and I don't think very much about the welfare of the meat I'm eating," while a wealthier husband and wife mull the virtues of "triple certified" coffee, buying local and avoiding chocolate harvested by child slave labor, though "no one seems to be pondering that as they eat." In investigating food production conditions, the authors' first-hand experiences alternate between horror and comedy, from slaughterhouses to artificial turkey-insemination ("the hardest, fastest, dirtiest, most disgusting, worst-paid work"). This sometimes-graphic exposé is not myopic: profitability and animal welfare are given equal consideration, though the reader finishes the book agreeing with the authors' conclusion that "America's food industry seeks to keep Americans in the dark about the ethical components of their food choices." A no-holds-barred treatise on ethical consumption, this is an important read for those concerned with the long, frightening trip between farm and plate.

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From [Booklist](#)

Less concerned with what people choose to eat per se, Singer and Mason make a case for how people's everyday food choices affect others' lives. They describe in vivid detail how applying industrial processing principles to animal husbandry has led to cheap foods whose cost savings occur at the expense of animals raised for profit and for product. Using Wal-Mart as an example, they lay out how huge retailers wield enormous power over prices and compel those far up the chain of food production and distribution to make unhelpful decisions. They hold up for admiration a Kansas family that has turned vegan so as not to participate in this particular destructive cycle of animal and human exploitation. They also thoughtfully and critically examine the ethical pros and cons of eating meat in any form. Urban dwellers far removed from the source of the foods they eat will find Singer and Mason's descriptions of food production more disturbing and violent than the quiet, attractive, plastic-wrapped displays in the local supermarket's pristine meat case.

*Mark Knoblauch*

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About the Author

PETER SINGER, is author of *Animal Liberation* and coauthor of *Animal Factories*, is one of the highest-profile writers on ethics today, regularly drawing fire for his views on such hot-button issues as abortion, euthanasia, war, and animal rights. Born in Australia, he has taught at Princeton University since 1999 and lives in New York.

JIM MASON is the author of *An Unnatural Order* and the coauthor of *Animal Factories*. He is also an attorney and the fifth generation of a Missouri farming family. He lives on Virginia's Eastern

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