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Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health, Revised and Expanded Edition

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Food Politics by Marion Nestle (no relation to the corporation) should be required reading for anyone who eats. A nutritionist and educator for 30 years, Professor Nestle, of New York University, builds upon her work as a policy advisor to the Department of Health and Human Services and as a prior author in order to bring about a second edition of *Food Politics*. This book is a well-researched exposé about the food industry. In transparent fashion, it documents how the industry uses politics, government, marketing, and children to push a bottom line—*sell more*, which translates into *eat more*. In a society whose body habitus is ever increasing, eating more is the wrong direction.

This book is partitioned into five parts with an added introduction and afterword that serve to update the relevance of this book from its first edition, published in 2002, to its second edition, published in 2007. For each of the five parts, Professor Nestle, like a great lecturer, writes what she is about to explain, explains it, then summarizes what she explained, making this book all the more memorable. Furthermore, she uses graphs, timelines, examples of advertising, and citations to augment her written points.

What she succeeds in proving is that the food industry is powerful. It uses the political system and marketing to influence our food choices and the government's policies to sell its product. Thus, this influence affects our health.

Marion Nestle writes of the government's realization that eating fewer calories and less cholesterol, i.e., eating less, is important to improving the health of the nation. She writes of the food industry's reaction to this message of eating less. This starting point then leads to the manipulation of science, politics, and dietary advice, all three of which are laden with conflicts of interest involving the food industry.

Have you ever wondered why jelly beans were once considered healthy? Or wondered why the Secretary of Health and Human Services was featured on a milk mustache campaign? Did your school receive computers from a soda company in exchange for a contract to sell their sodas? Did you ever notice that a cereal labeled that it reduces the risk of coronary heart disease is more expensive than the same cereal without that label?

Do you feel safer consuming a medicine that is regulated by the government and prescribed by a physician or just as safe using a similarly acting supplement that is not prescribed nor regulated? Did you know that ketchup was once promoted to reduce the risk of cervical cancer?

These questions all deal with the food industry's success in swaying government interests for the benefit of their brands and not

necessarily for the benefit of society. These questions are all addressed by this book. In a time when our health, healthcare, and the burden of disease in terms of economics and other hardships are serious issues to consider, it is time to take a closer look at that which affects our livelihood constantly—food.

If you were ever curious about the food you eat, about health claims made, or whether you consider your diet to be “healthy,” then this book is worth reading. Understandably, not everyone who eats will read this book. But, those who teach nutrition, health care professionals, and anyone wanting to improve their grasp of why we eat what we do should read this book. There is a food movement happening and a health awareness movement happening, and the backbone is knowledge. This book is important to that core because by learning about the food industry, one can make an educated vote with one’s own fork.