

# In Defense Of Food Summary

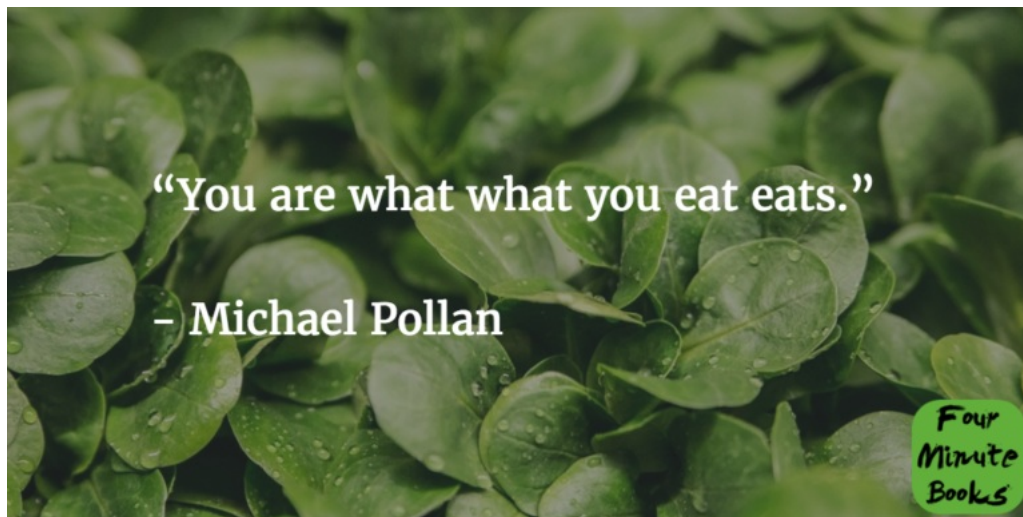
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 [fourminutebooks.com/in-defense-of-food-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/in-defense-of-food-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *In Defense Of Food* describes the decline of food in exchange for diets driven by science and nutritional data, how this decline has ruined our health and what you can do to return to food as a simple, cultural, natural aspect of life.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



If you gave your great-grandma your breakfast – would she recognize it as food?

In case the answer is “probably not”, you should have a talk with Michael Pollan. In The Omnivore’s Dilemma he explained how the explosion of corn supply has led to a paradoxical amount of food choices and how we can make far better ones by simply buying from what’s locally available to us.

With In Defense Of Food, he takes it one step further, debunking the entire science of nutritionism. He’ll show you how the construct on which the modern, Western diet is based is a very shaky one at best, why it has done nothing for our health and how to return to an actual culture of food.

Here are 3 lessons to help you eat better so you can live longer without chronic diseases:

1. Thanks to one greedy senator you now talk about nutrients instead of foods.
2. Instead of making us healthier, nutritionism has made us sick.
3. Choose foods that are simple, natural and don’t make bold claims.

Ready to fight for your right to good food? Let’s go get some advice from grandma!

## Lesson 1: You now think more about nutrients than foods because of one greedy senator from the 1970s.

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How did you describe your dietary habits the last time you thought about changing something? Did you say: “I’ll try to eat less bread and more salad?” Or rather something like: “I’m cutting out carbs.”

Today, we spend most of our time talking about nutrients, rather than foods, but why is this?

It all started in the 1950s, when scientists came up with something called the lipid hypothesis – the idea that eating lots of fat and cholesterol (mostly from meat and dairy) is bad for you and causes heart disease.

However, that lipid hypothesis stood on just two, very shaky studies, but over the years has been cited and re-cited thousands of times, until it became an almost universally accepted “law” – in spite of just as many studies showing opposing evidence.

The reason the lipid hypothesis became a center of attention is that in 1977, a special committee selected by the senate published a report called “The Dietary Goals for the United States”. Originally, the report was going to tell people to “eat less meat and dairy.”

However, since head of the committee, George McGovern, happened to own a bunch of cattle farms, (which would not have sold a lot of meat after the release of the report), the wording was changed to *“decrease consumption of animal fat, and choose meats, poultry and fish which will reduce saturated fat intake.”*

This sounds a lot more cryptic and it doesn’t encourage you to eat less meat – no, just less “saturated fat” – whatever that means.

**And that’s how one greedy guy got you to think about eating low-carb instead of quitting donuts.**

## Lesson 2: Our turn to science for choosing our food has not made us healthier – it’s made us sick.

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The pretense for all this science-talk about food was of course that it’d make us healthier, but did that really happen?

Not really. 3 out of 4 Americans are either overweight or downright obese and if we continue to eat the way we do we’ll end up in a place where 1 in 3 children will get diabetes. Yes, deaths from heart disease have been cut in half over the past 50 years, but admissions to hospitals from heart attacks haven’t – it’s better medical treatment that carries this achievement, not better nutrition.

So not only did we start talking about food in very un-foody ways, this “evolution” has also failed horribly at bringing about the improvements in health it was created for in the first place.

**Cooking up your diet in a lab instead of going with what your common sense (and gut feeling) tells you won’t make you healthier.** If anything, it’ll make you sick.

So what to do instead?

## Lesson 3: Go for foods that have few ingredients, are natural and don’t make suspicious health claims.

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It’s actually not that hard to eat good food. You simply have to look back at where our food choices came from 100 years ago: culture.

In 1900, mothers and grandmothers ran the show in the kitchen and they cooked whatever their moms and grandmas had taught them was healthy. When you shop groceries now, half the stuff in your shopping cart isn’t even food – it’s a poor excuse, stuffed with chemicals – a mere food-substitute.

But with a few simple rules, you can go back to more natural ways of eating:

1. **If your grandmother wouldn’t eat it or recognize it as food, don’t eat it.** Does your grandma think bubble tea is food? No? Then don’t drink it.
2. **If it has more than five ingredients, it’s a test result, not food.** Yogurt only needs milk and bacteria to become yogurt, not sugar, not kosher gelatin, and certainly not modified corn starch.
3. **It if tells you that it’s healthy, it probably isn’t.** It’s hard to put a “I’m full of healthy nutrients!” sticker on a banana or a carrot. But it fits perfectly on a box of frosted flakes for breakfast.

Use these simple rules the next time you shop, and you’ll end up with a much healthier shopping cart at the checkout line.

## In Defense Of Food Review

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*In Defense Of Food* reminded me of Diet Cults. It’s a skeptic book, looking at what’s wrong without telling you exactly what’s right (aka “this is the diet you should follow”). Books like these are better than specific dietary advice, I think, because they force you to come up with your own set of principles for eating, rather than pushing someone else’s agenda down your meal plan.

I’m buying this for a friend right now, definite recommend, great work Mr. Pollan!

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## **What else can you learn from the blinks?**

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- Why we might confuse nutrient-rich foods for healthier than they are
- How the lipid hypothesis lead to even the simplest foods being stuffed with fake nutrients
- What happened when ten, “Westernized”, sick Aborigines returned to their natural roots for 10 days
- Why eating is a chain of people and animals, not a single thing
- How many apples you need today to get the iron content of one apple back in 1940
- The reason you’d best distance yourself from a Western diet
- Why you are what you eat eats (and what that means)

## **Who would I recommend the In Defense Of Food summary to?**

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The 15 year old, who currently eats really unhealthy, because she’s in puberty, the 52 year old on a Western diet with recently developed diabetes, and anyone who thinks food labels are too complicated.