



Righteous Porkchop: Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms

Nicolette Hahn Niman

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“*Righteous Porkchop* is a searing, and utterly convincing, indictment of modern meat production. The book also brims with hope and charts a practical (and even beautiful) path out of the jungle.”

—Michael Pollan, author of *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*

“[A] necessary book—part memoir, part exposé...its reasoned case for healthy and humane farming practices has the sweet savor of truth.”

—*O The Oprah Magazine*

A crusading environmental activist, vegetarian, and lawyer who has worked with Robert Kennedy, Jr. on environment issues, Nicolette Hahn Niman blows the lid off the shocking practices in the pork, meat, and poultry industries in *Righteous Porkchop*, a *Fast Food Nation* for the hog trade. Subtitled, “Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond the Factory Farm,” *Righteous Porkchop* is at once an eye-opening grand tour of Hahn Niman’s battles with the industrial farming conglomerates, a guide to avoiding unhealthy meats, and a very personal story of one woman’s reawakening.

Righteous Porkchop: Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms Details

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From Reader Review **Righteous Porkchop: Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms** for online ebook

Claudia Yahany says

Los humanos necesitamos entender que no somos dueños de lo que nos rodea. En el camino, la autora se enamoró de una industria diferente y al final termina pidiendo a la audiencia que seamos conscientes con lo que consumimos. Yo creo que nos hace falta el siguiente paso, ¿cómo se provoca la consciencia?

Leer: *Defending Beef: The Case for Sustainable Meat Production* (también de Nicolette Hahn Niman).

Sarah says

Part documentary on modern farming, part memoir, Niman tells what she learned on her journey through battling pollution by industrial ag companies and her relationship with the sustainable farming advocate and cattle rancher she eventually married.

My frustration with her book is that I feel like she tries to make her argument through two distinct methods: her thorough research, which really got me to rethink things; and her claims of the moral superiority of traditional farming, which made me want to throw the book across the room and never pick it up again.

This is where I need to put in the fact that I grew up on a hog farm that became increasingly confinement based, so my focus may be a little hog-centric, but Niman does a good job of detailing the history and development of industrial farming for several kinds of livestock. It also means that I came into this book with some pretty strong opinions of advocates against industrial farming methods.

When it came to hog farming I was completely swayed by her argument that environmental regulations have been manipulated by the corporate farms to either be too lax or poorly enforced, but when she tried to transition that into arguing that all hog confinement facilities are inherently bad I didn't see the same well-reasoned argument laid out. Clearly there are problems in the pork industry stemming from mismanagement and more attention to profit than animal welfare, but that doesn't mean that all confinement facilities are run that way and can't be run in a responsible way.

When she visits a hog confinement facility run by a farmer clearly concerned with the welfare of his animals, her tone gives away the fact that she has already passed judgement before inspecting the building. She keeps referring to confinement buildings as "depressing" and "dreary". When she's allowed to pick up one of the baby pigs she thinks that she's shown this pig "the sole taste of human kindness [it] will ever know." As someone who's main chores in high school involved caring for new piglets in a confinement facility, I can tell you she's flat-out wrong that farmers never show kindness to the animals in confinement buildings.

On the other hand, when she visits her husband's feedlot, the area of beef production she admits there are some problems with, she instantly assesses the animals as healthy and happy. That was the way I felt about visiting my farrowing houses. I talked to the sows as I made my rounds through the building each morning and made sure to give each piglet personal attention as I processed new litters. I was proud of my happy pigs. But just like her assumption that all confinement raised hogs are unhappy, neither one is clear evidence as to the actual condition of hogs raised in confinement buildings.

The moralizing tone continues as she visits more farms associated with her husband's sustainable farming brand and farms considering joining Niman Ranch. Everything is wonderful and rosy here. The one dead calf she talks about is a wonderful story of getting the dead calf's mother to foster another calf who's mother is sick. Whereas when she visits an industrialized dairy farm, the one dead calf there is grimly documented as evidence of what a terrible place this is.

Her smug, condescending tone pissed me off so much because this book has so much promise. She's clearly done her research and she makes a lot of good points, but the attitude she took during the tours of hog facilities, that she automatically knew more than the folks who were raising these animals for a living, made me want to disregard all the well laid out research that had preceded. When she brushed off the eager industrial farmers as poor misguided souls, I wanted to ask what she would realistically do in their shoes.

To be fair, one of the final chapters goes into more detail about the manipulations of agribusiness giving family farmers little choice but to fall in line with the industrial methods they espouse, but it still feels like she doesn't see these farmers as individuals unless they're running traditional, pasture-based operations. While she does a great job of pointing out the rigged system created by agribusiness that has forced most family farmers into adopting at least some industrialization, she can't help lumping all non-pasture farming into the same inherently evil bunch, which gets back to the whole reason why I want to discount everything she says, despite the fact that her research is pretty solid.

Normally I like non-fiction with a little personality, but from Niman I would much rather read a book of just her research than a book interspersed with her personal stories of all the morally superior decisions she's made during her life.

I realize I'm focusing on what I hate in this review, when really it was more of a 50/50 split for me. The research and history of how current farming practices got to the place they are today really was enlightening. While I don't agree with all the arguments she makes, I will agree with her on the importance of learning more about where your food comes from and putting more pressure on governments to protect family farmers who have the welfare of their community and livestock in the forefront over corporate agribusiness, which appears to care solely about profit, to the detriment of rural communities' social and environmental welfare.

Annie says

This book is part memoir, part history and partly just informative. It belongs to the same family as the current popular food reformers in the Michael Pollan camp, but it's distinctly separate as well.

The story begins with Niman's first experiences with industrial hog farming as Robert Kennedy Jr.'s lead attorney for his environmental action group, Waterkeepers. Legal drama interspersed with tales of environmental degradation and human interest stories made the whole thing pretty compelling, although Niman is neither a great poet nor journalist. I doubt the whole Law and Order meets donning muck boots and wading through poisonous pig shit thing is exciting to everyone.

I also liked the aside in the middle of this saga, a short but detailed history of twentieth century industrialized farming in the United States. There's not much new information, if you've already done some reading on the subject, but there's some good nuggets, and I really liked how historical facts are given the same credence as the subjective change in the lives of farm families and their animals throughout the experience of farm

modernization.

After Niman leaves Waterkeepers due to a conflict with a manager, the book gets a little slow. Niman's bias against local food movements and toward the way her new husband runs his cattle ranch is off-putting. I think she would benefit from recognizing that she has the same message as people who advocate for local food... that it's not always about how far it's traveled, it's precisely that local food allows one to know their source and to support their local communities and ecosystems.

The reason I gave this book 4 stars instead of 2 stars is the chapter called Answering Obstacles to Reform. Niman succinctly offers answers to the questions continually fretted by agribusiness, answers that never seem to be fully addressed by any one person in the contemporary local/organic/workers' rights contingency. Is industrial farming necessary for the nutritional needs of the world, in any way, shape or form? Or for that matter, do technologies like genetic modification or breeding for maximum production really increase human quality of life? Numerous studies and the author's own well reasoned and intuitive qualitative observations decidedly point to no.

The book tends to drift towards an animal rights angle on the whole issue, which is kind of a no no in the moderate press, as Niman is all too aware. For her, this resolves itself into a defense of traditional farming, which I really appreciated. Those who see all farming as a form of animal slavery and torture get very little sympathy from her.

One major criticism I have is that the book was clearly written over a span of about 8 years (2000-2008) and the dated information in most of the book makes it feel like you're reading something that was written before the explosion of media concerning the same subject matter. A book published in 2009 should not leave you wondering what has transpired since 2002 concerning the broad range of interesting topics it covered.

Bill Laine says

"While I fully accept the appropriateness of humans raising animals for food, I do not accept that humans have a right to treat animals cruelly in the process, least of all for the purpose of higher profits"

That sentiment about sums up the philosophy of Nicolette Hahn Niman after a books worth of life-journey and immersion in the practices of producing food from animals.

Bobby Kennedy, Jr decides to set his Waterkeepers organization after the confinement pork industry because of the strain they put on the natural systems they inhabit. He hires attorney Niman to be the point person. Niman happily abandons her Manhattan life for the role of environmental activist. In the first part of the book we learn the confinement meat industry and the harms that can come of it. We also meet farmers who have avoided the trap of industrial production, developing a culture of respect for nature and the animals.

Our author eventually moves on from the Waterkeepers campaign, lives a little more life, does a little more activism, and marries one of the good farmers she has come to know. She moves to his California ranch and throws herself in to the life of a ranch wife. She discovers the joys of raising animals in the traditional ways and comes to love the work and rhythms of ranching.

She ends with a summary of the progress she sees in the holistic ranching world and a plea to consumers to be more concerned about the source of their food.

I had already read Michael Pollan's "Omnivore's Dilemma" and it had helped me see some of the ways our society has gone wrong in our constant efforts to make more and make it cheaper. This book puts an exclamation point on the issue. Nicolette Hahn Niman is a good writer. She is well versed in her subject and she is passionate about the state of our food supply. Don't read this book if you want to keep getting your regular meat supply at the supermarket or if you don't want to be put off the occasional quarter pounder. Do read it if you want to know what we are capable of doing to ourselves in the name of "efficiency" and how you can turn your back on that system.

Steve says

A very interesting, fact-filled book.

The negatives: several typos (annoying), the middle drags on a bit, and it is a slight bit of "propaganda" for Niman Ranch.

The positives definitely outweigh the negatives, however, and I found myself very into the book, especially in the beginning and end.

I'd say my favorite section (where I learned the most) turned out to be the section on seafood and farmed fish; I learned a lot about eating it, and Niman's information debunked a lot of hearsay about seafood/fish being the "ok alternative" when eating in restaurants. I'll definitely be more picky when ordering it now.

Also, living in North Carolina, I much appreciated the information on industrial pig production and how my state's politicians are swayed (bought, perhaps) by the large-scale pork producers to add, change/modify, and/or ignore laws to suit the industry's needs (i.e. \$), not their constituents' needs (like clean water or safe air to breathe).

Maddie says

If you are going to read a book about where food comes from, read this one.

This title was chosen for the 2012 Linn Area Reads program - which brings the community together through reading a single book. I started too late to participate in the book discussions but am excited about the various events in the next few months including meeting the author!

At first glance I thought this book would be similar to Jonathan Safran Foer's Eating Animals: part memoir, part indictment of the industrial food industry. Both books look at different segments of big ag animal business: beef, pork, poultry, seafood, etc. But Righteous Porkchop is the better book by far.

Foer's book is very focused on eliciting gut responses: for example the section page 24 is called "The case for eating dogs." Niman never pulls any PR punches like that. She presents her case methodically and rationally but does not lack readability. Righteous Porkchop is part-memoir because Niman's life has become about the issue of factory farms and the threat they pose to animals, to small farmers, to the environment, and

to us. Her life has become irrevocably intertwined with these issues and that keeps her interjections of personal stories grounded in this book.

Righteous Porkchop is not a vegetarian manifesto (although Niman is a vegetarian, she is also a cattle rancher). Instead it is an argument for humane and responsible treatment and raising of animals that provide us with milk, eggs, and meat. Niman writes that current large scale industrial practices hurt local economies and small farms, maintain low costs only by polluting our air, water, and ground and by using tax dollars for subsidies unavailable to small farmers, and by taking animals away from nature so that they suffer.

But the biggest and best part of this book (in my opinion) is that Niman argues (and provides in my mind) that these practices are not necessary - for example she writes that the same number of pigs are raised in the United States today as were at the start of the 20th century. The difference is that much larger numbers are raised on a much smaller number of farms. This bad for the pigs, its bad for the environment (TONS of POO anyone?), and its bad for us (the result is less flavorful meat that is raised with antibiotics and is contributing to antibiotic-resistant bacteria).

Instead, we should "vote with our fork" for meat and animal products that are raised humanely, responsibly, and sustainably.

Zinta says

For many years, I thought I had been doing the right thing, eating the right foods and watching out for my health. I thought I was an environmentalist, caring about the preservation and good stewardship of the natural world we live in.

Holy cow, was I wrong.

Some time ago, I was reading another good book about human behavior, and what is required for us to behave against our own values. *Compartmentalization* was a concept I came to understand is absolutely necessary for most of us to act in ways that are not in accordance to our own values. To do wrong, we must push out of our awareness the realization of consequences to our actions. We must stuff things into a locked away place and live in denial.

Picture the mind as a house with many rooms, each with a door. Well, there was this room in my mind ... and it had a door, and I had firmly closed it. Inside that room was a vague realization that animal abuse was happening in order to put food on my plate. Gee, I love that steak, that juicy burger, that slab of bacon! Did I really want to know how it got there?

Now I know. The door to that room is wide open, and I have no intention of closing it again. Once most of us are aware, most of us do change our behavior. Most of us, when you get down to it, are pretty nice people. Most of us want to do the right thing and we love our pets, we love the natural world around us, and we care to preserve it.

So how is it that our supermarkets are filled with food produced in food factories, by an industrialized form of agriculture that is fast ruining our environment and obliterating a type of lifestyle many of us find admirable? How is it that we tolerate the cruelest forms of animal abuse imaginable? And consider this: we don't have to. We can still enjoy that steak, sizzle that bacon, and chow down on that juicy burger. Yes, we

can have our delicious porkchop and eat it, too.

The person breaking down my denial door is author Nicolette Hahn Niman. Assigned to write a story about food production and food activism for the Kalamazoo College alumni magazine, I introduced myself to Nicolette when she (an alumnae) visited the college campus. She was talking to a rapt audience about her new book, *Righteous Porkchop*. Slides illustrating her experiences as a food activist working for Bobby Kennedy, Jr. added images to her words, and I'm pretty sure I could hear doors flying open throughout that room.

Niman had grown up in Kalamazoo, Michigan, majored in biology at Kalamazoo College, and had been raised in a family that shopped for local foods before it was something of a fad (a good one) to do so. By the time she was an adult, she was a vegetarian, and she considered herself pretty safe in thinking she was not participating in livestock abuse. But wait. She was still enjoying dairy products. She was still eating eggs and cheese. She still had an occasional meal of fish.

And me? I've been eating skinless chicken breasts that I purchased at the supermarket in frozen bags, along with salmon fillets, and only the occasional chunk of red meat. That's good, right?

Wrong.

Niman's wake up call was when she heard Bobby Kennedy, Jr. speak in Kalamazoo. That talk led to a meeting that led to a job offer. Nicolette was offered a job to work for Kennedy as a food activist. She would have to know a lot about pigs and a lot about, well, pig poop. Dream job? Turns out, it was. Nicolette had some political savvy already, having served as a city commissioner in Kalamazoo, but now she was traveling the country investigating industrialized food production.

In his foreword to Niman's book, Kennedy writes: "*The waste from hog factories is prodigious. A hog facility with 100,000 animals can produce the same amount of fecal waste as a city of one million people... Waste from these factories can contain a witch's brew of nearly 400 dangerous substances—including heavy metals, antibiotics, biocides, chemical disinfectants, pesticides and disease-causing viruses and microbes.*"

A necessary evil? You may be thinking ... jobs in a lousy economy, maybe?

Kennedy writes: "*Each pig factory puts family farmers out of business, replacing high-quality agricultural jobs with hourly-wage workers in degrading positions that are among the lowest paid and most dangerous in the United States. Because the animals are fed and watered by computer and are given almost no husbandry, as few as two workers may tend an operation with ten thousand pigs. Conditions are so miserable that employees seldom endure these jobs for more than a few months. Major slaughterhouses, including those owned by Smithfield, typically have a 100 percent annual employee turnover rate.*"

But surely that nagging global problem of hunger?

Niman writes: "*Global food production has actually outpaced population growth. Every year the world produces enough wheat, rice, and other grains to provide 4.3 pounds of food per person per day (including two and a half pounds of grain, beans, and nuts, a pound of fruits and vegetables, and nearly a pound of meat, milk, and eggs.) Moreover, in the last four decades, per capita food production has grown 16 percent faster than the world's population, meaning there is now more food per person available on the planet than ever before in history. Clearly, abundance is not an issue.*"

I'm hearing a chorus of belches at the buffet table by now, but it is coming from only one side of the table. Niman is right. We have only to look around at our epidemic of obesity to realize the table has a shorter leg on one side, all the food sliding into one set of mouths at one end of the table, while the other end is left high and dry. It is not about abundance; it is about distribution. Hunger is about poverty. If people have the resources and the means with which to purchase or grow their own food, they will not go hungry. This call is to focus our efforts where they belong—on eliminating poverty.

So let's get back to what are the real issues at hand: the ills of industrialized food production. And I choose the word "ill" with multiple purpose. To read Niman's account, the results of her nationwide research, in-person visits to food factories and feedlots and slaughterhouses is enough to make you ill. And it should. And it does. Because the abusive conditions of these great numbers of confined animals, purposefully (and don't doubt that purpose, just think "out of sight, out of mind") kept behind closed doors where most of us will never see what is really going on, is also making the animals ill. Living creatures, no matter what kind, need a few basics to survive and thrive: fresh air, exercise, good food. Subtract all of these, as industrialized food production does, and you have to substitute growth hormones, antibiotics, tranquilizers, steroids, and a host of other drugs just to keep these animals alive.

I stopped eating veal decades ago. All it took was seeing one photograph. That photograph appeared in Time magazine, and I can see it vividly in my mind still. It is a black and white photograph of a tiny newborn calf, standing wobbly and great-eyed in a wooden crate which prevented any and all movement. That crate prevents movement because people like tender meat. That is, meat without muscle. Get the picture? To prevent any movement that might develop muscle, that baby animal is crated for all its living days so that you can eat a tender piece of veal.

I was an easy convert. I already had one foot in the crate, or out of it. But Niman's book led me into the immense metal barracks that hold battery cages of thousands upon thousands of chickens, the cages that hold pigs until they start to wave their heads back and forth and chew the air in what are visible signs of an animal going mad. Niman took me into the feedlot and the slaughterhouse, to realize that a disturbing number of animals are actually dismembered and gutted while still alive and fully conscious. Niman made me understand that we so little value the life of the chicken that after one year of holding these hens, their beaks cut off to prevent pecking each other out of stress, in cages so small that they cannot even turn around, that once they are considered "laid out," they are sucked up into immense vacuums and dumped into bins with rotor blades to chop them up into mincemeat. Mind you, still alive. It's enough to make me put that drumstick down.

And this is necessary ... why?

Which is Niman's point. It is not only not necessary, it is, in fact, detrimental. This kind of food production is detrimental to animals, detrimental to human beings, detrimental to the environment. Wastes from confined animals end up in lagoons of liquefied manure that are often pumped into our water sources or allowed to seep into soil (the author writes about her helicopter adventures flying over these lagoons as food factory workers illegally flush them into nearby rivers).

If you thought manure was a terrific fertilizer, you are right. But not in these incredible quantities. On traditional farms—those that we still try to sell to our children while singing ditties about Ol' MacDonald had a farm—manure happens naturally, in quantities that can be used in soil to grow crops, and with the addition of sunshine, killing harmful bacteria. There's a whole process there that works beautifully before we start super-sizing it and messing with it.

Instead, we have Mad Cow disease, and microbes flowing into streams and rivers and lakes. We have salmonella. We have noxious gasses that have been increasingly connected to a long list of ailments in anyone unlucky enough to live anywhere in the vicinity of modern agriculture. We have a growing mountain of evidence that industrialized farming is responsible for more climate-changing pollution than the auto industry and the cars we drive. Add to that statistics showing that Americans are throwing away more than half the food we produce in this country, and you can see that this is a recipe for disaster.

Just when I want to go screaming down that hall of suddenly open doors that have revealed to me the horrors of food factories, however, Niman lets some sunshine in the window. Yes, there is a better way. And we begin to understand that “progress” is not always foreword movement. Sometimes it is regression. Sometimes we have to go back to that place in the road where we took the wrong fork.

Traditional farming had it right all along. While there is always room for improvement, farming in a manner that raises animals in a humane and healthy manner produces better quality food. In other words, if you don't give a hoot about the pig, consider all that flavor and nutrition you and your family are missing. Niman takes us from the feedlot into the gourmet kitchen, where chefs across the country are discovering—or rediscovering, if you will—that foods coming from traditional farms taste a lot better.

Our palettes have become desensitized, but once you taste the difference between meat that comes from an animal that has been grazing on grass and eating healthy foods (you don't even want to know how much animal poop is being used as feed for other animals, but you should know, because you are the next animal in line), you won't want to go back. Ever tasted a greenhouse tomato and then taken a bite out of vine-ripened tomato? Then you have an idea what this food adventure is all about. It's a flavor explosion. (Yes, I've been on a food adventure of my own since reading this book, and it's been truly delicious. I had no idea what I was missing.)

Niman's book is unnerving. It pounds sense into our compartmentalized brains. Every lie we have come to believe about food is gutted. The author shows us what is going on behind all those closed doors and hidden-away buildings. She gives practical advice about how to shop organic, and what the labels mean and don't mean. "Natural" is often anything but. "Organic," well, usually. "Open-range" can mean the door is left open for a while on the food factory, or that a chicken foot may have touched cement for a moment, but not earth. This is an exposé, and she encourages voting with your fork.

Personally, I don't think I have ever encountered an easier crusade to join. It just tastes so darn good. The laws are mostly already in place, Niman writes. It is just a matter of insisting our legislators enforce them. Government subsidies are supporting food factories and helping to destroy traditional farms. Get the government out of the way, and organic food will be a lot more reasonable in price. It's a movement to reclaim our good health, live in a sustainable manner on our good earth, and simply to do the right thing with respect to all living beings.

Still not enough for you? Okay, fine. Niman also tells a terrific love story. Ever heard of a vegetarian who falls in love with a cattle rancher? Nicolette Hahn Niman is the wife of nationally respected cattle rancher Bill Niman, formerly of Niman Ranch (you may see that on your menu at quality restaurants). The two (plus young son Miles) are now living on a cattle ranch in California, raising beef cattle and heritage turkeys.

There you have it. A delicious cause that will make you feel good, and right with the world, when you sit down to dinner. A love story with a happy ending. A well-written and interesting read that has just enough facts and figures to put it on solid ground, but not so dry that you won't want to turn the page. My pages kept zipping by. A horror story that will keep you up nights, too, and should ... but it is one you can change. Start

with this important book—and start voting with your fork.

~Zinta Aistars for The Smoking Poet Winter 2009-2010 Issue

De says

The more I learn about industrial farming the less I wonder why we're all sick, fat and tired. Honestly. And now to see that we're messing with the organic standards as well just makes me look at my local farmers who actually take pride in what they do. I'll be happily handing my cash over to them.

This book was definitely full of good information, if a little slow to read. Nicole's passion for research definitely shows but at times makes for slow going. A must read for all those concerned about how our food is being "grown" instead of "raised", Mrs. Niman goes into great detail about her visits to industrial farms. Yech. This could be the book that makes the disconnect between the filth she describes in how these animals are grown and the "clean" meat you see in the supermarket disappear, I would hope.

BookBec says

Wow, did this book ever get off track! We spend the first half with Nicolette as she works for Waterkeeper, learns about hog factory farm pollution, and files lawsuits demanding that industrial ag mend its ways. Then -- kaboom! -- she quits that job, the lawsuits are left dangling, and we head off to learn about her new life as a rancher's wife and hear her musings on beef, dairy, fish, food shopping, and religion. Perhaps she had a book contract before she quit Waterkeeper and had to do something to fill out the page count. Regardless, it was a major thematic shift.

Was the information useful and thought-provoking? Yes, although I've heard much of it before. I was looking forward to the specific angle this book seemed to address: legal challenges against factory farming. I was sorely disappointed not to follow the Waterkeeper work to any sort of conclusion. On page 87, Nicolette says, "I felt we were finally on our way to making some real, lasting change." Did it happen? Well, you won't find out in the rest of these 278 pages.

My other complaints were the editing, occasional gaps in facts, and the oversharing of personal information. There were many comma problems, both missing and unnecessary, and a whole lot of missing hyphens. Sadly, the credibility of your argument is diminished by problematic writing. The same with "I guess" as a source of your information: "My guess is that fish feel especially happy when ..." (p.220) is not a valid scientific argument. Neither is "I've seen no specific account of this savings, but my guess is that it's substantial" (p.243). And Nicolette has a tendency to tell you more about herself than is necessary. Her too-tight lawyer suit and her cold beer after a day of press conferences particularly stood out to me.

In summary, it was an interesting read, but it could have been so much better with tighter editing and a commitment to following one story line to its conclusion. Two and a half stars.

tiffany says

this is a very informative book, i have read many books on factory farming so a lot of the information was not new to me, however, it was from a fresh perspective, a vegetarian (very much not a no-meat activist) learns the ropes and marries a cattle rancher..quite the twist. i will say it was very enlightening to the cattle/beef production versus all other. definitely some good facts there. also, i learned that 80% of all seafood and fish is imported and 90% of shrimp is, almost all from china where there is major problems with drug and chemical contamination that is rampant. i never ate fish or seafood so it was not something i paid particular attention to but needless to say if i did now i would read this very very carefully and i would not be eating anything fishy very much.

i am vegan and am not one to try to change anyones mind about anything but i think it is a total lapse to not be adamant in knowing where your food comes from and how it is raised, humane treatment is paramount and not to insist on it says something. it is not enough to assume a label on eggs stating cage free at the store means it is all hunkey dorey, mass production and cage free do not go hand in hand.
enough said.

Pia says

One of the best books I've read in years. this was a really well written book on industrial farming. She starts with the hog industry in NC, and how the closed containment farms are a disaster for the environment, the polluted rivers and estuaries are a result of the manure and urine of the hogs. And how superbugs/viruses have developed as a result of antibiotics that are added to the daily feed of the animals (pig, chicken) living in crowded, stressed, disease laden environments. The antibx come out in the manure, which is collected in manure lagoons, disgusting, which then has to be disseminated somewhere - sometimes onto corn and soy fields, sometimes directly onto pastures that cows are crazing on. (yuck). Illegal dumping is commonplace, and it ends up in the groundwater, poisoning fish and plant life. She goes on to talk about all animal farming - dairy, meat cattle, chicken, egg, fish farming. I'll be buying this book as a gift for years to come. Everyone should read it to become aware of where their food comes from, it isn't a book that tries to make you a veggie, just an informed consumer. And she provides a compelling argument that our meat/eggs/milk don't have to be produced this way, smaller farms can be more economically feasible. And certainly healthier for all of us. Read it.

Stephan says

What do you do if your dream home in a lush green rural area starts to get surrounded by hog farms? You sell before it gets too stinky. This book would be a great introduction to all those who are unaware about the dangers of CAFOs.

Sierra Bailey says

I need to start off with this book, as I have been talking about it non stop for almost 3 months now. I should begin by stating that it didn't register when I picked this book up (I must not have read the back) at Barnes & Noble that it was authored by the wife of Bill Niman, founder of Niman Ranch. It made the book that much

more wonderful though, as I lived and ran restaurants in the Hudson Valley of NY for a few years and was very familiar with the high quality of both their meat and philosophy. If you have an interest in food quality and eating well, this book is extremely educational on the subject of industrial farming and food production in the US. I know farmers and have spoken to them at length about the battle in this country to make a living at farming while maintaining humane conditions for their animals. This book gets into it. It also brought light to the reality of chickens eating chickens and what that means to the humans who consume them. I loved this book.

g-na says

Righteous Porkchop is very similar to The Face on Your Plate, which I just finished reading, but it is also an entirely different book. The similarity lies in that R.P. really does tell you the truth about food; you learn about the major types of animal foods--milk, eggs, beef, pork, chicken, and fish--as well as specifics about how the animals are housed, fed, drugged, and treated. It goes in-depth on subjects such as how "old-fashioned" traditional farms actually improve the soil in their environment, and how "modern" industrialized factory farms pollute and destroy not only the land in their immediate vicinity, but also water sources many miles away.

The difference between these two books lies in how they are presented. Righteous Porkchop is extremely well-researched and written. Some eight years in the making, the author has done her homework. She has a similar mindset to the author of The Face on Your Plate (she does not eat meat nor tolerate animal suffering), but unlike him she never demands the general population stop consuming animal products, and in fact, counts combatative militant vegans as a liability against the crusade for animal welfare.

At 278 pages (plus an additional 32 pages of references and notes) R.P. packs a tremendous amount of information into a small size, including a chapter about "Answering Obstacles to Reform" which both addresses and dismisses the fallacies that "industrialized farming is necessary to feed the world," and "there is not enough land to support the amount of traditional farming needed to replace factory farming" (both statements are used by the factory farming industry as a way to drum up support for their industry). This book is highly recommended for everyone--omnivores, vegetarians, and vegans-- and especially for people who don't care much about where their food comes from. There's a lot to be learned.

Katherine says

This book was extremely influential in my understanding of where meat comes from and the horrible condition of farmers and animals in CAFOs.

Honestly, if you're choosing between Pollan's Omnivore's Dilemma (which I also loved) and this one, I think Niman's book is harder-hitting and highlights the effects of CAFOs on the environment and farmers better than his. (Although she focuses primarily on Pork.)
