

Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives

Carolyn Steel

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Carolyn Steel : Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Quest for Food and Our Living EnvironmentBy FCRichelieuThe author gives an intriguing account of how our relationship with food has, through the ages, shaped the environment that we live in. She tells a vivid tale that started way back when our ancestors were still hunter-gatherers. Our quest for food has determined where and how our cities are built. The processes of farming, raising animals, sourcing, storing, transporting, selling and buying, cooking, etc make up a complex network with which we are intricately linked. The

evolving roles of meals shared at home or in the community tell an interesting story. As an architect, the author also has interesting insights on how food has influenced architecture and city planning. The lively story turns rather bleak when we come to look at modern food preparation and logistics. The extent to which a few big food businesses have come to monopolise food supply in supermarkets in modern cities is truly disturbing. These conglomerates have taken over from us decisions on what foods to grow or raise, limiting varieties to those that are most suited for mass production and quick monetary return. I, for one, have given little thought to the issue before reading this book (although I have mumbled now and then about supermarkets stocking only tomatoes that are tasteless). Worse still, the great deal of processed food that the industries churn out contribute not so much to nutrition as to obesity. For anyone interested in the subject matter, this should be a delightful read, with sobering food for thought (pardon the pun) nonetheless. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating 'story' of cities and our food By V. Wiegell

I've read the book and absolutely loved it - bought it to give as a present to friends. The book presents a view on the relationship between cities and the way we relate to our food (production, processing, transportation, consumption). It places the relationship in a personal, historical, social-economic perspective. Carolyn Steel presents a story that is rich in detail and in concepts. Her writing style keeps a good balance, neither woolly or academic nor infantile. The reader is challenged. For anyone interested in the way we shape our world (with some of its excesses) and how it came about will find lots of interesting ideas. One of the details I liked, for example, is about the number of apple varieties in the UK (over 2000) originally grown and how nowadays most apples consumed are just two (Golden delicious and Granny smith) varieties - neither indigenous. All that because these two sorts fit the logistic, commercial requirements best though neither are particularly tasty. Based on this, and many other examples, Steel shows how a particular myopic logic has led us to a situation in which we are 'poorer' in many respects. In the discussion she does not spare the reader/consumer/politicians/entrepreneurs without becoming vindictive or pedantic. The book has a strong UK outlook. For non-UK readers some more example from other countries would have been nice. I enjoyed enormously the book nonetheless. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic look at Anglo-American Food Systems By Georgia Riepe

Carolyn Steel wonderfully illustrates the history of our cities and their food systems from Ancient Greece and Rome through to contemporary agribusinesses, marking the path through this history with insightful commentary on the intersections of food, culture, government, and urban planning. As a British architect, she pays particular attention to ideas of modern utopia; she drives the reader to question how culture can better devise and live out sustainable cities. Anyone who is interested in broadening their perspectives of food will enjoy this, especially those who have exhausted the current base of American authors on the politics of food (Pollan, etc.). Steel's a joy to read and very hard to put down.

Cities cover just 2% of the world's surface, but consume 75% of the world's resources Global food production increased by 145% in the last 4 decades of the 20th century - yet an estimated 800 million people are still hungry* In 2005 British supermarkets sent half a million tonnes of edible food to landfill - the whole food sector put together sent 17 million tonnes* One quarter of the British population is obese - one in three meals we eat is a ready meal WHY? The relationship between food and cities is fundamental to our every day lives. Food shapes cities, and through them, it moulds us - along with the countryside that feeds us. The gargantuan effort necessary to feed cities arguably has a greater social and physical impact on us and our planet than anything else we do. Yet few of us are conscious of the process and we rarely stop to wonder how food reaches our plates. Hungry City examines the way in which modern food production has damaged the balance of human existence, and reveals that we have yet to resolve a centuries-old dilemma - one which holds the key to a host of current problems, from obesity, the inexorable rise of the supermarkets, to the destruction of the natural world. Carolyn Steel follows food on its journey - from the land (and sea) to market and supermarket, kitchen to table, waste-dump and back again - exploring the historical roots and the contemporary issues at each stage of food's cycle. She shows how our lives and our environment are being manipulated but explains how we can change things for the better. Original, inspiring and written with infectious enthusiasm and belief, Hungry City illuminates an issue that is fundamental to us all.

“Hungry City is a sinister real-life sequel to Animal Farm with the plot turned upside down by time in ways even George Orwell could not have foreseen.” — Observer

About the Author Carolyn Steel is an architect, lecturer, and writer.