



Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

By Barbara Kingsolver, Camille Kingsolver, Steven L. Hopp

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Author Barbara Kingsolver and her family abandoned the industrial-food pipeline to live a rural life—vowing that, for one year, they'd only buy food raised in their own neighborhood, grow it themselves, or learn to live without it. Part memoir, part journalistic investigation, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is an enthralling narrative that will open your eyes in a hundred new ways to an old truth: You are what you eat.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. [Signature]Reviewed by *Nina Planck*Michael Pollan is the crack investigator and graceful narrator of the ecology of local food and the toxic logic of industrial agriculture. Now he has a peer. Novelist Kingsolver recounts a year spent eating home-grown food and, if not that, local. Accomplished gardeners, the Kingsolver clan grow a large garden in southern Appalachia and spend summers "putting food by," as the classic kitchen title goes. They make pickles, chutney and mozzarella; they jar tomatoes, braid garlic and stuff turkey sausage. Nine-year-old Lily runs a heritage poultry business, selling eggs and meat. What they don't raise (lamb, beef, apples) comes from local farms. Come winter, they feast on root crops and canned goods, menus slouching toward asparagus. Along the way, the Kingsolver family, having given up industrial meat years before, abandons its vegetarian ways and discovers the pleasures of conscientious carnivory. This field—local food and sustainable agriculture—is crowded with books in increasingly predictable flavors: the earnest manual, diary of an epicure, the environmental battle cry, the accidental gardener. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is all of these, and much smarter. Kingsolver takes the genre to a new literary level; a well-paced narrative and the apparent ease of the beautiful prose makes the pages fly. Her tale is both classy and disarming, substantive and entertaining, earnest and funny. Kingsolver is a moralist ("the conspicuous consumption of limited resources has yet to be accepted widely as a spiritual error, or even bad manners"), but more often wry than pious. Another hazard of the genre is snobbery. You won't find it here. Seldom do paeans to heirloom tomatoes (which I grew up selling at farmers' markets) include equal respect for outstanding modern hybrids like Early Girl. Kingsolver has the ear of a journalist and the accuracy of a naturalist. She makes short, neat work of complex topics: what's risky about the vegan diet, why animals belong on ecologically sound farms, why bitterness in lettuce is good. Kingsolver's clue to help greenhorns remember what's in season is the best I've seen. You trace the harvest by botanical development, from buds to fruits to roots. Kingsolver is not the first to note our national "eating disorder" and the injuries industrial agriculture wreaks, yet this practical vision of how we might eat instead is as fresh as just-picked sweet corn. The narrative is peppered with useful sidebars on industrial agriculture and ecology (by husband Steven Hopp) and recipes (by daughter Camille), as if to show that local food—in the growing, buying, cooking, eating and the telling—demands teamwork. (May) *Nina Planck* is the author of *Real Food: What to Eat and Why* (Bloomsbury USA, 2006).

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—This book chronicles the year that Barbara Kingsolver, along with her husband and two daughters, made a commitment to become locavores—those who eat only locally grown foods. This first entailed a move away from their home in non-food-producing Tucson to a family farm in Virginia, where they got right down to the business of growing and raising their own food and supporting local farmers. For teens who grew up on supermarket offerings, the notion not only of growing one's own produce but also of harvesting one's own poultry was as foreign as the concept that different foods relate to different seasons. While the volume begins as an environmental treatise—the oil consumption related to transporting foodstuffs around the world is enormous—it ends, as the year ends, in a celebration of the food that physically nourishes even as the recipes and the memories of cooks and gardeners past nourish our hearts and souls. Although the book maintains that eating well is not a class issue, discussions of heirloom breeds and making cheese at home may strike some as high-flown; however, those looking for healthful alternatives to processed foods will find inspiration to seek out farmers' markets and to learn to cook and enjoy seasonal foods. Give this title to budding Martha Stewarts, green-leaning fans of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (Rodale, 2006), and

kids outraged by Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (Houghton, 2001).—Jenny Gasset, *Orange County Public Library, CA*

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

In this very topical memoir, Kingsolver has penned a "heroic story" that demonstrates how "growing your own fruits and vegetables, with people you love, can be as rewarding an experience as any on the face of the earth" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). It also may mark the first time fresh asparagus has been documented with such rapture. The author's passion and narrative prowess make *Animal* an entertaining, often page-turning read. Her biologist husband Steven offers pithy sidebars about the politics of sustainable agriculture, as well as advice on how to make a change at home. Eldest daughter Camille supplies simple, nutritious recipes. Their combined efforts resulted in nearly universal praise from the critics.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Allen Goehring:

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Marianne Haglund:

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