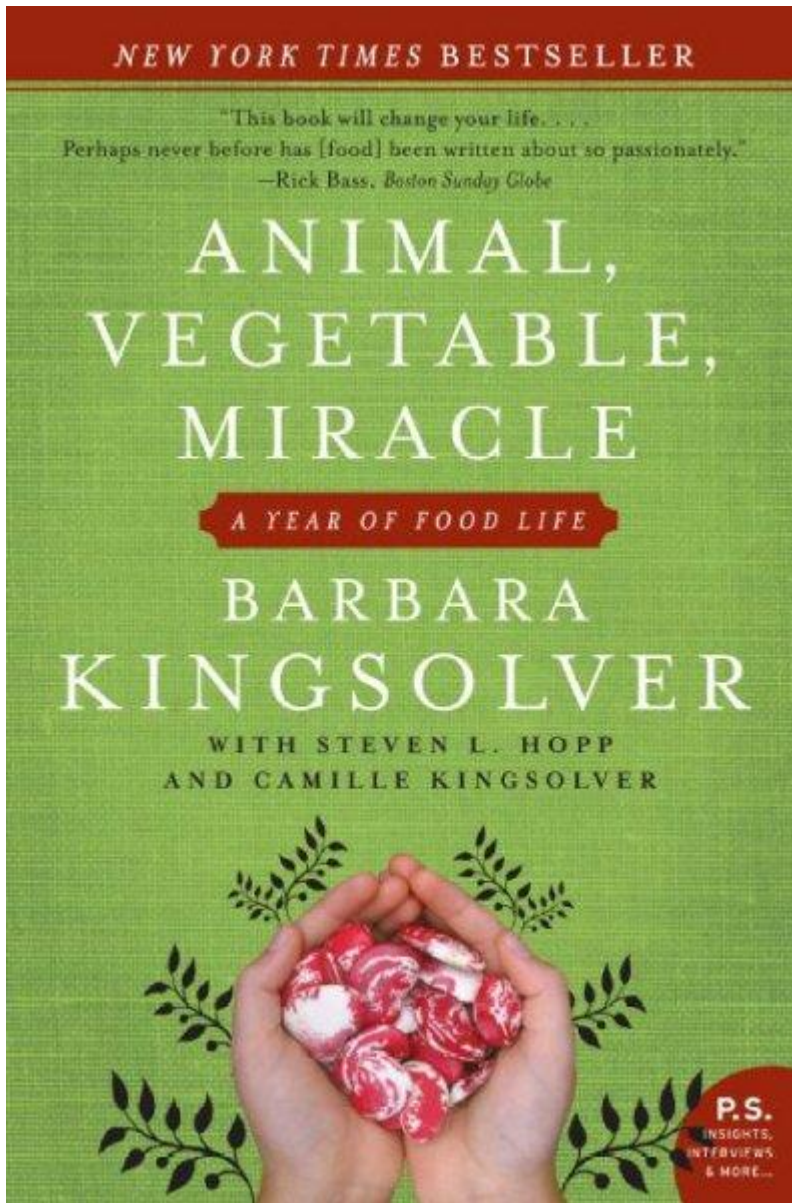
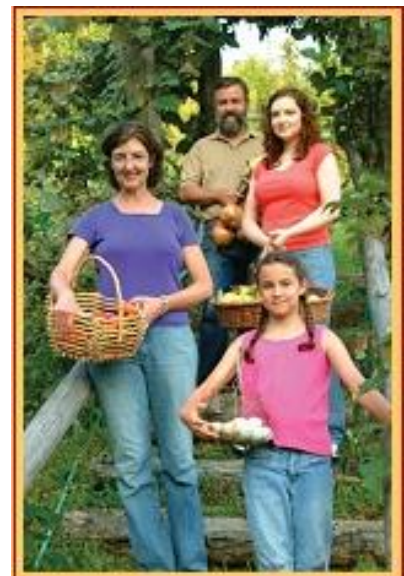


## About the book...



Kingsolver takes readers through the seasons, chronicling the joys and challenges of eating only foods that she, her husband, and two daughters grew in their backyard or purchased from neighboring farms. Part memoir, part cookbook, and part exposé of the American food industry, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is one family's inspiring story of discovering the truth behind the adage "you are what you eat" and a valuable resource for anyone looking to do the same.



*"This is the story of a year in which we made every attempt to feed ourselves animals and vegetables whose provenance we really knew . . . and of how our family was changed by our first year of deliberately eating food produced from the same place where we worked, went to school, loved our neighbors, drank the water, and breathed the air."*

### **About the author...**

(<http://www.kingsolver.com/home/index.asp>)

Barbara Kingsolver's twelve books of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction include the novels *The Bean Trees* and *The Poisonwood Bible*. Translated into nineteen languages, her work has won a devoted worldwide readership and many awards, including the National Humanities Medal. Her most recent book is the highly praised, *New York Times* bestselling *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, published in May 2007. She lives with her family on a farm in southwestern Virginia. Camille Kingsolver attends Duke University, where she studies biology, anatomy, and dance, and teaches yoga.

Steven L. Hopp teaches environmental studies at Emory and Henry College and conducts research in bioacoustics and the natural history of vireos.

## Awards

### **Book Sense Book of the Year Award for Adult Nonfiction Winners in 2008**

Ranked in **Time Magazine's Top 10 Nonfiction Books of 2007**

## Reviews

### *BookPage Reviews: Eating locally*

*Barbara Kingsolver puts homegrown food on the menu*

All stories, they say, begin in one of two ways: 'A stranger came to town,' or else, 'I set out upon a journey,'" writes novelist and essayist Barbara Kingsolver in ***Animal, Vegetable, Miracle***. The latter theme pervades her new memoir cum investigative nonfiction narrative, a faithful, funny and thought-provoking chronicle of a year in which the author and her family pulled up their big-city stakes and moved from Tucson, Arizona, to a farm in southwestern Virginia. The objective: to spend a year subsisting on food they would raise themselves, or purchase only from local sources, like farmers' markets.

"The project of taking this sort of sabbatical year really was something we had to do as a family," Kingsolver says, speaking from her Virginia farm. "I couldn't do it

by myself. And we talked about it for years—it's not something we did overnight." Indeed, the experiment germinated a while; its roots are clearly visible in her essay, "Lily's Chickens," (from the 2002 *Small Wonder* collection) in which she discusses the "energy crime" of American food transportation and the ethics of responsible eating.

Kingsolver's Appalachian adventure was her response to a conviction that America's food system "has been kidnapped," that our nation's food production and consumption habits have been hijacked ("there are ingredients on food labels we can't even pronounce!" she exclaims). She observes that we are now a mostly urban society disconnected from the land—the source of our sustenance. "To connect to it, we have to know what farmers do and how vegetables grow. It's a whole area of knowledge that has been lost from our culture in the last two generations," she says.

Contributing to this loss is America's reliance upon highly processed foods across all product lines, with foodstuffs routinely transported worldwide to satisfy our national cravings for any comestible, any time. "Americans put almost as much fossil fuel into our refrigerators as our cars," states Steven L. Hopp, Kingsolver's husband, in the book's first chapter.

As it turns out, this book has not one author, but three. It is a collaborative project that, Kingsolver admits, no one in the family saw coming. The idea to make a book, she says, had its genesis in practicality and generosity,

a way to inform people about how small, individual lifestyle changes (such as buying food locally and cooking at home) can make a huge difference in quality of life. And inform it does—accompanying Kingsolver's finely crafted, endearingly personal narrative are information-packed sidebars of no-nonsense prose by Hopp, a biologist. There are also delightful, earnest essays from her 19-year-old daughter, Camille, who comments on the whole adventure, nutritional issues and the sometimes embarrassing (sausage-making!) behaviors of parents. Rounding out this bi-generational perspective are family recipes and weekly meal plans (downloadable from the book's website, [www.animalvegetable.com](http://www.animalvegetable.com)). Readers—whether vegetarian or carnivore—will not go hungry, literally or literarily.

Nor was the Kingsolver-Hopp clan famished during their year of "cutting off the industrial pipeline and sinking into the local foodshed." Though Kingsolver reports that it *was* hard work cultivating the farm, and harvesting and storing the crops for use in the winter months, she says her family thrived on reconnecting with a bounteous earth and its cycles, and derived great pleasure from cooking and eating delicious meals. "This was a project that brought our family together," Kingsolver says.

This year of engaging with the land, of changing eating and purchasing habits, expanded a sense of plenty—not scarcity. During our conversation, she reveals that there has been a tremendous interest in the book, even

before its publication. And the question people repeatedly ask her is: What was the hardest thing to give up? This confounds Kingsolver, who feels that, in their year of eating consciously, they gained a sense of connection, awareness and fulfillment, and a gratitude for the earth's abundance and generosity. "We didn't drag through the year missing things," she says, "We had such a good time celebrating what we had and celebrating the seasons—it's really such a lesson for life, isn't it?" One thing they did not eschew, however, was coffee. "We wheedled out of that one!" she laughs, explaining that they purchased only fair-trade java.

Though they handily solved the coffee conundrum, situations arose that were not so easily dealt with, such as "harvesting" their livestock for the table. Just before our interview, Kingsolver had been out checking on her animals. "We just had lambs born yesterday," she enthuses. One of the book's most powerful essays, "You Can't Run Away on Harvest Day," rationally, but tenderly, discusses how humans kill other life forms—from worms, butterflies and broccoli to cattle—for sustenance. "People do get emotional about killing animals, but less than five percent of the population is vegetarian, which means that 95 percent of us eat animals, and we know that somebody killed them," Kingsolver says firmly. She knows that humans don't want to think about this, and says that it's hard for her, too, even though she takes great care in raising—and dispatching—her animals in the most humane ways possible. "I am a very soft-hearted person," she admits,

"and it's difficult to look your food in the eye and face the fact that someone had to kill it for you. But looking at it head-on allows you to make good decisions. Every book I've ever written is about something difficult—I don't shrink from raising the difficult questions."

After all our discussion of flora and fauna, I realized I hadn't queried Kingsolver about the third element of her book's title. What, I asked her, was your particular miracle? "Realizing that I could change," she answers, "that I could joyfully embrace a simpler, more sustainable way to live. We can act sensibly, return to our local economies and have a different world. Whether or not people read this book, fossil fuels are going to run out. The dinosaurs are not going to lie down and make more oil."

### *Kirkus Reviews*

With some assistance from her husband, Steven, and 19-year-old daughter, Camille, Kingsolver (*Prodigal Summer*, 2000, etc.) elegantly chronicles a year of back-to-the-land living with her family in Appalachia. After three years of drought, the author decamped from her longtime home in Arizona and set out with Steven, Camille and younger daughter Lily to inhabit fulltime his family's farm in Virginia. Their aim, she notes, was to "live in a place that could feed us," to grow their own food and join the increasingly potent movement led by organic growers and small exurban food producers. Kingsolver wants to know where her food is coming from: Her diary records her attempts to

consume only those items grown locally and in season while eschewing foods that require the use of fossil fuels for transport, fertilizing and processing. (In one of biologist Steven's terrific sidebars, "Oily Food," he notes that 17 percent of the nation's energy is consumed by agriculture.) From her vegetable patch, Kingsolver discovered nifty ways to use plentiful available produce such as asparagus, rhubarb, wild mushrooms, honey, zucchini, pumpkins and tomatoes; she also spent a lot of time canning summer foods for winter. The family learned how to make cheese, visited organic farms and a working family farm in Tuscany, even grew and killed their own meat. "I'm unimpressed by arguments that condemn animal harvest," writes Kingsolver, "while ignoring, wholesale, the animal killing that underwrites vegetal foods." Elsewhere, Steven explores business topics such as the good economics of going organic; the losing battle in the use of pesticides; the importance of a restructured Farm Bill; mad cow disease; and fair trade. Camille, meanwhile, offers anecdotes and recipes. Readers frustrated with the unhealthy, artificial food chain will take heart and inspiration here.

### *Library Journal*

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.

### *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 Tuscon 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).

## **Literary Criticism**

Title: The politics of the table

[ILLUSTRATIONS OMITTED]

It's gratifying to me to see how much food politics figures in public discussions these days. The New York Times runs op-ed pieces at least twice a month on food, and its Wednesday Dining In--Dining Out section and

Sunday magazine often address how America's food got to be the way it is. Even my sadly diminished local newspaper, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, made an inadvertently valuable contribution recently: John Ewolt's "*Keeping Costs Down*" (July 31, 2007) blithely reports on the cheapest sources of fueling oneself with industrial food, and even though he leaves out externalized costs such as pollution, fuel consumption, and illness, it is still food politics.

Add to those the recent spate of "I-ate-locally-for-an-entire-year" books, such as Alisa Smith and J. B. Mackinnon's *Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally* (2007), and the website of Jessica Prentice et al., [www.locavores.com](http://www.locavores.com), and you've got yourself a literary food revolution. Of sorts. Moving berries and lettuce halfway around the world simply so they're available out of season is daft at two levels: that of taste and that of energy conservation. But such concerns need to be balanced against those of the trade interests of small farmers everywhere, and too many locavore calls seem to ignore this.

Barbara Kingsolver's chronicle and screed, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, falls squarely into the category of "locavore" testimony. Interspersed with her text are helpful, sobering sidebars by her husband, environmentalist Steven L. Hopp, and sweetly thoughtful, contextualized recipes by her nineteen-year-old daughter, Camille Kingsolver. The Kingsolver family, like food activists countrywide, were swept up in

the urge to eat locally for a year. I feel cynical for viewing these projects askance, and yet ...

Six years ago, Gary Paul Nabhan undertook this challenge as thoughtfully and as thoroughly as anyone could. In *Coming Home to Eat: the Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods* (2002), Nabhan tells his story of eating only food native to the southern Sonoran desert for a year. More: he fed crowds of friends. Compared to this, the local eating projects of Prentice and her colleagues, Smith and Mackinnon, and the Kingsolver family seem like high concepts in search of book contracts. In Kingsolver's case, with considerably less knowledge and inquisitiveness than Nabhan possessed, the family settles in for a twelve-month experiment in eating foods from all over the world, so long as they are currently grown in Virginia.

This isn't to say that these writers and activists weren't committed and earnest about eating locally. However, they undertook their projects in places so temperate and fecund that they provide no template for most people worldwide, never mind for those who live in truly pauperate food environments. Prentice lives in the San Francisco Bay Area; Smith and Mackinnon in coastal British Columbia; and the Kingsolvers in southern Virginia. These are not places where food, other than exotics like coffee and tea, must be imported. Compare their challenges to those of Nabhan, who lived off the land in a place as arid as Darfur and parts of Ethiopia, where hunger is endemic. (Try to

imagine explaining an "eat local" challenge in Chad, and you'll get the picture.)

Nineteenth-century European settlers and travelers were stunned by the extremity of North America's interior climate. They had no experience with regions that were as hot in the summer or as cold in the winter. They were amazed at how quickly milk became sour and butter rancid, meat spoiled and vegetables moldy. Quite sensibly, they did not attempt to override the climate or turn its quiddities into a game: instead, they imported what they needed to supplement or extend each season's food. Their accounts of cooking and eating are filled with inventories of imported foods: anchovies, oysters, clams, and citrus fruit in the Upper Midwest; passenger pigeons, dates, pineapples, and avocados on the East Coast. They longed for foods from foreign lands, and they got them: first by ship and then by rail. And before the Europeans, the natives of the North had traded for foods from as far south as Mexico and Central America. Humans are trading creatures--so I find it jarring to be scolded, as Kingsolver readily does, for enjoying the fruits of other places.

For me, her tone is established in the first chapter, when she snipes at a clerk in a convenience store as she and her family are leaving Tucson for their new home in Virginia. The clerk observes rain clouds and is dismayed; Kingsolver, after "two hundred consecutive cloudless days," is excited. The clerk, "this bleached-blond guardian of gas pumps and snack food," wants the storm to pass: "Tomorrow's my first day off in two

weeks, and I want to wash my car." For Kingsolver, though, the impending storm is "the final benediction pronounced on a dying land." Her disdain could not be plainer: the clerk is deluded, ill-employed. Low class.

But Kingsolver doesn't have to work six days a week at a dispiriting and possibly dangerous job. When she becomes unnerved by living in a city that depends heavily on the resources of the adjoining states for water and food, she moves to a mild, clement place on the East Coast where her husband already owns land and has a teaching job. Most people, of course, can't do that. Should Bangladeshis or Winnipegians move because their locales can't support them? Should I leave the Twin Cities because I can't grow my own food in winter? Is there anyplace, no matter how blessed by climate and natural resources, that could take on the added burden of all the people who can't eat locally where they came from?

In the time-honored tradition of city mice, Kingsolver and her family learn from the neighboring country mice how to butcher chickens, raise crops, and can and freeze. Although there's a haze of self-satisfaction about the process, much of it is earned: it's no easy thing to go from buying most or all of life's necessities to producing them yourself, and she has a right to feel proud of doing so.

But it's another thing to feel superior about it. Asides such as, "A sight like [limp, plucked ducks like socks on clotheslines] on Main Street USA would send customers

running the other way, possibly provoking lawsuits over psychological damage to children," or "Elsie and David aren't Audubon Club members with binoculars and a life list, nor are they hippie idealists trying to save the whales"--jam a wide variety of individual actions and beliefs into stereotypic boxes. Kingsolver's breeziness sometimes sounds heartless, for it appears to discount as ludicrous people who have committed no greater crime than holding values different from hers. Too often, the only people who seem worthy of her regard are her family, her neighbors, and other farmers of whose practices she approves. (In her reference list, for example, she doesn't list resources that take positions different from her own.)

That said, there is value to be found in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. Kingsolver is dead on, for example, when she observes that women of her generation were hoodwinked out of valuing cooking as a skill, as a gesture:

When my generation of women walked away from the kitchen we were escorted down that path by a profiteering industry that knew a tired, vulnerable marketing target when they saw it. "Hey, ladies," it said to us, "go ahead, get liberated. We'll take care of dinner." They threw open the door and we walked into a nutritional crisis and genuinely toxic food supply.

The passage then becomes sloppy and hectoring:

If you think toxic is an exaggeration, read the package directions for handling raw chicken from a CAFO [confined animal feeding operation]. We came a long way, baby, into bad eating habits and collaterally impaired family dynamics. No matter what else we do or believe, food remains at the center of every culture. Ours now runs on empty calories.

This paragraph isn't coherent: none of its statements leads logically linked to the next one. What is the connection between precautions for handling possibly salmonella-infected chickens, "bad eating habits," and "impaired family dynamics"? Between the cultural centrality of food and a culture "run[ing] on empty calories"? This is mere fustian.

In welcome contrast to Kingsolver's fevered tone, that of Steven L. Hopp is even-tempered, factual, and informative. Hopp teaches environmental studies, and his voice is pedagogical: seemingly neutral but mildly personable, offering facts, drawing conclusions, arguing from history. His sixteen sidebars, whose topics range from conventional agriculture's dependence on oil ("Oily Food") to pesticide resistance ("Losing the Bug Arms Race") to Fair Trade ("Trading Fair and Square") to making local foods an political reality ("Legislating Local") are compact and informative.

The third member of this family trio, Camille Kingsolver, a student at Duke University, provides comments and recipes for local foods. Nothing in the

recipes makes them intrinsically local, of course; one could as easily cook them from ingredients purchased in a warehouse store. They're merely seasonal, pleasantly introduced, and clearly written, most of them simple to make. They'll be vivid and memorable only when prepared with fresh ingredients.

The recent spate of eating-locally-for-a-year books treats as reasonable and virtuous what has always been exceptional. Only unlucky peoples have eaten just what they could scrounge or grow, and only in very affluent societies, such as the US and Japan, would people play games of competitive eating ([www.ifoce.com](http://www.ifoce.com)) and eating locally. From the Silk Road to the Columbian Exchange to human history's other great trade movements, people have always swapped foods, or foods and other goods. This isn't something to deplore; it's something to celebrate. The chickens Kingsolver depends on for eggs came originally from India or China; the maize, from Central America; the cabbages and apples, from Europe. New Zealand-raised lamb, it now appears, produces fewer carbon emissions, even when imported, than lamb raised in the United States or Britain. In other words, there's no intrinsic purity in eating locally. Other factors need to be weighed in as well: Would we, for example, have coffee farmers in Kenya or Guatemala starve because their products burn food miles to reach America? Would we deny people who do not grow it themselves the wheat we grow here?

I don't think Kingsolver believes this. But I think she's too easy on herself, too delighted with what she's discovering, to consider the historical record and the plight of people worldwide who depend on these ancient, as well as contemporary, exchanges.

Jan Zita Grover teaches cooking classes and works at a food co-op in Saint Paul, Minnesota. She is working on a guide for Minnesota cooks for the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Grover, Jan Zita

*Source: Grover, Jan Zita. "The politics of the table." The Women's Review of Books Nov.-Dec. 2007: 10+. Literature Resource Center. Web. 18 May 2011.*

## **Discussion questions**

1. What was your perception of America's food industry prior to reading *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? What did you learn from this book? How has it altered your views on the way food is acquired and consumed?
2. In what ways, if any, have you changed your eating habits since reading *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? Depending on where you live—in an urban, suburban, or rural environment—what other steps would you like to take to modify your lifestyle with regard to eating local?
3. "It had felt arbitrary when we sat around the table with our shopping list, making our rules. It felt almost

silly to us in fact, as it may now seem to you. Why impose restrictions on ourselves? Who cares?" asks Kingsolver in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. Did you, in fact, care about Kingsolver's story and find it to be compelling? Why or why not? What was the family's aim for their year-long initiative, and did they accomplish that goal?

4. The writing of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* was a family affair, with Kingsolver's husband, Steven L. Hopp, contributing factual sidebars and her daughter, Camille Kingsolver, serving up commentary and recipes. Did you find that these additional elements enhanced the book? How so? What facts or statistics in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* surprised you the most?

5. How does each member of the Kingsolver-Hopp family contribute during their year-long eating adventure? Were you surprised that the author's children not only participated in the endeavor but that they did so with such enthusiasm? Why or why not?

6. "A majority of North Americans do understand, at some level, that our food choices are politically charged," says Kingsolver, "affecting arenas from rural culture to international oil cartels and global climate change." How do politics affect America's food production and consumption? What global ramifications are there for the food choices we make?

7. Kingsolver advocates the pleasures of seasonal eating, but she acknowledges that many people would view this as deprivation "because we've grown

accustomed to the botanically outrageous condition of having everything always." Do you believe that American society can—or will— overcome the need for instant gratification in order to be able to eat seasonally? How does Kingsolver present this aspect in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*? Did you get the sense that she and her family ever felt deprived in their eating options?

8. Kingsolver points out that eating what we want, when we want comes "at a price." The cost, she says, "is not measured in money, but in untallied debts that will be paid by our children in the currency of extinctions, economic unravelings, and global climate change." What responsibility do we bear for keeping the environment safe for future generations? How does eating locally factor in to this?

9. Kingsolver asserts that "we have dealt to today's kids the statistical hand of a shorter life expectancy than their parents, which would be *us*, the ones taking care of them." How is our "thrown-away food culture" a detriment to children's health? She also says, "We're raising our children on the definition of promiscuity if we feed them a casual, indiscriminate mingling of foods from every season plucked from the supermarket." What responsibility do parents have to teach their children about the value and necessity of a local food culture?

10. In what ways do Kingsolver's descriptions of the places she visited on her travels—Italy, New England,

Montreal, and Ohio—enhance her portrayal of local and seasonal eating?

11. "Marketing jingles from every angle lure patrons to turn our backs on our locally owned stores, restaurants, and farms," says Kingsolver. "And nobody considers that unpatriotic." How much of a role do the media play in determining what Americans eat? Discuss the decline of America's diversified family farms, and what it means for the country as a whole.

## **Multimedia**

### **Back to Basics: Kingsolver Clan Lives Off Land (Radio Broadcast)**

Available At:

**<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9891473>**

In her newest book, Barbara Kingsolver departs from the route taken in popular works of fiction like *The Poisonwood Bible* and *The Bean Trees*, to tell the true story of going back to her roots in Appalachia.

In *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, Kingsolver and her family conduct an experiment in what she calls learning to "eat deliberately." That means eating only seasonal local foods, or food they've grown themselves.

The family leaves their home in Tucson, Ariz., and heads to Kingsolver's family farm in Virginia to live off the land. The clan grows a large garden and spends the summer storing food, jarring tomatoes, braiding garlic and stuffing turkey sausage.

Along the way, the family discovers the pleasures of eating naturally raised meat.

Kingsolver's family did more than live the story; they also contributed to the book. Her husband, Steven Hopp, writes about industrial agriculture and ecology, and her daughter, Camille, adds flavorful recipes.

Lynn Neary speaks with Kingsolver and Hopp about their experiences.

## **Action Items—On Your Own**

Try eating at least one meal per week made from locally and organically produced meats and produce. As Steven L. Hopp points out in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, this "would reduce our country's oil consumption by more than 1.1 million barrels of oil every week."

To find farmers' markets and local producers in your area, visit the USDA website at [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov), or check out [www.LocalHarvest.org](http://www.LocalHarvest.org) and [www.csacenter.org](http://www.csacenter.org).

When shopping at a grocery store or food co-op, ask about food origins and request that locally produced items be stocked.

Share your opinion with local and regional policymakers at town and city hall meetings, school board meetings, and state commissioner meetings. Also, speak up at venues you or your family frequent where food is served such as a church, social club, school, or day care center and encourage them to use local ingredients.

If you have the space, start your own garden and begin by growing a few items. If you live in an urban area, consider taking part in a community garden ([www.CommunityGarden.org](http://www.CommunityGarden.org)). More information about urban gardening can be found at [www.CityFarmer.org](http://www.CityFarmer.org) and [www.UrbanGardeningHelp.com](http://www.UrbanGardeningHelp.com).

Share stories about your local food adventures at [www.animalvegetablemiracle.com](http://www.animalvegetablemiracle.com).

## **Action Items—With Your Book Club**

Take a tour of a local farm, visit a farmers' market, or try your hand at a u-pick operation (strawberries in the summer, for example, or apples in the fall).

If you're inclined to take your book club international, follow in Barbara Kingsolver's footsteps and experience Italy's *agriturismo*, a guest accommodation on a working family farm.

For your club's discussion of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, devise your own menu or use the recipes in the book to prepare a feast with locally produced ingredients that are in season.

Alternately, hold your book club discussion at a farmer's diner or a restaurant that uses local ingredients.

In the spirit of Barbara Kingsolver's 50th birthday festivities, which she describes in the book, have a plant exchange. (Just don't thank each other for the blooms!)

Take a class or meet up at a member's home for a session of cheese-, yogurt-, or bread-making.

Donate to a hunger-relief organization that teaches sustainable farming practices. Visit [www.WN.org](http://www.WN.org) (World Neighbors), [www.JourneyToForever.org](http://www.JourneyToForever.org), or [www.Heifer.org](http://www.Heifer.org) (Heifer International) for information.

## **Additional Resources**

[www.AnimalVegetableMiracle.com](http://www.AnimalVegetableMiracle.com)—recipes, web resources, and more

[www.Kingsolver.com](http://www.Kingsolver.com)—listen to an audio interview with Barbara Kingsolver about *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*

## **Further Reading**

*Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schlosser

(Call Number: 394.1 Sc)

Journalist Schlosser argues that the fast food industry has triggered the growth of malls in America's landscape, widened the gap between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled American cultural imperialism abroad. He discusses facts about food production and preparation, the ingredients and taste-enhancers in the food, the chains' efforts to reel in young, susceptible consumers, and other unsettling facts.

*Eating In America: A History* by Waverley Root & Richard de Rochemont

(Call Number: 641.097 Ro)

The story of American eating begins and ends with the fact that American food, by most of the world's standards, is not very good. This is a rather sad note considering the "land of plenty" the first American settlers found, and even sadder considering that with the vast knowledge of food we possess, we have still managed to create things such as the TV dinner and "Finger Lickin' Good" chicken. Nevertheless, America's eating habits, the philosophy behind these habits, and much of the food itself are deliciously fascinating. Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont, in a style that is rich, tasty, and ironic, chronicle the history of American food and eating customs from the time of the earliest explorers to the present. In writing this chronicle on American food, Root and de Rochemont

have in fact created a fresh and commanding history of the United States itself. *Eating in America* is an erudite, sumptuous, witty, marvelously readable study; truly a book to feast on time and again.

*Cook Food: A Manifesto For Easy, Healthy, Local Eating* by Lisa Miya-Jervis

(Call Number: 641.5636 Mi)

This rousing call to action for healthy, conscious eating is an inspirational primer for those who want to move beyond packaged and processed food toward a more responsible and sustainable way of eating. Many people are learning about the political ramifications of what they eat, but don't know how to change their habits or expand their kitchen repertoire to include meatless dishes. This compendium offers a straightforward overview of the political issues surrounding food, and a culinary toolkit to put principles into practice. Without resorting to faux meat, fake cheese, or obscure ingredients, the recipes focus on fresh, local, minimally processed ingredients that sustain farmers, animals, and the entire food chain. Instead of a rigid set of recipes to be replicated, it offers tips for improvisation, creative thinking in the kitchen, practical suggestions for cooking on a budget, and quick and delicious vegan and vegetarian meal options for anyone who wants to eat fast, tasty, nutritious food every day.

*Summaries from AADL.org Catalog*

## Readalikes

### Nonfiction

*The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan (2006)

*Harvest: A Year in the Life of an Organic Farm* by Nicola Smith and Geoff Hansen (2004)

*The Exact Same Moon: Fifty Acres and a Family* by Jeanne Marie Laskas (2003)

*Confessions of a Counterfeit Farm Girl* by Susan McCorkindale (2008)

### Fiction

*Prodigal Summer* by Barbara Kingsolver (2000)

*Strange as This Weather Has Been* by Ann Pancake (2007)

