

Food for Thought

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After purchasing In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifest by Michael Pollan, I walked out of Barnes and Nobles. Suddenly, a whiff of familiar, affable smell instantly awakened the ravenous tiger hibernating at the abyss of my stomach. My stomach growled as if it set a target on a vulnerable prey. And indeed, I saw a prey. The giant 'M' sign, which McDonald's boasts extravagantly, allured my eyes. My stomach growled for a Big Mac, my mouth watered for a McFlurry, and my brain had only one thing in mind.

Food. It is a necessity, but what accurately defines food? Can McNuggets or any other digestible concoction of diversified ingredients be classified as "real" food? As Michael Pollan argues in his book, the dietary concept of food has been distorted through the ages, and our generation, brainwashed. Today's society has been brainwashed by the bullies of food industry. As the world became sophisticated, so have these bullies. They no longer loot lunch money directly from our pockets; these oppressors shrewdly manipulate the marketing industry and nutritional science to hoodwink people into spending their money on fake foods, mere factory foods that are supposedly "healthy." The portable Go-Gurt epitomizes this thesis, Pollan explains. Go-Gurt has labels that say "nutritional," but in reality, it is stuffed with additives and preservatives that paradoxically detriment our health. The food industry mesmerizes us with misleading images, but real food honestly promotes our health without any health claims.

Health. Everyone desires to keep it in good condition. Therefore, many people look for healthy versions of food products with the most vitamins and least calories.

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Today, such “healthy” forms of food are artificially created through a concept called nutritionism, the idea that food can be broken down into its nutritional components.

There was once a time when beverages contained natural flavors. Nowadays, to increase profit and add more “nutrition,” numerous “good” artificial ingredients are added and “bad” ingredients are taken out through technology. A key ingredient in such beverages is high-fructose corn syrup. However, studies indicate that it causes diabetes and coronary artery disease. Like how a shattered mirror cannot be pieced perfect, it is impossible to break down and reconstruct food in a perfectly “healthy” way. What is natural is meant to stay natural, but the food industry stubbornly believes otherwise.

The human race survived for thousands of years thanks to our ancestor’s dietary routine. However, the modern development of “fake foods” is marring people’s health. So how do we fight back the cruel food industry bullies? Reject nutritionism, and as Pollan puts it: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” As for me, I didn’t walk into McDonalds that night. Maybe it was because I didn’t want to look like a hypocrite with a book about health in my hand, but a part of me just wanted to go home and eat my mom’s traditional meal, some real food. It’s just a food for thought.