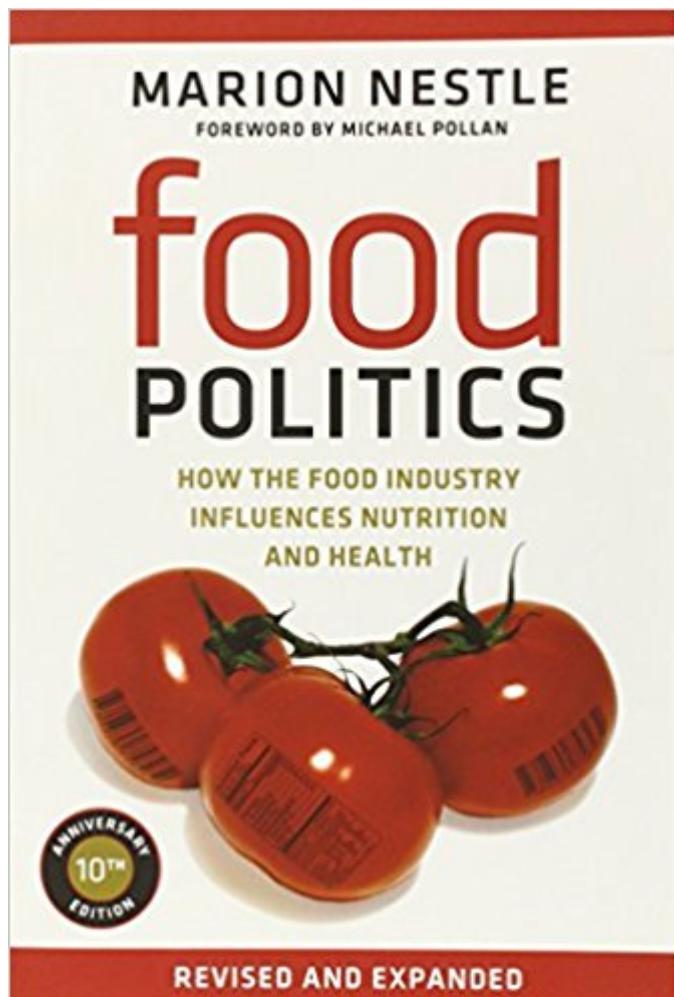


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# Food Politics: How The Food Industry Influences Nutrition And Health (California Studies In Food And Culture)



## **Synopsis**

We all witness, in advertising and on supermarket shelves, the fierce competition for our food dollars. In this engrossing exposÃ©, Marion Nestle goes behind the scenes to reveal how the competition really works and how it affects our health. The abundance of food in the United States--enough calories to meet the needs of every man, woman, and child twice over--has a downside. Our over-efficient food industry must do everything possible to persuade people to eat more--more food, more often, and in larger portions--no matter what it does to waistlines or well-being. Like manufacturing cigarettes or building weapons, making food is big business. Food companies in 2000 generated nearly \$900 billion in sales. They have stakeholders to please, shareholders to satisfy, and government regulations to deal with. It is nevertheless shocking to learn precisely how food companies lobby officials, co-opt experts, and expand sales by marketing to children, members of minority groups, and people in developing countries. We learn that the food industry plays politics as well as or better than other industries, not least because so much of its activity takes place outside the public view. Editor of the 1988 Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health, Nestle is uniquely qualified to lead us through the maze of food industry interests and influences. She vividly illustrates food politics in action: watered-down government dietary advice, schools pushing soft drinks, diet supplements promoted as if they were First Amendment rights. When it comes to the mass production and consumption of food, strategic decisions are driven by economics--not science, not common sense, and certainly not health. No wonder most of us are thoroughly confused about what to eat to stay healthy. An accessible and balanced account, *Food Politics* will forever change the way we respond to food industry marketing practices. By explaining how much the food industry influences government nutrition policies and how cleverly it links its interests to those of nutrition experts, this path-breaking book helps us understand more clearly than ever before what we eat and why.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

At times you might be forgiven for thinking that surely food can be left free of politics, when so much else in the world is tied up with political string. Sorry, but politics plays a big place here too! Whether it is public policy and politics dictating what we should eat and drink on health grounds, or should that be "health" grounds, geopolitics with us being encouraged to favour produce from country X instead of country Y for various reasons or just plain business politics, with companies lobbying politicians to help further their own means, food and politics are tied together. Depressing reading, for sure, but this book provides a good non-hectoring read of this subject in a tenth anniversary edition of a classic work. The food industry is big business and yet this academically-minded book does a good job in opening our eyes to what is actually going on in the wider world, without it sounding like there is a conspiracy behind every door. Written from a U.S. perspective the reader should not, however, be under the misapprehension that things are only an "American problem". It is just that perhaps their own country is less open and thus more things are hidden out of view. Will you be able to look at things again in the same light? Making food is big business and we are encouraged to consume more than we need. Cutting costs to maximise profits often leads to the food that we eat is not necessarily good for us. Convenience foods sound oh-so-convenient until you notice the chemical soup that often accompanies them. There is a reason why various "corners can be cut", totally legally, that maximise profits and waistlines alike. Ah, but there are pesky government regulations that get in the way of free trade and protect the customer, aren't there? Well, yes, there are regulations but the idea for these regulations doesn't just come from thin air. Big companies with vested interests invest heavily in lobbying, strong-arming weaker countries and elbowing smaller competitors out of the way. It sounds paranoid but nonetheless... Through this book you will get a much more informed picture of what is going on. You still might be powerless to change things but a better informed consumer can at least attempt to mitigate change even if they cannot influence it. Things are only going to get worse as technological advances are realised. Already the world is aware of GM (genetically modified) food and the pros and cons of this, but more

and more foodstuffs are coming via a laboratory and they are not there just to make things cheap and tasty. Far from it..A great index is provided at the end of this very thought-provoking book and, for those who either doubt the veracity of what they are reading or who wish to learn even more there is a fanatical amount of notes and further reading citations as befits a serious academic work. However it must be stressed that this is an accessible book for the "average reader" but you would be best to set aside some quality time to read and digest its contents. Prepare to be shocked, amazed and possibly sickened by what you read. Tobacco and "Big Pharma" are already painted as villains in many sections of society and, at the time of writing this review, the food industry is under scrutiny in Europe for the criminal mislabelling of horse meat and passing it off in the food chain. After reading this book you might start to wonder what the next scandal will be and wonder just how it has been allowed to get to this stage...

An alarming read for anyone in the healthcare field. Nestles major premise is that eating less would improve health and this is a challenge because this is in direct opposition to the food industries goal of making a profit. Her message is that involvement of the regulatory agencies should be more independent of the food industry. As so many of our chronic illnesses are cause by obesity or influenced by it - she makes a case for why we should all be concerned where we are heading. Particularly chilling are the details about marketing to children. In addition, the marketing tactics were a slight surprise to me as I am a new reader in this area of health policy. Nestle dissects the subtle nuances of the dietary recommendations and explains how the food industry shapes those recommendations. Of course these tactics aren't illegal but when the food industry is involved with shaping the recommendations - the ethical issues become clear. Nestle suggest we should be cautious of research because the food industry influences which research gets published and even reframes the findings to be favorable to products. A scholarly read that is approachable as well. I liked the book because it weaves an interesting narrative in with copious references.

I am not finished with the book yet, but it's filled with great information regarding the relationship between government agencies and what is communicated to the public regarding healthy nutrition. I recommend this read for anyone who wants to understand what's behind how hard it is to eat/live healthy without the hype given by companies only in it for the money.

Great exposé on how our food choices and recommendations are influenced by those with motives

other than nutrition and health. The author has good inside info on the details of food consortiums and lobbyists. Sad but true, and eye-opening.

Nestle's work is very careful, honest, courageous. She helps us understand why we are so mis-informed about food. The dirty politics behind your so-called education and the national food guidelines have dark forces pulling the strings. Knowledge is our best weapon, and Nestle hands it to us.

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