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Closing The Food Gap: Resetting The Table In The Land Of Plenty



Closing the Food Gap

*Resetting the Table
in the Land of Plenty*

MARK WINNE

"It's heartening to find a book that successfully blends a passion for sustainable living with compassion for the poor."
—DR. JANE GOODALL



Synopsis

In *Closing the Food Gap*, food activist and journalist Mark Winne poses questions too often overlooked in our current conversations around food: What about those people who are not financially able to make conscientious choices about where and how to get food? And in a time of rising rates of both diabetes and obesity, what can we do to make healthier foods available for everyone? To address these questions, Winne tells the story of how America's food gap has widened since the 1960s, when domestic poverty was "rediscovered," and how communities have responded with a slew of strategies and methods to narrow the gap, including community gardens, food banks, and farmers' markets. The story, however, is not only about hunger in the land of plenty and the organized efforts to reduce it; it is also about doing that work against a backdrop of ever-growing American food affluence and gastronomical expectations. With the popularity of Whole Foods and increasingly common community-supported agriculture (CSA), wherein subscribers pay a farm so they can have fresh produce regularly, the demand for fresh food is rising in one population as fast as rates of obesity and diabetes are rising in another. Over the last three decades, Winne has found a way to connect impoverished communities experiencing these health problems with the benefits of CSAs and farmers' markets; in *Closing the Food Gap*, he explains how he came to his conclusions. With tragically comic stories from his many years running a model food organization, the Hartford Food System in Connecticut, alongside fascinating profiles of activists and organizations in communities across the country, Winne addresses head-on the struggles to improve food access for all of us, regardless of income level. Using anecdotal evidence and a smart look at both local and national policies, Winne offers a realistic vision for getting locally produced, healthy food onto everyone's table.

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Customer Reviews

I'm an academic, and read this book in part for possible use in a class that I teach on philosophy and the food system. Criticisms of the food system are very popular these days, and my current (and very incomplete) list of food books is pushing a couple hundred. Winne's book stands out from this crowd in two respects: his perspective as an activist rather than an academic, and his attention to aspects of the food system and the "food movement" that are often overlooked. As Winne notes near the beginning, he's a college-educated white man, but his working life has been spent as a professional activist and organizer for food access in impoverished urban communities around the US. Much of the book is stories from either his own experience -- especially in Hartford, Connecticut -- or from other activists and organizers. His tone is generally thoughtful, and he stops occasionally to reflect on what succeeded and what failed in these efforts. In a few places -- though only a few -- he steps back even more, giving his take on the fundamental problems with our food system. But he's not an academic, and he's not offering an academic analysis. In my class, I can see using his book (or a few of the best chapters of it; more below) in tandem with more theoretical readings: How well does this theory fit with Winne's experiences? How useful would it be for what he's trying to accomplish? In this respect, Winne's book is similar to Barry Estabrook's *Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit*.

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