



Diet for a Small Planet

Frances Moore Lappé , Marika Hahn

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This is the book that started a revolution in the way that Americans eat. Today, vegetarianism and "the politics of food" is at the center of a growing environmental movement that also encompasses animal rightists and recyclers. This 20th anniversary edition of an ecological classic features a substantive new introduction where Lappe stresses how her philosophy remains valid--that food is the central issue through which to understand world politics.

Diet for a Small Planet Details

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ALLEN says

It was Frances Moore Lappe's great gift to us to throw out the concept that something called an "entree" must center the dinner table, be it a great sullen lump of animal protein or a substitute like tofurkey. Instead, she focuses on protein complementarity, the technique of melding vegetable sources with incomplete amino acids into full proteins (for example, corn and legume beans; milk and peanuts). It's a wonderful way to think, plan, and cook; as a result this wonderful little book has braved the test of time and is now in its fifth decade. Recipes are good, too. Bon appetit!

Ben Williams says

Though many such books exist today, this book was akin to Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" in that it brought to life an entirely new way of looking at or thinking about food. It encouraged people to look more deeply, to see that food contains a hell of a lot more than the obvious elements one normally is exposed to. I read this book after completing my first semester of college, read it late into the night, feeling a new sort of excitement well up as the pages went on. Almost seven years later, the book remains, for my life, a turning point.

lp says

When my mom became a vegetarian in the early 90s, she read Diet For A Small Planet. I remember thinking, "wah wah wah my mom is such a boring loser moron head." I pitied her for picking up a book with the words "diet" and "small planet" on it—and a pile of grain, to top it all off. This was around the time that I hid all the "Now Serving Veggie Burgers!" pamphlets from our favorite diner, because I didn't want that nasty crap on my table. But Mom was onto something. Although it was written in 1991, Lappe's book is forward thinking about the social and personal importance of eating simply, healthfully, and meatlessly. I lost my paper copy years ago when it fell to pieces, and I'm bummed, because there was a killer recipe for Mulligatawny stew inside. (Oh, look! I found it. I love the internet.) And come to think of it, the idea of eating for a small planet is a beautiful thing, isn't it? God I was such a loser moron head when I was a kid.

Abby says

I read the 20th anniversary edition of this book (which is nearly 20 years old itself) and recommend that anyone else who do so start with the actual book, then read the intros and comments in chronological order. I just read it in page order, so I got a lot of updates and somewhat self-congratulatory and very earnest statements about the impact of the book until I got to the actual book that had such a big impact.

If Lappe feels self-important, it is because to a real extent her book (or at least the type of work that she and others have done) really does represent groundbreaking ideas on American diet, consumption, health, world markets, sustainability, and hunger. Through various college classes, discussions with friends, and articles I've consumed over the years I've already been exposed to nearly all of the concepts in the book, but that is likely in large part because of the book.

The breakdown, for those who haven't been as fortunate as me to have been previously exposed, goes something like this: we don't need nearly as much meat in our diets as we consume; meat production is a huge sink of our grain, soil, and water resources; lots of subsidies go into producing meat and various other non-necessary food products both in the U.S. and in other cultures; world hunger is solveable, but the "food aid" that we currently send to places is often in the form of grain to feed meat that the hungry cannot afford (I would add that a lot of world hunger is politically manipulated; Lappe doesn't really go into this). Perhaps the most important lesson stressed by Lappe in the various intros is that the decisions to continue our foolhardy production, aid, and diet patterns are not being made democratically and that a true participatory democracy driven by informed people is the only way to create a sensible and sustainable world food economy.

I haven't tried the recipes yet, and I can't really take Lappe up on the command that we visit local food co-ops, but I'm sticking to my mostly-veg diet and trying to eat as local as possible in a desert in the middle of nowhere, and remain excited about the concept of others catching on as well. Who knows, maybe some day Tuba City will have a salad restaurant and a food co-op, and people will know what tofu is!

Carmen says

This book ruined my childhood. This book made my mom put soy grits in spaghetti sauce, and I'm pretty sure it had something to do with her delivering a lecture on carob to my second grade class, too.

But I'll give it this: Walnut cheddar loaf sure makes the planet FEEL small. Because as far as I'm concerned, the planet isn't big enough for the both of us. I hate you, walnut cheddar loaf.

Devon Trevarrow Flaherty says

It was fun to read this book, because I felt like I was returning to the roots of a lot of the modern whole foods/vegetarian movement (if that's what you would call it). Honestly, though, it's the kind of information that you can now get in an abundance in a myriad of other, more modern, more up-to-date, even more interesting books and other sources. Even my current reading of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is proving to be more engaging, and has much of the same info as *Small Planet*. And another thing: no one warned me that *Small Planet* dips and out of political treatise. The author is very interested in sharing her findings on modern democracy and her opinions about it, which is appropriate, at least from her stand point, but does get repetitive and is hardly the informational recipe book for vegetarians that I expected.

I have not yet tried any of the recipes. Review on that forthcoming.

kate says

One more from the Steve Jobs' reading list.

In some ways this book is dated, in other ways it is a natural prologue for 'omnivore's dilemma' and andrew weil.

I do not believe in the word 'diet'. Deprivation results in binging, moodiness and an unrealistic approach to

something at the centre of one's life: food and health.

The author is concerned with world hunger, I am more concerned with the small planet, but an informative book. Being vegetarian or vegan is trendy now, but is falling short of changing our culture and consumption on a mass scale.

I have noticed a 'vast right-wing veganspiracy' in advertising, tv and movies lately. However, like the word diet, I do not know if hysterical "soylent green and meat is people!!" camera angles and shots can seed into altered lives, or if it will lead to an opposing counterproductive reaction from average, everyday people.

Like how all those "old white guy" and "white people" jokes backfired into a Trump presidency. Jung called it enantiodromia - a shadow racing towards its opposite when pressures are heightened.

Earth demands transcendence.

Beyond anderson cooper specials about trans bathrooms....

Ashley says

Admittedly not what I was expecting. I'm sort of sad she updated the book from the original because it seemed she was on a more political bent (which is fine) but I wasn't sure how she was connecting this new stuff to the fact that we should eat less meat and have a diet to save the planet. It was a very loose thread if you ask me. I got tired of the references to the original version. I was equally surprised that she made her case, but then included a great deal of dairy in her recipes. This just seemed to go against the updated portions of the book as it pretty much made a case for keeping cows on mass farms even though she stated earlier it was a waste of resources. Good read, but I think rather than updating DfaSP, she could have just written another book, a sequel if you please. All the same, I would recommend it to a friend and it has me thinking deeply about the human side of vegetarianism/veganism (even though Lappe herself does not endorse either).

Bionic Jean says

The most important book on Nutrition and Politics I have ever read. If you don't immediately see the relationship, then read this book.

Data says

The recipes I have tried from this cookbook actually are made to taste good. Years ago, when this book was new, it was difficult to find some of the ingredients the recipes called for, but it is not much of a problem now; even the local supermarket carries many of the specialty items used in here.

There is also a great deal of practical nutrition information.

Lisa Vegan says

I enjoyed this book when I read it, but I thought it hadn't made a huge impression on me. Looking back, I realize that I became a (lacto-ovo) vegetarian a few years after I read this, and I'm wondering if it had more of an influence than I've ever realized. Highly recommended - probably suggest reading the 20th anniversary edition that's out if you've never read the book, although I have not read that edition.

Anne says

Read this one a while back and started making soybean loaves. Good ideas, but wow, were some of the original recipes heavy on the stomach. Wonder if they've changed them over the years.

April Dickinson says

The overarching themes are possibly even more relevant today, but unfortunately, much of the facts and figures were way out of date. I mostly skimmed this one. The most powerful messages were: 1) more than 50% of the grain and acreage for producing grain is to feed livestock (makes no damn sense), 2) the US food industry is not designed to feed people, but instead to generate profit for a very small percentage of people, 3) the cost of agriculture is so highly manipulated and arbitrary that it does not reflect the true costs (subsidies, water table loss, soil erosion, importation of non-renewable sources of fertilizer, etc), and 4) a change in the food system requires a democratization of the system.

Bob says

I got this a couple of months ago and was prompted to read it by seeing author Frances Moore Lappé's daughter Anna speak this weekend. What's astonishing is quite how thoroughly she stated, 25 years ago, everything that current food politics writers (Pollan, Nestle) are still reiterating. The message is evidently still sinking in!

Her recipes themselves are intriguing - I think she might be single-handedly responsible for an entire generation always shaking gomasio on top of their rice and beans concoctions (to "complete" the protein). On the other hand, she recommends a lot of margarine, dried milk and other things I wouldn't consider using. No doubt in 1980, when one referred to "Worcestershire sauce" or "Italian dressing", HFCS had not yet become quite so ubiquitous an ingredient.

Tiffany says

My next door neighbor Leslie introduced me to this book. She was a hippie who gave my Nixon-loving parents fits. Later she died tragically of an unspecified genetic cancer. In the 70's she was skinny and long-haired and had hip-bones like Twiggy and I thought she was the bees knees.

What she said when she loaned me her copy of the book was that meat was very expensive and hard-on-the-planet to produce whereas grains were not. Because I was ten I thought she was talking about eating grass

and that made me sad that we were all going to be relegated to eating grass one day because we had poisoned the planet.

What Ms. Lappé said then was that we needed to think about how our food choices were more than just local choices--they were planetary in nature. I had the great good fortune to see her speak in 2009 at a TED conference during which time she asked, "How do you want future generations to look at you? Like gods of change? Or like *selfish little shoppers*?" Still saying profound things forty years later.
