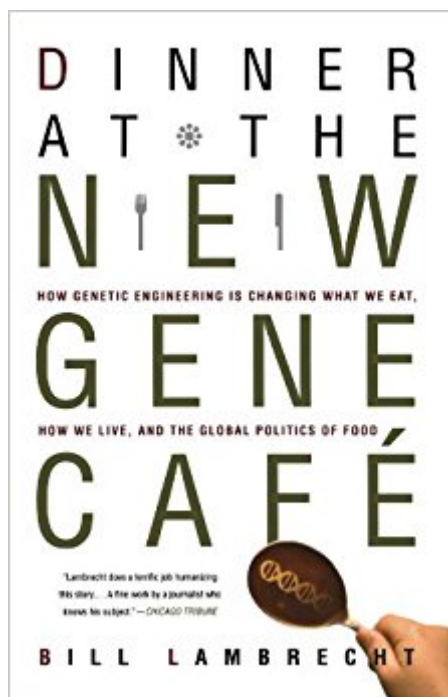




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Dinner At The New Gene Cafe: How Genetic Engineering Is Changing What We Eat, How We Live, And The Global Politics Of Food



Synopsis

Biotech companies are racing to alter the genetic building blocks of the world's food. In the United States, the primary venue for this quiet revolution, the acreage of genetically modified crops has soared from zero to 70 million acres since 1996. More than half of America's processed grocery products—from cornflakes to granola bars to diet drinks—contain gene-altered ingredients. But the U.S., unlike Europe and other democratic nations, does not require labeling of modified food. Dinner at the New Gene Café expertly lays out the battle lines of the impending collision between a powerful but unproved technology and a gathering resistance from people worried about the safety of genetic change.

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Customer Reviews

It may be true that we are what we eat. Now, with a flood of genetically modified foods overtaking the market, it is possible to eat what we are. But the prospect of genetic cannibalism is the least of the worries of food activists, and journalist Bill Lambrecht's *Dinner at the New Gene Café* follows both sides of the genetically modified organism (GMO) debate with vigor. He's been covering the story since the mid-1980s, interviewing agricultural officials, biotech industry executives, family farmers, and protesters to build a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Lambrecht's writing, clear and direct, explains the science and politics plainly enough that even those who flunked Biology or Poli Sci 101 can understand his arguments. He is equally skeptical of the claims of industry shills and activists, and often shakes his head in wonder at the incompetence of

government agencies. From academic conferences to the Battle for Seattle, he's seen every aspect of the GMO wars, as they ignited in Europe and slowly spread across the world and eventually penetrated the U.S. Peppered with short essays on his own illegal home experiments with GMO seeds, *Dinner at the New Gene Café* offers readers insight into a growing question that will most likely define our menu choices for many years to come. --Rob Lightner --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lambrecht, a reporter with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, has written an indispensable history of the political storm surrounding GMOs, or genetically modified organisms. Beginning before the Federal Government first approved genetically modified crops (in 1998) and taking us to the present, Lambrecht traces the struggle by Monsanto Company the industry leader referred to as "Monsatan" by the opposition to overcome the backlash to GMOs that has spread from Europe to other continents and to the United States. This book's greatest asset is the firsthand testimony it gives from every side of the debate. Lambrecht himself reported on everything from the Starlink controversy, in which genetically altered corn that had not been tested on humans turned up in Taco Bell products, to the World Trade Organization riots in Seattle, which he witnessed firsthand, to the conference on bio-safety in Montreal, where an international agreement to precautionary language on GMOs marked the first step toward a global compromise. He provides transcripts of interviews with players such as Monsanto chairman Robert B. Shapiro, anti-GMO guru Jeremy Rifkin and Iowa farmer Earl Sime, who tells why farming is in jeopardy and how GMOs can help. Lambrecht talks with farmers, activists and government leaders in Europe, India and Africa, and shows why Monsanto's long-term future lies in foreign markets and why the ultimate success or failure of GMOs rests with consumers. (Sept.)Forecast: If given due review attention and prominent displays following Lambrecht's author tour, this could be the breakout book on GMOs. The potential readership people who are concerned about what they eat is huge.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Although I second the other review here, I must add that this book could be some 100 pages shorter and still hit the mark. The way it is, Lambrecht uses too much words to deliver his message.Also, because of the subject matter itself, the book is a bit outdated.Other than that, good reading material.

The author did a lot of research and maintains a very neutral tone, as if the GMO adherents could

do no wrong. He just reports what they say, does not probe deeply in a caring way for whether people or the Earth will be damaged. This is not an exposé or an attempt to uncover hidden sources of influence. Almost an apologist for whatever will transpire will be interesting. He does not seem interested in the kinds of issues presented by Rifkin, for example. He quotes from a personal conversation he had with him: "There hasn't been a single discussion in any parliament of the world or in any scientific academy about the environmental implications of what they are talking about. What happens to foraging birds and insects and microbes and other animals when they come in contact with millions of acres of plants that are coding proteins for vaccines, vitamins, and chemicals? The problems they are going to have are a potential nightmare. And what about liability? And the health implications? A lot of these proteins are going to be innocuous. But you're going to get proteins that will be toxic, and the question is, who's it going to be toxic to? It might be one person in ten thousand." "If I were a company in this, I wouldn't want to deal with an introduction where there's no long-term risk assessment, no insurance company to take care of long-term losses, and the health implications are unknowable. And finally, the market isn't there." His response to this outpouring of concern was very ho-hum.

I was a little wary when purchasing this book that the entire premise would be zealotish anti-GMO and anti-biotechnology. The quotes on the cover seemed to indicate that would also be the case. I was extremely pleased to find a very balanced reporting of both sides of the genetic engineering debate. The author has been a reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch for over 2 decades, and has been covering the debate and progress since its inception. His style is engaging and fast-paced, with humor and human interest sprinkled in to lighten a complex topic. He seems to lean toward the side of caution, but gives full reporting to the biotech companies' claims and biotech's proponents' enthusiasm. I personally am hopeful of the promise and potential of this technology, but this book helped me understand opponents' fears in a very sympathetic way. Particularly frightening was the disclosure of some of the big biotech firms' less-than-open trials and political influences. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone interested in learning more about the issues involved in genetically engineering our food.

This book was very enlightening in the subject of GMO's, as they are a powerful new technology with frightening implications. Lambrecht uses entertaining anecdotes and accounts of his dealings with ordinary farmer and head agricultural power figures. I recommend this book because it tried to show an objective perspective on the entire issue, and left no voice unheard.

If you are curious about what you are eating this is a necessary book for you. Bill Lambrecht provides an unbiased resource for those interested in the history of GMO food. Lambrecht gives the opinions of scientists, politicians and the farmers that grow these crops. This provides a balanced collage of information that allows anyone to make up their own mind about what the future of food should be.

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