



The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food

Dan Barber

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"[E]ngaging, funny and delicious... I would call this *The Omnivore's Dilemma 2.0.*" --Chicago Tribune

At the heart of today's optimistic farm-to-table food culture is a dark secret: the local food movement has failed to change how we eat. It has also offered a false promise for the future of food. Our concern over factory farms and chemically grown crops might have sparked a social movement, but chef Dan Barber reveals that even the most enlightened eating of today is ultimately detrimental to the environment and to individual health. And it doesn't involve truly delicious food. Based on ten years of surveying farming communities around the world, Barber's *The Third Plate* offers a radical new way of thinking about food that will heal the land and taste good, too.

The Third Plate is grounded in the history of American cuisine over the last two centuries. Traditionally, we have dined on the "first plate," a classic meal centered on a large cut of meat with few vegetables. Thankfully, that's become largely passé. The farm-to-table movement has championed the "second plate," where the meat is from free-range animals and the vegetables are locally sourced. It's better-tasting, and better for the planet, but the second plate's architecture is identical to that of the first. It, too, is damaging—disrupting the ecological balances of the planet, causing soil depletion and nutrient loss—and in the end it isn't a sustainable way to farm or eat.

The solution, explains Barber, lies in the "third plate": an integrated system of vegetable, grain, and livestock production that is fully supported—in fact, *dictated*—by what we choose to cook for dinner. The third plate is where good farming and good food intersect.

While the third plate is a novelty in America, Barber demonstrates that this way of eating is rooted in worldwide tradition. He explores the time-honored farming practices of the southern Spanish *dehesa*, a region producing high-grade olives, acorns, cork, wool, and the renowned *jamón ibérico*. Off the Straits of Gibraltar, Barber investigates the future of seafood through a revolutionary aquaculture operation and an ancient tuna-fishing ritual. In upstate New York, Barber learns from a flourishing mixed-crop farm whose innovative organic practices have revived the land and resurrected an industry. And in Washington State he works with cutting-edge seedsmen developing new varieties of grain in collaboration with local bakers, millers, and malt makers. Drawing on the wisdom and experience of chefs and farmers from around the world, Barber builds a dazzling panorama of ethical and flavorful eating destined to refashion Americans' deepest beliefs about food.

A vivid and profound work that takes readers into the kitchens and fields revolutionizing the way we eat, *The Third Plate* redefines nutrition, agriculture, and taste for the twenty-first century. *The Third Plate* charts a bright path forward for eaters and chefs alike, daring everyone to imagine a future for our national cuisine that is as sustainable as it is delicious.

The Wall Street Journal

"[F]un to read, a lively mix of food history, environmental philosophy and restaurant lore... an important and exciting addition to the sustainability discussion."

The Atlantic

“When *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Michael Pollan’s now-classic 2006 work, questioned the logic of our nation’s food system, “local” and “organic” weren’t ubiquitous the way they are today. **Embracing Pollan’s iconoclasm, but applying it to the updated food landscape of 2014, *The Third Plate* reconsiders fundamental assumptions of the movement Pollan’s book helped to spark.** In four sections—“Soil,” “Land, “Sea,” and “Seed”—*The Third Plate* outlines how his pursuit of intense flavor repeatedly forced him to look beyond individual ingredients at a region’s broader story—and demonstrates how land, communities, and taste benefit when ecology informs the way we source, cook, and eat.”

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