



BOOK REVIEW

Arizona Heart Institute Foundation Cookbook

A Renaissance in Good Eating

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Review: Paige Passano

IN the early 1950s, the advertising world came to realise that the American people had an absolutely childlike fascination with the magical aspects of technology: space travel, television, bright flashing lights, fast cars. It was a multi million dollar realisation, because by bringing a “modern” look to the packaging of a product, it became obvious that Americans could hardly resist the temptation to buy, even if there was little inherent worth in the item. Even the glamour of the atom bomb was used to sell Beacon floor wax: *“The atom bomb’s brilliant glow reminds me of the brilliant gleam Beacon Wax gives to floors. It’s a science marvel.”*

As the pace of society quickened, there was an appeal to being able to eat lunch with one hand while driving to work. Fierce marketing campaigns began in the packaged food business, emphasising modernity, convenience and speed. The American public was quickly seduced by this, with very little skepticism about the shift from seasonal, natural foods to chemically preserved, nutritionally questionable products. Quality, freshness, and flavour were relegated to the back burner.

In 1951, Swanson introduced the first frozen TV dinner, marking the glorious beginning of TV centered family life. There was something about the passivity and lack of creative effort demanded by the television that seemed to call out for a meal that was like minded. It required no effort in preparation, no thinking, and all the food groups, despite being pumped full of preservatives, were conveniently present in their special compartments.

Today, many Americans are coming full circle, back to a simpler and more wholesome diet based on vegetables and grains. Vegetarianism is probably more popular in the States than it has ever been as more and more people are discovering the health hazards of a red meat centered diet. However, for the majority of the population, old habits die slowly, and there is still a frightening amount of chemical-ridden products that are



passed off as foods and eaten with relish.

The eating habits of North Americans are likely to have a direct role in killing three to four lakh American people per year. Of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States, eight of them are believed to have a direct connection with a poor diet (especially excessive fat intake), including heart disease, some types of cancer, diabetes, and arteriosclerosis. The Arizona Heart Institute Foundation, a pioneering centre for the treatment and prevention of heart disease, is bent on reversing this trend, through education on the crucial role of diet and exercise on health. The organisation has come up with a very well presented, informative and accessible cookbook meant to inspire people of all ages, not just heart patients, to learn to prepare healthful, delicious meals. While this cookbook will be of limited use to many Indians, due to the unavailability or unfamiliarity of many ingredients, it is worth a brief perusal, even if only to read the introduction and get an idea of the principles recommended to establish better eating habits.

The cookbook serves as a wakeup call to all those who are seduced by “modern” foods which sacrifice nutritional value, freshness and wholeness. A perfect example is the white bread so popular in urban homes today, that has been chemically processed so that the valuable part of the grain (containing fiber and important nutrients) is stripped away and discarded. So little is left in the final product that many nutritionists would hardly consider it a food anymore. Pepsi, with each 300 ml. bottle containing 17 tablespoons of sugar hiding in the carbonation, is another product growing in popularity despite its obvious detriment to the

health. But of all the potentially dangerous food additives, including excessive sugar, salt and preservatives, it is fat and cholesterol that the Arizona Heart Association is most concerned with.

Because how we learn to eat as children affects lifetime eating habits, the Arizona Heart Association encourages parents to start paying attention to how they feed their children. The main danger of growing accustomed to eating lots of fried oily foods, sugary snacks and rich meats is that these habits only make a person crave more of such “stimulating” foods. The extra fats, sugar, salt and preservatives mask the natural flavour

of the grains and fresh produce — serving as a sledgehammer to the taste buds. It becomes very unexciting to eat less adorned foods once one gets used to eating in this way.

The fact that these “modern” foods have taken such a damaging toll on people’s bodies and environment in the United States, not to mention the enormous wastage in health care dollars (in a desperate attempt to reverse something that could have been prevented by simple dietary measures) is a strong argument for adopting a bit of common sense and skepticism before being sucked in by clever advertising. Any diet that ends up generating death more than life needs a hard look. □

Women, Gender and Equity An Annotated Bibliography

Edited by Ramesh C. Nayak and Cherian Joseph
National Labour Institute

In 1990 the Uttar Pradesh based National Labour Institute initiated a project entitled Gender Issues in Labour, out of a concern over the vast amount of gender discrimination in the labour force — perpetuating the subordination of women and thwarting India’s development in general. The core aim of this project was to increase awareness about existing disadvantages for women and to work towards gender equity.

One result of the project was the addition of over 400 books on gender/women’s studies in their library.

Because the library has become an indispensable resource for anyone working in this field, an annotated bibliography was produced in order to disseminate the information. Women, Gender and Equity is clearly laid out into six thematic sections as well as having an author index for quick reference. Though the bibliography does not cover all the titles currently in the library (as over 100 new titles were procured after the compilation of this book) it will be a valuable research aid to a great range of scholars. □

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