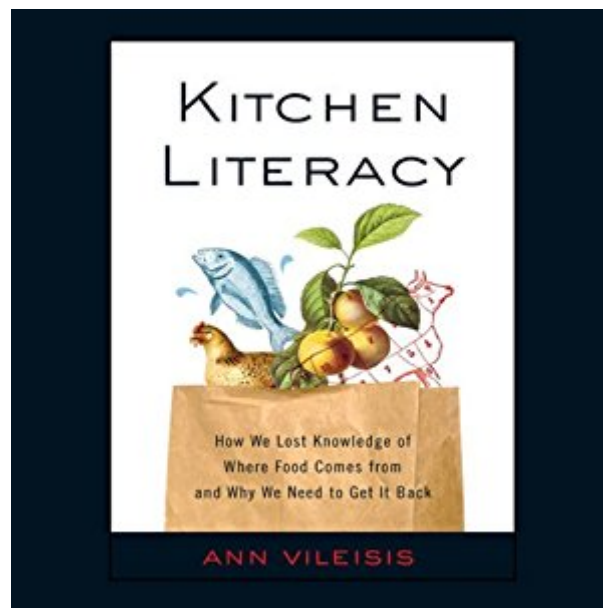


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# Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge Of Where Food Comes From And Why We Need To Get It Back



## Synopsis

Ask children where food comes from, and they'll probably answer: "the supermarket." Ask most adults, and their replies may not be much different. Where our foods are raised and what happens to them between farm and supermarket shelf have become mysteries. How did we become so disconnected from the sources of our breads, beef, cheeses, cereal, apples, and countless other foods that nourish us every day? Ann Vileisis's answer is a sensory-rich journey through the history of making dinner. Kitchen Literacy takes us from an eighteenth-century garden to today's sleek supermarket aisles, and eventually to farmer's markets that are now enjoying a resurgence. Vileisis chronicles profound changes in how American cooks have considered their foods over two centuries and delivers a powerful statement: what we don't know could hurt us. As the distance between farm and table grew, we went from knowing particular places and specific stories behind our foods' origins to instead relying on advertisers' claims. The woman who raised, plucked, and cooked her own chicken knew its entire life history while today most of us have no idea whether hormones were fed to our poultry. Industrialized eating is undeniably convenient, but it has also created health and environmental problems, including food-borne pathogens, toxic pesticides, and pollution from factory farms. Although the hidden costs of modern meals can be high, Vileisis shows that greater understanding can lead consumers to healthier and more sustainable choices. Revealing how knowledge of our food has been lost and how it might now be regained, Kitchen Literacy promises to make us think differently about what we eat. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Whether you lived in a small town or rural area in the 17th, 18th, and even 19th centuries here in the US, it was likely that you would have been involved in some way with producing food for your family. People had their own gardens and many people, even in towns and cities, kept a few chickens or other poultry and perhaps even their own cows--remember Mrs. O'Leary in Chicago? When you sat down to eat, you knew exactly where almost every part of the meal had come from. By the 20th century, however, all that had changed, as more and more food came from cans or boxes, and even fresh produce was shipped from far off states and even countries. People were removed farther and farther from their food, and their food was processed almost beyond being clearly identifiable (just what food group would you put Jello in? Diet soda?). In *Kitchen Literacy*, Ann Vileisis has traced the changes that led to our having become a nation of \*consumers\* rather than \*producers\*, and her narrative is well-researched and entertaining. The gradual introduction of more and more processing to food is described, along with the generally valid reasons for these changes. Being able to buy a can of corn processed immediately after picking in the Midwest certainly was better than having to choose from three or four-day old tired ears of corn brought from southern New Jersey to midtown Manhattan. Vileisis also provides a lot of hitherto uncovered explanations for why convenience foods first took off in the middle of the 20th century.

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