



Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food

Steve Striffler

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Anthropologist Steve Striffler begins this book in a poultry processing plant, drawing on his own experiences there as a worker. He also reports on the way chickens are raised today and how they are consumed. What he discovers about America's favorite meat is not just unpleasant but a powerful indictment of our industrial food system. The process of bringing chicken to our dinner tables is unhealthy for all concerned—from farmer to factory worker to consumer.

The book traces the development of the poultry industry since the Second World War, analyzing the impact of such changes as the destruction of the family farm, the processing of chicken into nuggets and patties, and the changing makeup of the industrial labor force. The author describes the lives of immigrant workers and their reception in the small towns where they live. The conclusion is clear: there has to be a better way. Striffler proposes radical but practical change, a plan that promises more humane treatment of chickens, better food for the consumer, and fair payment for food workers and farmers.

Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food Details

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Author : Steve Striffler

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Rachelle says

If your going to eat chicken do not buy from Purdue or Tyson or go one step further and buy organic and cage free chicken or get it from a farm. This book goes through the history of the chicken industry and pin points the exact time when a whole wholesome chicken was turned into chicken nuggets, chicken wings, boneless chicken or skinless chicken. Also a great book on the history of the workers who worked at these horrible factories and how horrible Tyson workers are treated. A book that shows where your food comes from but also about the people behind the scenes producing it, the farmers who are under the thumb of the large chicken corporations and the company itself.

Courtney says

This is a great ethnography for intro students.

Danielle Shtab says

This was a quick, informative read on the importance and dismal state that the poultry industry is currently in. I learned a lot about Tyson, Holly, migrant workers' involvement in the industry and how the Southern US is currently the epicenter of chicken production. I recommend this book for anyone interested in a not-so-complicated read on the poultry industry.

Dane says

I loved this book. The author covers the history of the poultry industry. He interviews both industry insiders and outsiders, talks about the culture of the workers, immigration, health, etc. Fascinating, pragmatic ...

Kate says

Nice a short, and a nice supplement to books like Fast Food Nation. I knew nothing about the world of poultry farming before reading this!

Painting says

Be like a raccoon and wash everything you eat!

Sarah says

Addy told me to read this. Not sorry I did, but it was a little loosely put together. The author tried to cover too much ground. He was pointing out the flaws in the corporate poultry world; and there are just too many. Perhaps he should have picked one for a deep dive. Terrible Labor practices? Terrible working conditions? Terrible immigration laws? Terrible environmental issues? Inhumane treatment of both workers and chickens? I think this was a potent book for Addy because she'd not been particularly confronted with these issues before. Sadly, I have. Its a well written primer on everything that is wrong with agri-business. And, yes, I will see if there is a local small producer from whom I can get my relatively rare chicken purchases.

Keelin Rita says

Interesting insight into America's relationship with chicken. I read this for an anthropology class in college and I still think about this book. Also advised: don't eat chicken while reading this. If you're like me however, you will subconsciously always get chicken when you're eating while studying this book haha

Indiana Liz says

This is a quick & easy critique of the industrial food system (i.e. Tyson) & immigrant working conditions, based mostly on anecdotes & interviews. As a work of history it disappoints; I suspect the pre-industrial era of chicken raising was more complicated than he suggests.

antonia vitale says

i have been reading a lot of books about food production lately (and since food production today means factory farming, that is what most have focused on). i liked this book and it stands out for a few reasons. it is written by an anthropologist and is written as such. it focuses more on the history of chicken production and the social implications that the industry has than any of the other books i have read. the author spent two summers working in a chicken processing factory (it is an ethnography) and so he writes from first hand experience. the stories are detailed (descriptions of his hiring process, training meetings, and interpersonal relationships within the factory) and really illustrate exactly what is going on behind those closed doors none of the MNCs want you to see behind. the book definitely focuses on the human rights abuses in the chicken industry much more than the animal welfare issue most of these books address. and again, as i often feel when i read any books about modern food production: i am quite glad to be vegan and not a part of this disturbing industry.

Jen says

Juuusst started it. Am forcing myself to read the somewhat boring introduction about how the major chicken-producing powerhouses came to be (Perdue, Tyson, etc).
