



Stuffed: An Insider's Look at Who's (Really) Making America Fat

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It was his job to keep you eating.
It was his job to keep you drinking.
It was his job to keep you buying.
Unfortunately for you, he was good at it.

For more than thirty years, Hank Cardello was an executive and adviser to some of the largest food and beverage corporations in the world. For more than thirty years, he watched as corporate profits—and America's waistlines—ballooned: fattening consumers meant fattening profits. Now, in this fascinating and timely book, Cardello offers a behind-the-scenes look at the business of food, providing an insider's account of food company practices, failed government regulations, and misleading media coverage that have combined to place us in the middle of a national obesity epidemic.

With insights culled from Cardello's time in the food industry, *Stuffed* explores how food companies have spent the last fifty years largely ignoring healthier fare in the name of their bottom lines while pushing consumers toward "convenience" food and supersize portions without considering the health consequences. From grocery aisles to restaurant booths to boardrooms, Cardello reveals the hidden forces that have long shaped your supermarket purchases and menu selections. He examines the black-and-white mindset that has produced the carefully targeted marketing strategies that have maximized profits for the food industry and led to weight gain for you.

But Cardello makes clear that the food companies should not take all the blame. They are merely a cog in a larger system that's broken, and here Cardello illustrates how the government and the media have only made it harder for Americans to make nutritious choices. Highlighting both bit players and high-profile voices of change, Cardello explains the fundamental risks to one-size-fits-all regulatory solutions and the bigger dangers posed by letting the food pundits confuse the health conversation.

More than simply a chronicle of how we got here, *Stuffed* also puts forth a groundbreaking blueprint for the future of the food industry. In debunking the common myth that "healthier" has to mean higher costs and unpalatable tastes, Cardello provides novel but concrete steps that food companies can take to fatten their profits and slim down their customers. In addition, he stresses the realistic role that consumers must play in America's new health equation, explaining that unless they demand healthier food with their wallets, America will continue to tip the scales for years to come.

Provocative and insightful, *Stuffed* is a sweeping critique of excessive food consumption in America, one that uncovers the money behind the calories and presents a fresh vision for building health into the lives of ordinary Americans.

Stuffed: An Insider's Look at Who's (Really) Making America Fat Details

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Deb says

*The un-stuffing of America starts here *

Who is to blame for the current obesity crisis? Do we point the finger at the food companies and restaurants who are hungry for profits, or do we blame it on consumers' insatiable hunger for tasty treats? Maybe we should blame the government or media who inevitably influence how and what we eat. Or do we admit that finger-pointing still leaves us with one hand free to mindlessly gorge on an unhealthy--yet readily available/convenient/designed to be irresistible--bag of chips?

Instead of (just) pointing fingers, *_Stuffed_* takes inventory of the confluence of factors that contribute to America's expanding waistlines, and provides ideas for solutions involving all "guilty" parties. As Cardello points out, the current obesity crisis is fed by: "Too much high-calorie food that's marketed too effectively to too many who can't resist. (p. 144)." Thus, the first steps of the solution lie not in expecting consumers to be able to miraculously resist the goodies, but in encouraging food companies and restaurants to actually make the goods good (or at least better) for us. Cardello offers a number of other realistic approaches for how all parties can work together and implement small changes to make big progress. It's not a matter of pointing fingers, but one of joining hands.

Sure, the obesity epidemic is a huge (excuse the pun) problem that is not going to go away any time soon. But hopefully implementing the kind of ideas and approaches suggested in *_Stuffed_* can help us start shrinking the magnitude of the crisis, one bite at a time. There are ways we can have our cake and be healthy too.

Becky says

I was curious to read Hank Cardello's *Stuffed: An Insider's Look At Who's (Really) Making America Fat*. It is an interesting, somewhat informative, book.

The first five chapters focus on the 'who' is making America fat. It is part history lesson (like chapter one and the invention of frozen dinners) and part behind-the-scenes commentary (like learning how advertising and marketing works, and why grocery stores place things where they are). It covers "the food industry." Think grocery stores, restaurants, and even school cafeterias.

The next three chapters, in my opinion, focus more on the government--national and state--and various lobbies and special interest groups. He has strong opinions on how people are reacting to the obesity crisis. And he doesn't agree necessarily with how some people want to "fix" the problem.

The remaining chapters focus on clearly identifying the problem and brainstorming on how to do something about it. If I understand his position correctly, and that is something that I hope I'm being fair about, it is that he doesn't support "banning" or "forbidding" any ingredient or type of food through legislature. Instead, he is all about urging food companies (manufacturers), grocery stores, restaurants, schools and school cafeterias to voluntarily act on their own to do something about the obesity crisis.

I found the first half more interesting than the second. I didn't personally find anything 'shocking' or 'scandalous' in the book. Though I could see it being an 'eye-opener' for some readers. Essentially, he argues that there is more than enough blame to go around--we are all, in various ways, responsible for the current health crisis. It is not just the fault of the government. (Though reading about how *involved* the government is with big agricultural farmers is disgusting. In my opinion. With the government--as of 2009--paying obscene amounts of money to farmers to plant certain crops in their fields.) It is not just the fault of food companies. It is not just the fault of grocery stores. (He talks a lot about food placement, and end displays). It is not just the fault of restaurants (with their huge portion sizes and the focus on how much money can I make off a customer). It is not just the fault of consumers who with their wallets show how satisfied they are with the status quo. It is not just the fault of the individual who is, after all, the one ultimately deciding what to eat, how much to eat, how often to eat. Everyone is to blame; no one is "solely" to blame.

As long as the government controls which foods are farmed, there is little reason to expect any improvement in the overall nutritional value of the nation's food supply. Fats and sweeteners are in. Fruits and vegetables are still out. (97)

The conventional wisdom among the food industry, activists, and government is that we consumers should act in a rational, disciplined manner. If something's bad for me, I'm obliged to say no. If it's good for me, then it's okay. But life doesn't work this way, as witnessed by our increased belt sizes. (141)

I think his focus was more on fixing things for "large groups of people" and not on individuals.

I would say his ideas or suggestions for how to "fix" things were on the modest side. For example, keep all the vending machines in schools, etc. Just stock them with snacks that are 100 calories or less. Just stock them with diet drinks or sugared-sodas in an 8 oz. size. One of his suggestions, and, I'm really doubtful that this would ever happen, was that fast food restaurants should refuse to sell food to kids and teens between certain hours of the day. Another idea that seems more on the ridiculous side to me, was, teacher-controlled cupcakes as 'rewards' for academic achievement.

I was disappointed, in a way, that he thought artificial sweeteners were the solution to most things. Make all snacks 'healthier' by artificially sweetening them. Lower calories equals automatic healthy snack! I disagree with that. I think artificial sweeteners--perhaps with the exception of stevia--are to be avoided if you really, truly care about what you're putting in your body and how it will effect you. Just my opinion.

He also seemed to think that the solution to 'unhealthy' restaurant food was to add omega-3 to (almost) everything. Just add omega-3 to Big-Macs and Big Macs will be healthy. (I'm not exaggerating. I'm really not.)

Yet another disappointment, to me, was that he didn't seem to think the way forward was to focus on real food, whole food, actual grown-from-the-earth food like fruits and vegetables. His focus was on future engineered food--junk food that is suddenly because of science actually healthy for you. I don't think the answer to America's health crisis is *more* engineering of our food. I think there are companies, perhaps with the best intentions in the world, "playing God" with our food supply, and in the name of "making it better" or "making it more affordable" or "making it tastier" is doing who-knows-what to the nations' future

health. I think it needs to be said: we don't have all the answers, we don't know exactly what we're doing, we're trying and experimenting, but there are still so much we don't know yet.

But to close with something I can wholeheartedly agree with:

"The Food Pyramid saga gives us a good look at what happens when the government tries to do more than it is capable of." (94)

Elizabeth says

The book is interesting to some extent, but the solutions he proposes absolutely miss the point. For instance, he suggests taking percentages out of every major chain's advertising budget to fund independent studies that address questions like "Which is healthier for my kids: regular Pepsi or diet Pepsi?" Um, how about neither? Ever thought of refusing soda for your kids altogether and making them drink *water*?

The short section where he imagines the "fast food restaurant of the future" is also peculiarly depressing. He mentions "omega burgers" that have been injected with omega-3s. This completely ignores the fact that the reason for our current omega-3 deficiencies is the fact that our diet is so overwhelmingly grain-based. Our meat has no omega-3s because our beef is fed grain instead of grass and is raised in CAFOs instead of on pasture. This vision of the future is still assuming that we raise our meat in this unhealthy and unsustainable way, which is depressing at best and dystopian at worst.

You're delivered food based on your particular body chemistry, but that would involve complete trust in both the food industry and the medical industry, which - no matter how far both advance - are still *industries*. That means they're based on money, not on your well-being - and they never will be - unless it brings them profit. I realize the entire premise of the book is that fast food companies can be more conscious of the health of their customers without compromising profits, but the idea that we will ever be able to completely depend on them for our well-being is laughable.

In a nutshell: Skip this and read Michael Pollan.

Jodi says

agree very much with the one-star review written by A. B. Morris on Amazon.

This book is aimed at Americans that have never before read even the most basic information about how supermarkets are designed to make you buy more, and that eat almost entirely or entirely packaged foods and fast foods and...that are not very bright or willing to make any type of changes to the way they eat.

The author shows how out of touch he is with basic healthy nutrition by commenting that the idea of not eating anything with ingredients you can't pronounce is ridiculous and would see you starve to death within a week!

The comments about all healthy food tasting awful were also bizarre. As if all of us hate the taste of all

vegetables and fruits, eggs, nuts, seeds and high quality meats no matter how well prepared!

The emphasis in this book is on calories and the evils of fat. Eating too many calories and too much fat makes you fat, the author claims. If that was true just recommending smaller serving sizes of the same old highly processed and sugar-filled junk food might be a helpful initiative. But it isn't true. The old 'calories in and calories out' line isn't true - as the book 'Good Calories, bad Calories' and others have explained.

Eating less (of the same old junk) and moving more isn't helpful advice for overweight people, as sensible as this advice seems. Far more important is what you eat, what nutrients it has in it and how much of what you eat is made up of allergens and refined carbohydrates and sugar (which raise blood sugar and insulin levels).

How can eating smaller portion sizes of sugar-filled cereals possibly work, when eating high-sugar foods leaves you more hungry after you've eaten them than before? It just makes no sense. These types of foods go hand in hand with overeating, as many of us can't stop eating them once we start due to blood sugar peaks and falls and so on.

Sometimes our taste buds may be fooled by fake foods but these foods won't fool our bodies, which need the nutrition from real foods. Chemical sweeteners are NOT a great solution to anything either as they have their own set of problems.

One of the worst parts of the book is the insistence by the author that while trans fats are bad for you, replacing them with saturated fats is no better. This statement is so wrong. Trans fats are unnatural fats that aren't safe for you at any level and which are immensely disease causing and dangerous. Saturated fats are healthy fats contained in many of the foods essential to good health that we need to live! (The claimed link between saturated fat and heart disease is bogus. See 'Eat Fat, Lose Fat' or 'Good Calories, bad Calories' or 'Know Your Fats' for more information.)

Chapters 11 to 13 are just horrible. I couldn't believe what I was reading. Tip Top white bread and McDonald's burgers with omega 3s added to them, and chocolate made with (unhealthy) vegetable oil instead of cocoa butter are not wonderful and healthy win-win solutions!

Although the author does some good points about why food manufacturers are not entirely to blame for health issues caused by poor food choices, the arguments in much of this book were very weak. This book is a scary read!

Nikki says

Warning, this review is as much rant as review!

Hank Cardello spent many years as a marketing executive in America's food and beverage industry (General Mills and Coca-Cola are just two places he worked). A bout with chronic fatigue syndrome somehow brought to his attention the health problems of obesity and poor nutrition that the late 20th and early 21st century American diet has caused. While he is no conspiracy theorist, he believes that the food industry (and by this he means primarily the processed food industry) has been a big part of the problem, and that it can be a major part of the solution. His book details a number of ways in which improvement could be achieved in restaurant meals (including fast food), supermarkets, school lunch menus and the product of large food processors.

Mr. Cardello makes a lot of good points and has some fascinating ideas. I think what bothered me about his thesis was his full acceptance of the idea that the only way out of our troubles is further use of industrial food-processing -- "better eating through chemistry." Specifically, he seems to believe that parents have no recourse but to serve their children what the processed food industry provides. I was especially annoyed at his concern for parents who have trouble deciding whether to serve their children sugar-sweetened soda pop or diet soda "when water is not an option." I can think of a few situations where water would not be an option, but they are not ones in which most families find themselves.

Like me, Mr. Cardello appears to have grown up in the 50s and early 60s, when obesity rates were lower. I remember how my family ate at home (and we usually did eat at home); soda pop was a rare treat and even ice cream was mostly for birthdays, not a permanent fixture in the freezer. Most of our desserts were homemade from scratch, and we were encouraged to play outdoors. None of us were overweight as children. Our weight problems seemed to begin when we had money and freedom to buy what my father called "pogy bait" on our own.

I know that I made nutritional mistakes with my children; for example, giving them apple juice in bottles rather than water (and I can't recall, in the 70s, anyone saying that was a bad idea!) Better parent education might be part of the answer. Mr. Cardello's ideas for sneaking nutrition into fast and processed food might be good ones, but I don't believe we have to sit passively by and wait for the food industry to save us from ourselves. Read Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food* or Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Vegetable Miracle*. Get a cookbook with fast, tasty recipes for suppers you can make at home -- *Desperation Dinners* and *Let's Eat In* are two of my favorites. We can take charge of our own nutrition.

I do think anyone who is interested in food and health would get something out of this book, and it's a fairly quick read. Recommended with reservations.

Rachael says

Nothing new here, which was disappointing since I expected a "food insider" to be up on the literature that has been out there for years about his industry. Instead he reveals "amazing" secrets like the fact that grocery stores place products they make the most money on at eye level!!! What??? You're KIDDING??? Next you'll be telling us that fast food places get people to buy more when they bundle their food as value meals...oh, wait, you ARE telling us that.

Zzzzzzzz....

What could have made the book better was if the author's promised solutions for how to get the food industry to partner with the public to improve health were useful. But his wonderful suggestions are pretty much to get on the "better living through chemistry" bandwagon and inject fast-food burgers with omega-3s and "sneak" healthier foods to the public so they keep eating the crap they want but it's "better" for them without them knowing it. He wants us to have our cake and eat it, too -- quite literally. Maybe I'm naive, but I'm completely opposed to Frankenfoods AND just throwing up our hands and saying "people won't change, so let's not ask them to."

Dree says

Oh where to begin. The first half of this book is actually fairly interesting--through about chapter 9. The earlier chapters are the most interesting (or I may have given up in disgust!). Chapters 11-13 are horrible. Actually, they are frightening.

Essentially (without complete and total spoilers as to his arguments, which I find weak anyway), Cardello feels Americans are fat because marketers must be greedy (as per what their job is) and regular people are stupid. Regular people can't be expected to stand up to marketing geniuses and say "No! Don't Supersize my meal!" or to think "I am full now, so I will stop even though I have half a bag left." Regular people can't be expected to NOT order a Monster Thickburger with giant fries and drink because they are so yummy! Regular people are lemmings.

Because Americans are stupid and companies must make money, his solution is what he calls "Stealth Health"--corporations should be sneaking omega 3s into hot dogs and better oils into french fries and vitamins into soda. And Americans shouldn't be told about it. Just like cookbooks that advocate sneaking veggies into your kids in muffins and marinara. I don't believe in tricking my kids--and they LIKE veggies (some more than others). I want them to be adults who can happily eat veggies too, and not never eat them without someone pureeing spinach into chocolate muffins.

Even better, he advocates artificial sweeteners. Yes, the man thinks chemicals are the answer. Because Americans should be able to eat and drink however much of whatever they want whenever they want! But fabulous new low-cal artificial sweeteners and formulated oils that don't absorb will keep people healthy!

What a weirdo.

Personally, I think Americans are fat because 1) Americans are greedy. We are drowning in credit card debt, having homes foreclosed on because we cashed out to buy a boat or fabulous vacations or gambled on ARMs (and now want the gov't to "fix" it--are we going to bail out losers in Vegas too?), and are fat. It's all about greed. We want more than is good for our waistlines, more home than we can afford, and anything we see. We are all greedy--not just the marketers. All of us. And, 2) just like Americans don't understand compounding interest, don't get what rolling the rest of an old car loan into a new one means, don't get how when you supersize a meal, you aren't "saving" 40 cents, you are SPENDING 50 cents you weren't going to spend. It's NOT a great deal if you didn't need it (and no one does, unless you are actually splitting it in half with someone else--or maybe even 2 others).

All of this should be taught in 8th or 9th grade. Compounding interest, how credit cards work, how ARMs work, how marketers get us to spend extra money and make us think we're saving, how serving size is manipulated on packaging. Basic math. The math everyone needs way more than calculus.

On top of the content, the writing is odd (and he had a writer!). Reading this book is like reading a keynote address.

The best part of the book? The image on the cover. It's awesome.

Allyson says

I was walking through a book store when the cover of this book caught my eye. I did not want to pay \$25 for the book, so instead I put my name on the waiting list at the library. It took about a month to get the book, but I was super excited when it came in.

I'd say it took me about 3 weeks to read, but I didn't put in a huge effort to finish it. I suppose that statement right there speaks for itself. See, if you know me, you know that I read books that I like quite quickly. Don't get me wrong, it was a good book with necessary information, but the writing style seemed to be very circulatory. I would read one chapter, then a few chapters later, feel like I was reading the exact same thing. I think that might of been because he wouldn't of had enough information to make it into a book. I would of appreciated a few more little stories than he put. That probably could of taken up the space that they needed to fill without all of the repetition.

I have to say, I learned a lot from this book. It actually kind of made me want to go vegan, just from learning about what food companies put into the food. Of course, I know that in moderation anything can really be fine. (Save drugs, and tobacco!) One thing I really didn't like was that the author seemed to like the idea of fake sugars. In my opinion, fake sugars are so nasty and horrible for you. I have no clue as to why he thinks that they are good for you. Another thing would be that he seemed to put the blame of the obesity epidemic entirely onto the government and the food companies. His reasoning was that *people* are to *stupid* to eat in moderation. He believes that we do not possess the knowledge of how to eat correctly ourselves. In some cases, that can probably be said to be true. But mostly I think that it comes out of laziness.

All in all I would say that this book is a must read for the information about the food companies. While it might not be the best writing style in the world it is pretty effective. I am giving this book 4 stars based solely on the information. If I were to grading it based on writing style I would give it a zero. I hope that my review helped you out!

Richard Thompson says

Cardello was mover and shaker for some of the food industry giants like Coca Cola and General Mills before realizing that the actions of those giants were having some profoundly negative effects on the health of Americans. He outlines some of the market realities that make it unlikely that the food industry will take the initiative in providing healthier products, but also has no faith in government regulations or in the ability of consumers to make personal changes. What he never comes near to considering as a possibility is that the very giantness of the giants is, at root, the problem; huge publicly traded companies will always have their bottom lines and only their bottom lines in view. A healthy society — morally, physically, economically and socially — would dismantle the stock market system and limit the size of corporate entities. (That's my solution to the problem.) Cardello finally plunks down for the concept of Stealth Health — slipping healthier ingredients into our “sin” foods without telling anyone. If the stealth items could be healthier, cheaper for the producers to produce and no more expensive for the consumer, the scheme might be useful I suppose. I skimmed the last chapter. Note: check out phytosterols, green tea, and reduced calorie butter alternatives.

Karin says

The book was published in 2009 which makes the information (most of which the average American is well aware of) a bit dated. Unfortunately most of the problems from back then are still with us everyday. Clearly healthy food choices are individual responsibilities, as with everything else it's all about the bottom line of private industry and their lobbyists. The one thing which haunts me is the story of the lady from Chicago who started a community garden because "it's easier to buy guns and drugs than it is to buy a fresh tomatoe."

Jamie says

Although I found the author's perspective on changing the diet of Americans interesting at times, his dismissal of personal responsibility is alarming. Further, his idea of the "healthy cupcake" was disgusting. Renaming the cupcake and positioning it as a reward snack was downright appalling.

Simone says

Although I found this book really interesting, "Mindless Eating" remains at the top of my Food-Book heap; that book was great!

No one will argue that being informed on the topic of healthy eating won't help you make better choices. Being educated on the subject and recognising just how much and how often you are being manipulated will benefit you – but the bottom line for me is: it's all about the choices you make.

No matter how clever (or sneaky) "The Industry" is, no matter how good the marketing is, YOU are responsible for what you put in your mouth. If you reach for the chips instead of the apple.... well....

I don't have a lot of sympathy for adults, making healthy choices is a challenge! I get it! - but just because it's difficult should you just give up? I have a hard time believing that people are that clueless and don't understand that broccoli as a side dish is a better choice than tater tots or that a walk to the corner store is better than driving. You may not like it, you may not do it, but you KNOW it and if you are struggling with your weight it can't be a mystery.

When it comes to kids however, then it all seems a little more insidious to me. Saturday morning cartoon advertizing sugary foods, vending machines selling junk in schools... easy to tell an adult to control themselves and learn more about what they are doing, but the kids are at the mercy of the adults. To quote the author: they are caught in the middle; they don't have the ability to self regulate.

If mom says dinner is a plate of chicken nuggets... what's a kid to do? (I'm not talking about the occasional treat – I mean 3 times a week on a regular basis). I said earlier that I have a hard time believing people are that clueless when it comes to food, but maybe these kids who are not being fed properly from the start are growing up into clueless adults!! I hope not. If that is the case, then I would agree the "The Industry" could help in lots of ways.

Sara says

My favorite part of this book was, without a doubt, the cover. What a great cover. Every time I closed it, I spent at least 3 minutes admiring the model of the U.S. made out of food. I liked that Michigan was corn flakes.

I was most interested in learning about the steps companies have taken to improve the healthfulness of their products and how those changes have reduced fat, calories, cholesterol. But I also just kept thinking that this expectation that companies have a responsibility to make their products healthier is removing the responsibility to eat healthier from the consumer.

Cardello tries to explain that it will be easier for us to eat healthier if companies also aim their products and packaging toward that goal. I just still feel like moderation is a good rule of thumb, but I also see Cardello's point that just blankly encouraging smart eating habits is inadequate.

Alexis says

I found this book at the library while I was doing research on another topic. The second I saw it, I knew I had to read it. I was reading another book at the time, decided to read a chapter of "Stuffed" and then ended up reading the whole thing because I found it so interesting.

The author, who wrote this with a co-writer, was a food executive involved in the industry for over 30 years. He's got a lot of experience with some of the decisions that the food industry has made and he's really an insider.

However, he has seen some of the mistakes that have been made in the name of profit.

This book has some pretty fascinating revelations. For example, it's more profitable for companies to sell you a bigger size of something at a fast food restaurant. Larger food items mean more profit and more money, at the expense of waistlines :(There's also a move at chain restaurants called the "nod" which will get you to purchase that item. People with a grocery list will generally buy more items because they have to walk through more areas of a store.

Did you know that some counties in various States have banned cupcakes from schools? Others have banned things like jellybeans, but are still allowing chocolate bars from certain companies to be sold because these companies pay into school lunch programs.

The author also looks at the role of purchasing agents and how buying and selling affects what goes into the food.

All in all, this book is really good, but I'm sure I enjoyed it more than most other people would because I've heard lectures from food industry reps and am pretty much fascinated by the food industry. It's also incredibly American. There were references to grocery stores, restaurant chains and products that I've never even heard of, and references to the farm bill and school lunch programs that aren't applicable in Canada.

Some of the facts are pretty chilling. About 30 of America is obese and people consume 10 per cent more calories than they did in the 1970s.

The author does offer some solutions and suggestions to some of the problems, like offering smaller sizes, making healthy changes to food items in restaurants, selling things in smaller portions in the store, etc.

Hmm, I was just looking at some of the other reviews and it was interesting how polarized people were about this book and how many people really didn't like it. I have to admit that some of his solutions are coming from an industry view, but that's the perspective that he comes from. I also think he liked Diet Soda way too much.

Part of the problem is the idea of personal freedom vs the nanny state and government enforcing health measures. He also points out that the US has more health regulations on food now than at any other time, and obesity continues to rise.

Lori says

I hovered between 2 stars and 3 for this title. It was obvious that the author was not a writer, but had expertise in other areas and some valuable information to put out there. Some of the material became repetitive and I was not sure this was a style device (to underscore points and sum up material at the end of chapters) or if it was mainly a way to stretch the content into a book. In my estimation, Hank Cardello had a little too much to say to limit himself to an article but not quite enough material for a full length book. However, I am glad he did choose to go with a book format because I am convinced the average American needs to get their head around certain systemic problems with the way we grow, package, transport, market and consume food in this country. We are a grossly dysfunctional food culture (despite the abundance of taste tingling treats we enjoy on a daily basis). It is making feel like crap, look like hell and it is killing us.

As someone who has become more and more interested in food quality, nutrition and cookery, I have read more than my share of articles or, more accurately, diatribes about the state of the American diet. Many of these Cassandras, who are urgently trying to warn us that we are eating ourselves to death, do not represent the average person in terms of palate, food ethics and level of nutritional knowledge. Thus, they come off as shrill or extremist. They propose lifestyle changes that are too dramatic for the time deprived and junk food addicted Joe or Jane Sixpack.

Cardello recognizes this and I believe this understanding of the real world needs and behavior patterns of consumers is the strength of his arguments. Cardello also has an insider's view of the world of Big Food. These companies have been around for decades, if not a century. They did not transform themselves into multinational cash cows by ignoring the desires of their customers. They historically cateri to the the 'wants' more than the nutritional "needs" of the folks who buy their products. Ditto with the fast food industry, the world of family-centric franchise restaurants and the like.

So, along with the usual warnings about how serious our obesity health crisis is, Cardello offers the reader some ideas about how restaurants, food corporations and government agencies can all make realistic and incremental changes that would result in food businesses continuing to make a profit while offering their customers healthier products.

The eyes of the reader who is less versed in the realities of what we eat in America will be especially opened by some of the points about how foods are marketed to us in grocery stores and how the enormous portion sizes we take for granted as "normal" are actually grossly abnormal and far more than anyone should be eating at one meal.

Stuffed is a less "radical" read than Fast Food Nation, or other titles from the Supersize Me school. It might be a good rational starting point for the reader who is not yet ready to fully embrace a more "radical" eating style...one that is actually more moderate and sane than the way we are presently consuming food.
