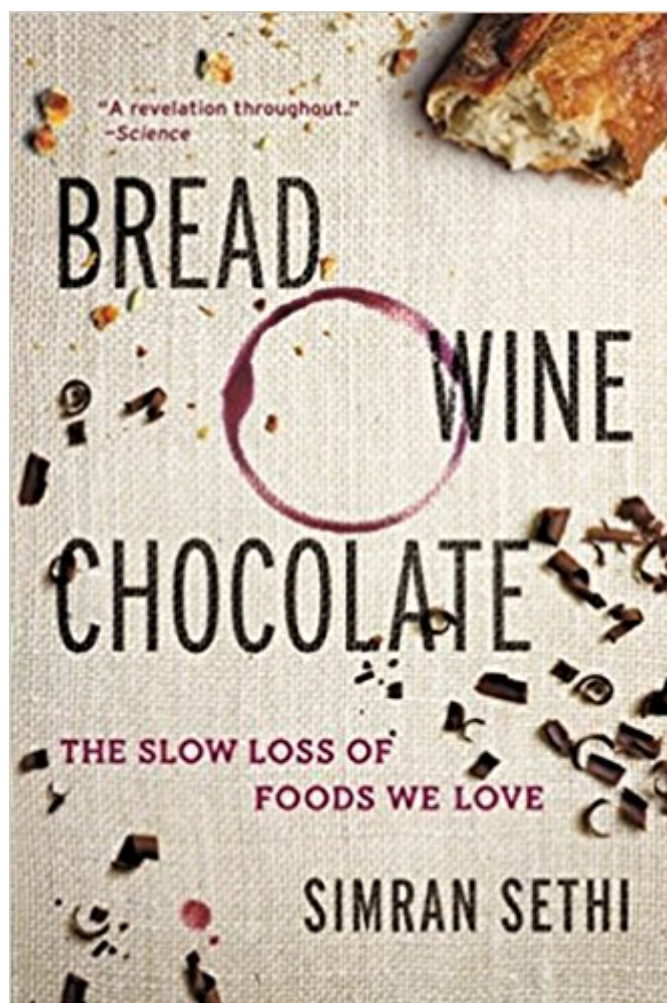


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# Bread, Wine, Chocolate: The Slow Loss Of Foods We Love



## Synopsis

Award-winning journalist Simran Sethi explores the history and cultural importance of our most beloved tastes, paying homage to the ingredients that give us daily pleasure, while providing a thoughtful wake-up call to the homogenization that is threatening the diversity of our food supply. Food is one of the greatest pleasures of human life. Our response to sweet, salty, bitter, or sour is deeply personal, combining our individual biological characteristics, personal preferences, and emotional connections. *Bread, Wine, Chocolate* illuminates not only what it means to recognize the importance of the foods we love, but also what it means to lose them. Award-winning journalist Simran Sethi reveals how the foods we enjoy are endangered by genetic erosion—a slow and steady loss of diversity in what we grow and eat. In America today, food often looks and tastes the same, whether at a San Francisco farmers market or at a Midwestern potluck. Shockingly, 95% of the world's calories now come from only thirty species. Though supermarkets seem to be stocked with endless options, the differences between products are superficial, primarily in flavor and brand. Sethi draws on interviews with scientists, farmers, chefs, vintners, beer brewers, coffee roasters and others with firsthand knowledge of our food to reveal the multiple and interconnected reasons for this loss, and its consequences for our health, traditions, and culture. She travels to Ethiopian coffee forests, British yeast culture labs, and Ecuadoran cocoa plantations collecting fascinating stories that will inspire readers to eat more consciously and purposefully, better understand familiar and new foods, and learn what it takes to save the tastes that connect us with the world around us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“[Simran Sethi] looks at ways in which monoculture and an increasingly standardized global diet put food systems in peril and leave crops vulnerable to blight and climate change.” (Wall Street Journal)

“In *Bread, Wine, Chocolate: The Slow Loss of Foods We Love*, Sethi describes how, in recent years, environmental and economic forces have decreased biodiversity and threatened the existence of some of our favorite foods and beverages.” (Boston Globe)

“Our tables are never really of, or for, one, as Sethi elegantly shows us.” (NPR)

“Bread, wine, chocolate—three things many of us refuse to live without. But, as Simran Sethi tells us in her new book, *Bread, Wine, Chocolate: The Slow Loss of Foods We Love*, we might have to.” (Acquired Taste)

“Read this wonderful book and you will become immersed in the intricate worlds of no less than six (delicious) foods and drinks. It is about our relationships with the life forms that sustain us—and how we might learn to approach those relationships with far more love, compassion, and good taste.” (Naomi Klein, New York Times bestselling author of *This Changes Everything* and *The Shock Doctrine*)

“Simran Sethi’s passionate book on food and biodiversity reminds us how healing food can be. The world is on our plate.” (Deepak Chopra, M.D.)

“A powerful reminder that we can eat in ways that don’t cause damage to the planet or its poorest people—and that can delight us, not just fill us up. Don’t read it on an empty stomach!” (Bill McKibben, author of *Deep Economy*)

“A passionate plea to save and restore the things most precious about our food—its myriad flavors and its connection with nature. As global economic forces slowly squeeze the uniqueness out of what we eat, Simran Sethi explores the delicate culinary delights that offer hope, and deliciousness, for the future.” (John McQuaid, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of *Tasty: The Art and Science of What We Eat*)

“A stirring call to arms for anyone who loves food!” (Andrea Reusing, James Beard award-winning chef and author of *Cooking in the Moment: A Year of Seasonal Recipes*)

“Should be required reading for culinary students, journalists, scholars and citizens who care about what they put into their mouths and what we’re doing to Mother Earth. Sethi is the kind of writer who can coat the bitter pill in honey and we all just swallow and say thank you.” (Linda West Eckhardt, James Beard award-winning cookbook author, Editor/Founder of *Everybody Eats News*)

“In this illuminating and impactful book, Simran Sethi sheds light on the dwindling diversity of our diets and our landscapes through the stories of our most beloved tastes. *Bread, Wine, Chocolate* calls on all

of us to cherish and thus preserve the world's endangered flavors. (Dan Barber, chef/co-owner of Blue Hill and New York Times bestselling author of *The Third Plate*) "Read this and you will understand that cuisine is how we kiss the world. There is more good news: it kisses back. (Paul Hawken, New York Times bestselling author of *Natural Capitalism and Blessed Unrest*) "By turns explorer and explainer, Simran Sethi conducts a thoughtful and heartfelt tour of humanity's most beloved tastes and the threats that could extinguish them forever. (Michael Brune, executive director, Sierra Club) "Bread, Wine, Chocolate is for anyone who has ever longed for a richer understanding of the foods you love, and for greater awareness of what it takes to bring them to you. (Kaelyn Riley, *Experience Life Magazine*) "In a new book, author Simran Sethi argues that we are facing one of the most radical shifts in food ever. (Smithsonian Magazine) "[Sethi] writes with a deep understanding of pleasure and taste to convey her urgent message we must make uncompromising, purposeful choices when it comes to what we eat before it's too late! (Alice Waters, chef, author and the proprietor of *Chez Panisse*) "...Simran Sethi's new book *Bread, Wine, Chocolate: The Slow Loss of Foods We Love*, an excellent look at loss of biodiversity through something that we all know, and love, well: food. (Paste Magazine) "Simran Sethi... argues convincingly about the deep importance of these humble foods that human beings have been imbibing for millennia. (Civil Eats) "Bread, Wine, Chocolate is full of wonderfully geeky bits of science, including an excellent section on how memory and culture influences our perception of taste. But Sethi's friendly, welcoming tone makes serious topics digestible and pleasurable. (Associated Press)

Simran Sethi is a journalist and an associate at the University of Melbourne's Sustainable Society Institute and the former host of the PBS *Quest* series on science and sustainability. Her work has appeared on NBC Nightly News, PBS, Oprah, MSNBC, the History Channel, and NPR. She was the national environmental correspondent for NBC News, the anchor/writer of Sundance Channel's first dedicated environmental programming, and the host of the Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary *A School in the Woods*.

There was a large gap in the public conversation of food and the Earth that this book fills. This is not only a book about perhaps three of the most beloved foods but a book about people and how we treat each other and where it might get us. Sethi has gone out to really do the job of a true journalist.

A job whose morals seem to have diminished in our current society. Intelligent, thoughtful and thought provoking. This book will be a part of curriculums for years to come.

Good food does more than just nourish our bodies. It also delights our senses. In this wonderfully captivating book, Simran Sethi explores five of our favorite foods--bread, wine, chocolate, beer and coffee--in a globetrotting pursuit of the stories behind them and what can be learned from our love of them. Her journey takes her from Ecuador to Ethiopia (and beautiful points between). We meet some of engaging and colorful characters who are integrally parts of the stories behind our food (who are usually almost always anonymous), while being fed an appetizing mix of biology, botany, history, public policy as well as the author's personal reflections on her journey. A talented writer, Ms. Sethi's book is a mouth-watering and eye-opening gift to eaters, especially those whose appreciation of good food goes beyond merely a desire for personal pleasure (while not neglecting the importance of it). The damage done by industrial food system's destruction of naturally beautiful biodiversity in food isn't just ecological and nutritional. We are also deeply impoverished by the loss of the joy that is produced by the exquisite range of tastes of truly good food--a loss that is more profound than we might usually imagine. Aware of this, the author is not content to stop at merely identifying and describing the physical effects of a loss of biodiversity in our favorite foods; she delves into the spiritual significance of it as well, and it was then that the book most resonated with me. Food is not just a vehicle for transporting nutrients into our body. Biodiversity in food is not just important so we can savor a variety of tastes. Rather, the value of biodiversity in food reflects the value in diversity generally. There is reflected in the stories behind our food a universal interconnecteness. There is, for example, a fascinating and beautiful web of stories behind the satisfaction (joy, even) that we get when sipping a fine cup of coffee in the morning. In the author's words, it is "a manifestation of deeper human connection," a source not only of joy, but even transcendence. And the appreciation of good food creates opportunities far beyond merely increasing our own personal pleasure. It helps create an instrument for changing the world, and fixing the brokenness of our food system. "Taste," the author writes, "is the gateway through which we will transform food...By demanding what is delicious we can transform what is grown and sold. It is the first step in reclaiming what we love." As a vegetable farmer trying desperately to convince people not to settle for what is cheap and convenient, I offer a hearty amen to that sentiment. The "sensory guides" designed for tasting the foods were a little over the top for my more plebeian palate but should delight the epicures. Who knew one could savor bread with the same careful attention a connoisseur would give to wine, for example? I give Bread Wine Chocolate an

enthusiastic two thumbs up. Bravo to Simran Sethi. May her tribe increase.

Beautifully written, this book has inspired me to pay closer attention to food, its origins, and the people who are passionately working to nurture abundance on earth and in cultures across the globe. Sethi interweaves rich stories of her experiences with (and learnings from) these colorful and wise people with well researched information on biodiversity and cultural diversity, all filtered through beloved foods. Through these compelling stories, Sethi reveals how each person can play a role in supporting bio- and cultural diversity thereby averting further loss. Plus, the full color flavor guides for wine, chocolate, coffee, beer and bread put the power of tasting into readers' hands. Using the wine chart during a party last night, my guests and I discovered that by focusing on the tastes, scents, and textures of the fluid in the cups before us, our enjoyment of the drink blossomed. This book just keeps on giving!

I had heard a lot about this book but I wasn't sure how much it would benefit me. I guess it sounded a little intimidating. But then I read the chapter about chocolate and learned so much! I had no idea that chocolate comes from this football-shaped pod. I used to buy fair trade chocolate because I thought it was a good thing to do. Now I understand why it's so important to feel good about the purchases I make for myself and my family and buy chocolate that benefits the farmer, the environment and everything in between. I've been telling all my friends and coworkers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, too. So even though the science was a bit over my head, overall, I enjoyed the book and especially the fun tasting guides.

Surprising, in the most unsurprising of places. Weird in a good way. Loaded with information but intimately portrayed. Fun, inviting, and emotional. Certain pieces of it follow me around all day.

Simran captures the essence of the foods we love -- the tastes, flavors, memories, associations, identities that are encompassed by familiar and beloved foods -- while at the same time illuminating the severity of what's at stake if we don't address the loss of biodiversity in food and agriculture. Her book is equal parts intimate, nourishing, thought-provoking and insightful -- all evidence of Simran's ability as a storyteller and writer. It's a story of food, it's a story of love, it's a story of connection. Definitely worth the read! (Not to mention that it would make a perfect gift for any number of people on your holiday shopping list).

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