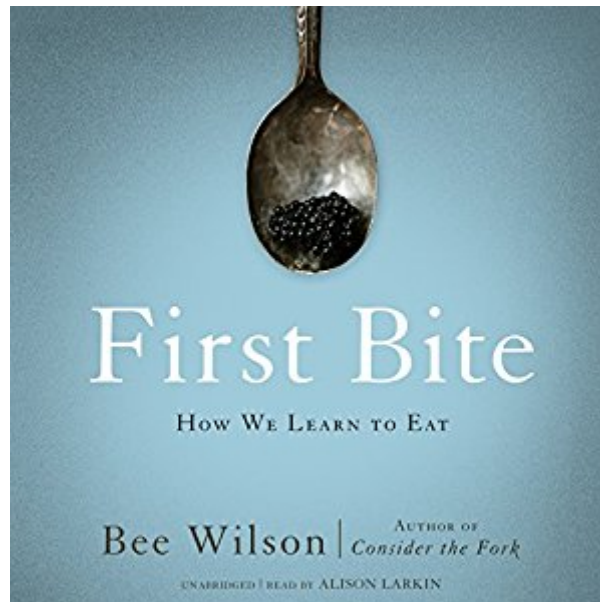


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First Bite: How We Learn To Eat



Synopsis

We do not come into the world with an innate sense of taste and nutrition; as omnivores, we have to learn how and what to eat, how sweet is too sweet, and what food will give us the most energy for the coming day. But how does this education happen? What are the origins of taste? In *First Bite*, the beloved food writer Bee Wilson draws on the latest research from food psychologists, neuroscientists, and nutritionists to reveal that our food habits are shaped by a whole host of factors, including family, culture, memory, gender, hunger, and love. An exploration of the extraordinary and surprising origins of our tastes and eating habits - from people who can eat foods only of a certain color to an amnesiac who can eat meal after meal without getting full - *First Bite* also shows us how we can change our palates to lead healthier, happier lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I first encountered social historian and food writer Bee Wilson through her brilliant book, *Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat*, which looks at history and much more through examining the evolution of cooking, and the implements needed for this. Wilson is my favourite kind of writer or non-fiction - "extensive in research, meticulous citing to enable the interested reader to search further, and, most important of all for me - a gifted weaver of words. However erudite a writer, I need the skills a good novelist possesses - how to tell the story. Essential that this is done in non-fiction as much as in fiction, I think. Bee Wilson knows how to tell the story. *First Bite: How We Learn to Eat* is a more personal, different kind of book, though all the strengths of Wilson's writing, as detailed above, are as impeccably in place. This book takes a long and cool look at the

origins of our often disordered eating habits. It is a more personal book because Wilson herself, as she explains, was a disordered eater, tending towards weight gain, attracted to the sugary, struggling with this and that diet. Meanwhile her sibling had another kind of eating disorder. Food, in lands of plenty, has become a huge problem for man. Fashions in advice for how to change, in the developed world, the curious mixture of obesity and malnourishment which is endemic, is endlessly written about, and the legions of diet gurus all grow fat (metaphorically, one assumes) on the proceeds of the over-fedâ™s obsessions.

This is an informative book about eating: about how taste preferences are formed, and how we can change them, and why it's so hard to start eating healthily when you're used to the opposite, and about eating disorders and their treatment. One of the things I learned from this book is that I do not enjoy reading about eating for nearly 300 pages, so if you love foodie books, your rating will likely be higher than mine. Those three stars represent my level of enjoyment rather than the quality of the book. In case you, too, are unlikely to read the entire book, here's the short version. Tastes are developed, not inborn (as anyone who's ever deliberately cultivated a taste for something you once disliked knows). So, anyone can learn to like healthy food â€” which is what anyone who wants to eat healthier must do, because nobody sticks with a diet that feels like punishment at every meal. The best way to develop good taste in children is to start very young: babies are particularly open to new flavors at 4â€”7 months of age. But once you're past that, let children choose among healthy foods without forcing anything down their throats, and keep offering small amounts until they start to like it. This actually works at any age, even for extremely picky eaters. But the way we eat in the first world has gone badly wrong, with an abundance of cheap food offering poor nutrition. It doesn't help that our methods of training children to eat are inherited from a time when famine, rather than obesity, was the primary danger: hence the fact that "cleaning your plate" is considered virtuous. People are healthier when they regulate their eating based on actual hunger, rather than external cues like portion size, or dealing with emotions by eating.

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