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Closing The Food Gap: Resetting The Table In The Land Of Plenty



Closing the Food Gap

*Resetting the Table
in the Land of Plenty*

MARK WINNE

"It's heartening to find a book that successfully blends a passion for sustainable living with compassion for the poor."

—DR. JANE GOODALL



Synopsis

In Closing the Food Gap, food activist and journalist Mark Winne poses questions too often overlooked in our current conversations around food: What about those people who are not financially able to make conscientious choices about where and how to get food? And in a time of rising rates of both diabetes and obesity, what can we do to make healthier foods available for everyone? To address these questions, Winne tells the story of how America's food gap has widened since the 1960s, when domestic poverty was "rediscovered," and how communities have responded with a slew of strategies and methods to narrow the gap, including community gardens, food banks, and farmers' markets. The story, however, is not only about hunger in the land of plenty and the organized efforts to reduce it; it is also about doing that work against a backdrop of ever-growing American food affluence and gastronomical expectations. With the popularity of Whole Foods and increasingly common community-supported agriculture (CSA), wherein subscribers pay a farm so they can have fresh produce regularly, the demand for fresh food is rising in one population as fast as rates of obesity and diabetes are rising in another. Over the last three decades, Winne has found a way to connect impoverished communities experiencing these health problems with the benefits of CSAs and farmers' markets; in Closing the Food Gap, he explains how he came to his conclusions. With tragically comic stories from his many years running a model food organization, the Hartford Food System in Connecticut, alongside fascinating profiles of activists and organizations in communities across the country, Winne addresses head-on the struggles to improve food access for all of us, regardless of income level. Using anecdotal evidence and a smart look at both local and national policies, Winne offers a realistic vision for getting locally produced, healthy food onto everyone's table.

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Customer Reviews

Having been a part of the movement since the 1970s, serving as (among other positions) the executive director of the Hartford Food System, Winne has an insider's view on what it's like to feed our country's hungry citizens. Through the lens of Hartford, Conn.—a quintessential inner city bereft of decent food options apart from bodegas and fast food chains—he explains the successes he witnessed and helped to create: community gardens, inner city farmers' markets and youth-run urban farms. Winne concludes his tale in our present food-crazed era, giving voice to low-income shoppers and exploring where they fit in with such foodie discussions as local vs. organic. In this articulate and comprehensive book, Winne points out that the greatest successes have been an informal alliance between sustainable agriculture and food security advocates... that shows promise for helping both the poor and small and medium-size farmers. For the most part it is a calm, well-reasoned and soft-spoken call to arms to fight for policy reform, rather than fill in, with community-based projects and privately funded programs, the gaps left by our city and state legislators. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A calm, well-reasoned and soft-spoken call to arms. "Publishers Weekly" "Fearless, intelligent, and surprisingly funny." Gwyneth Doland, *Sante Fe Reporter* "It's heartening to find a book that successfully blends a passion for sustainable living with compassion for the poor." Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE, author of *Harvest for Hope* "Reading this book should make everyone want to advocate for food systems that will feed the hungry, support local farmers, and promote community democracy—all at the same time." Marion Nestle, author of *What to Eat* "By combining stories of his deep personal experience as an activist with keen insights into strategies for addressing food injustice, Winne fills a gap in the growing literature on good food, why it matters, and how to ensure that everyone everywhere has access to it. Plus, the book is a fun read. Winne's stories made me want to meet him down at the local farmers' market and then join him afterward for a cold beer." Anna Lappé, cofounder of the Small Planet Institute and author of *Grub* "Part personal journey, part manifesto for creating food security in the United States, *Closing the Food Gap* sets out the dream of a nation without poverty and hunger, telling

stories of people and community projects that have made a difference in the lives of the food-insecure." •Rod MacRae, Food for Thought

Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of the Plenty, challenges readers to think about the issue of hunger from a systemic lens. The food systems currently in place are flawed, which has resulted in an increase in the number of food-insecure Americans, despite an increase in charity and non-profit efforts. While there are many ways citizens can be locally involved in addressing hunger, such as participating in community gardens, farmers markets, and handing out meals to the hungry, Winne continually points back to root cause of hunger: poverty. It is our job to empower those who are most affected by poverty to speak up, because "as with these movements [rights for blacks and women], the struggle for inequality, access, affordability, healthy food, and food security will ultimately be won by those with the most at stake" (Winne, 2008, p. 191). This book captures the complexity of the food gap in America, while giving readers hope that there is a solution. We have to speak up and advocate for policies that end poverty and allow all Americans a place at the table in the land of plenty.

Awesome book that really helps one understand our food system and how to address issues of inequality and food access. Highly recommended!

This book is practically new!

Read as a group for our Library book of the month. Very lively discussion after reading it.

It come as it was described.

This book is probably the best descriptor of how our food systems end up leaving out those in poverty. Extremely well written. If you liked Michael Pollan's books, you will love this.

This book gives an excellent picture of the food and hunger crisis in this country. It's easy to forget with one third of our population being obese that there are also many who go hungry. It's interesting that similar political and environmental forces lead to both problems. Winne is very liberal, which may turn off some more moderate readers, however his science is sound and he has the facts down right.

I've had the privilege of attending a food policy workshop at which Mr. Winne was the guest speaker. The man has a lot of experience in a wide range of food policy issues. As another "overeducated white guy" (his words), he's dedicated much of his life to improving the food security of those who need help most. Through much of the book, he reiterates time and again how meaningful change must come from within - it can't be forced on a community from an outside source. He honestly shares his successes and failures in a variety of efforts - bringing grocery stores back into underserved neighborhoods, establishing farmer's markets and community gardens, growing CSAs, working with food pantries, even changing bus routes so people from underserved areas can reach the services they need (food and other services as well). I found his narrative informative and engaging. Best of all, it was real - "We did this, it worked. We did that, it didn't." This was not a "in theory only" book. What really bothered me, and why I am only giving this book three stars, is how at the end of the book he turned his back on every lesson he's learned and called for top-down, big money, legislative efforts to enforce change. That blew me out of the water. I know Mr. Winne has a very socialist viewpoint, but, dang, from his own experience he should know that simple handouts never solve anything except for in the short term, and federal bureaucracy is very slow to respond to the needs of the people and inevitably does do at higher costs than local programs. He says this himself earlier in the book. I was really disappointed. Read the book, learn from his successes and failures - there is a lot of good material here - just be aware that it ends in contradictions.

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