

Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation

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****Now a docu-series streaming on Netflix, starring Pollan as he explores how cooking transforms food and shapes our world. Oscar-winning filmmaker Alex Gibney executive produces the four-part series based on Pollan's book, and each episode will focus on a different natural element: fire, water, air, and earth. ****

In *Cooked*, Michael Pollan explores the previously uncharted territory of his own kitchen. Here, he discovers the enduring power of the four classical elements—fire, water, air, and earth—to transform the stuff of nature into delicious things to eat and drink. Apprenticing himself to a succession of culinary masters, Pollan learns how to grill with fire, cook with liquid, bake bread, and ferment everything from cheese to beer.

Each section of *Cooked* tracks Pollan's effort to master a single classic recipe using one of the four elements. A North Carolina barbecue pit master tutors him in the primal magic of fire; a Chez Panisse-trained cook schools him in the art of braising; a celebrated baker teaches him how air transforms grain and water into a fragrant loaf of bread; and finally, several mad-genius "fermentos" (a tribe that includes brewers, cheese makers, and all kinds of picklers) reveal how fungi and bacteria can perform the most amazing alchemies of all. The reader learns alongside Pollan, but the lessons move beyond the practical to become an investigation of how cooking involves us in a web of social and ecological relationships. Cooking, above all, connects us.

The effects of not cooking are similarly far reaching. Relying upon corporations to process our food means we consume large quantities of fat, sugar, and salt; disrupt an essential link to the natural world; and weaken our relationships with family and friends. In fact, *Cooked* argues, taking back control of cooking may be the single most important step anyone can take to help make the American food system healthier and more sustainable. Reclaiming cooking as an act of enjoyment and self-reliance, learning to perform the magic of these everyday transformations, opens the door to a more nourishing life.

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, April 2013

: Who has untangled the nature of modern America's relationship with food more effectively than Michael Pollan? After sharing the experience of growing his own food in *Second Nature*, he illuminated how our appetites drive the evolution of edible plants with *The Botany of Desire*. Then he pondered *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, weighing our precarious food chain and popularizing the pleasures of eating local; in *Defense of Food* and *Food Rules* distilled his conclusions into a manifesto and a manual. With *Cooked*, he closes the seed-to-table loop with a passionate exploration of the satisfying transformation of grilling, braising, baking, and fermenting--and their primal roots. Learning to cook elevated humans from lone animals into increasingly intelligent, civilized groups, and though we spend scant time doing real cooking, we've become obsessed with watching people cook--a paradox that points to longing for a lost experience. Through his own experiences making and enjoying food with pit masters, chefs, bakers, and "fermentos," he retraces our path to connection with real ingredients and health for people and planet.

Whether you're sympathetic or skeptical, you can't help but appreciate Pollan's genius for conveying the elemental appeal of making a meal. --Mari MalcolmMichael Pollan, recently featured on Netflix in the four-part series *Cooked*, is the author of seven previous books, including *Food Rules*, *In Defense of Food*, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, and *The Botany of Desire*, all New York Times bestsellers. A longtime contributor to *The New York Times*, he is also the Knight Professor of Journalism at Berkeley. In 2010, *Time* magazine named him one of the one hundred most influential people in the world.

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Other Books

Philosophers at Table. When you boil it down, one of the most important things we do each day is eat. The question of eating—what, and how—may seem simple at first, but it is dense with complex meanings, reflecting myriad roles that food plays and has played over the centuries. In fact, as Raymond D. Boisvert and Lisa Heldke show in this book, it's difficult to imagine a more philosophically charged act than eating. *Philosophers at Table* explores the philosophical scaffolding that supports this crucial aspect of everyday life, showing that we are not just creatures with minds, but also with stomachs. Examining a cornucopia of literary works, myths, histories, and film—not to mention philosophical ideas—the authors make the case for a bona fide philosophy of food. They look at *Babette's Feast* as an argument for hospitality as a central ethical virtue. They compare fast food in Accra to the molecular gastronomy of Spain as a way of considering the nature of food as art. And they bite into a slug—which is, unsurprisingly, completely gross—to explore tasting as a learning tool, a way of knowing. A surprising, original take on something we have not philosophically savored enough, *Philosophers at Table* invites readers to think in fresh ways about the simple and important act of eating.

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