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The Mindful Carnivore: A Vegetarian's Hunt For Sustenance



Synopsis

A vegan-turned-hunter reignites the connection between humans and our food sources and continues the dialog begun by Michael Pollan and Barbara Kingsolver. While still in high school, Tovar Cerulli experimented with vegetarianism and by the age of twenty, he was a vegan. Ten years later, in the face of declining health, he would find himself picking up a rifle and heading into the woods. Through his personal quest, Tovar Cerulli bridges disparate worldviews and questions moral certainties, challenging both the behavior of many hunters and the illusion of blamelessness maintained by many vegetarians. In this time of intensifying concern over ecological degradation, how do we make peace with the fact that, even in growing organic vegetables, life is sustained by death? Drawing on personal anecdotes, philosophy, history and religion, Cerulli shows how America's overly sanitized habits of consumption and disconnection with our food have resulted in so many of the health and environmental crises we now face.

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Customer Reviews

I've just finished Tovar Cerulli's newly released *The Mindful Carnivore: A Vegetarian's Hunt for Sustenance*, and I highly recommend it to just about anyone who eats and reads. No matter how you'd label yourself--hunter, nonhunter, antihunter, vegan, vegetarian, carnivore, or just an omnivore with dilemmas--this is a book worth reading. And once you've finished it, you may begin questioning those labels that once seemed so simple and clear. But apart from all the big ideas in this book, it's just a good read. As Cerulli tells a deeply personal story of his own journey from vegan

to hunter, he connects his experiences to larger themes having to do with meat, meaning, and the karmic costs of every food on his table--including the brown rice, tofu, and organic vegetables. As you'll immediately guess from the book's title and cover, Cerulli is now something of a venison evangelist. But he wasn't always. After reflecting on the compassionate words of Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, he became a vegetarian at age 20. Soon, after learning more about the modern egg and dairy industries, he went completely vegan. Eventually, however, he began to have second thoughts. "I realized," he writes in his bio for a recent panel discussion, "that all food has its costs. From habitat destruction to combines that inadvertently mince rabbits to the shooting of deer in farm fields, crop production is far from harmless. Even in our own organic garden, my wife and I were battling ravenous insects and fence-defying woodchucks. I began to see that the question wasn't what we ate but how that food came to our plates. A few years later, my wife--who was studying holistic health and nutrition--suggested that we shift our diet, and my health improved when we started eating dairy and eggs.

Tovar Cerulli seems like a very thoughtful, articulate person and he's certainly a good writer. However, I had a bit of hard time getting through some sections. About halfway through the book, I started to find myself skimming the first sentence of each paragraph to get through some of the more anecdotal parts. And I guess it's to be expected that a Buddhist, former vegan from Vermont who describes himself as pro-feminist and even cites a number of texts written by feminist scholars, as well as Buddhist philosophers such as Thich Naht Hahn, wouldn't write from the perspective of a more stereotypical hunter--which is I guess is why I bought this book. I wanted a unique perspective. In fact, as a male non-hunter, I bought five books on the "why" of hunting all at once, and read the two written by women, "Call of the Mild" and "Girl Hunter," first. Then I read "The Mindful Carnivore." I figured these two female authors and a male former vegan would provide a really unique, thoughtful perspective on the subject--and they did. At least Cerulli and Lily Raff McCaulou did--not so much Georgia Pellegrini. Her book was more about getting driven around on a golf cart or ATV by the billionaire owners of huge privately owned nature preserves, shooting animals that were RAISED in-house to be hunted, and then getting drunk on expensive scotch and eating gourmet food afterward (seriously?!?.....stay away from "Girl Hunter" by the way). "The Mindful Carnivore" was certainly worth reading and I'm glad I did. Knowing basically nothing about hunting, I learned quite a bit. It was just a bit too sensitive for me. At times a little out there.

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