

Preface

There can be no doubt that the current industrial food system is broken and the links are severed at many points along the supply chain. News of the damage continues to filter into the public realm. Increasingly, there are media reports which punctuate the public's consciousness; inhumane treatment of animals at the point of slaughter, supermarket giants with billion dollar profits expanding their tentacles into non-food retail industries, food safety scares and outbreaks, increasing levels of diet-related chronic diseases, food producers being unfairly treated by supermarkets, grocery prices rising, regulators taking supermarkets to court...and the 'Big Food' juggernaut continues.

Sounds somewhat depressing, doesn't it? What on earth could you, your household or your community possibly do to redress the balance? Reminiscent of David versus Goliath? Sounds all too hard, ... or is it? Indeed some people may be practicing food democracy already, and are unaware that they are part of a growing alternative food movement. Food democracy is the counter weight to the current food system and offers a corrective opportunity. It posits that people can take small steps to regain some control, or influence the food system. Indeed, the small efforts of a large number of people to impact a larger system should not be underestimated.

The book starts with a brief analysis of the current food system, and what is wrong with it. Chapter 2 explores the foundations of food democracy, after which Chaps. 3, 4 and 5 examine examples of Australian food democracy in action at household, community and national levels. Food democracy is an alternative food system revolution where passive consumers are transmogrified into active citizens. With this in mind, Chap. 6 takes a practical look at the 'how to' of food democracy. Finally, the authors offer their reflections on food democracy in the final conversational chapter.

The genesis for this book came from a suggestion by John Coveney after several years of us both teaching the Master's level topic, Food Democracy and Public Health at Flinders University. In the process of developing and teaching the course two things became apparent, firstly many students were unfamiliar

with both the term and concept and secondly, there was no textbook and minimal Australian academic literature available.

This book will be of interest to university students examining food issues. Food has become an important component in many topics, especially at the undergraduate level because it is a useful vehicle to convey ideas about society, politics, ethics as well as a more conventional place in the Health Sciences.

It is our hope that this introductory book will fill a niche and build the food system literacy of not only ordinary people, but also those who question the status quo and are interested in the politics of food, the environment and citizenship. Food democracy will never replace 'Big Food', but contained within this book are the small steps of an alternative food movement guiding the reader towards regaining a modicum of control.

Adelaide, December 2014

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Food Democracy

From consumer to food citizen

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2015, XII, 57 p. 5 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-981-287-422-1