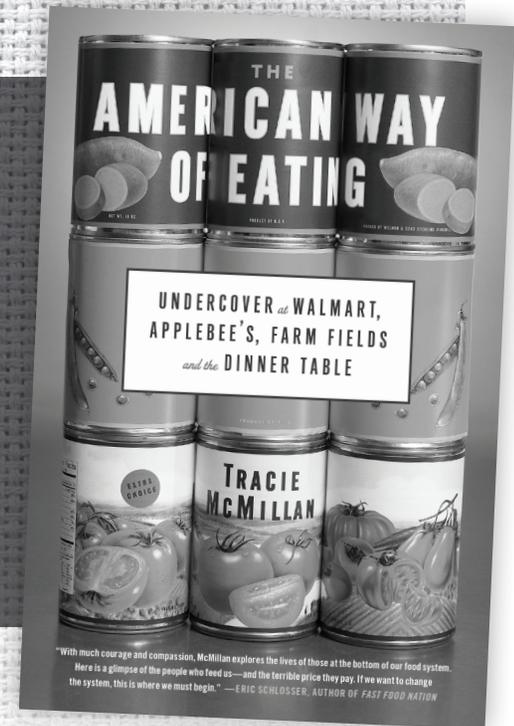


Book Club in a Bag

“An engaging balance
between documentary
and history”

— *Publisher's Weekly*



Kalamazoo
Public Library



A working-class transplant from rural Michigan, Brooklyn-based writer **Tracie McMillan** is the author of the New York Times bestseller, *The American Way of Eating: Undercover at Walmart, Applebee's, Farm Fields and the Dinner Table*. Mixing immersive reporting, undercover investigative techniques and "moving first-person narrative" (*Wall Street Journal*), McMillan's book argues for thinking of fresh, healthy food as a public and social good—a stance that inspired *The New York Times* to call her "a voice the food world needs" and Rush Limbaugh to single her out as an "overeducated"

"authoress" and "threat to liberty." In 2012, *Whole Living* magazine named her a "Food Visionary," building on her numerous appearances on radio and television programs, which range from the liberal *The Rachel Maddow Show* to the "tea-party favorite" *Peter Schiff Show*. She has written about food and class for a variety of publications, including *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *O, The Oprah Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Saveur*, and *Slate*.

McMillan moved into writing about food after a successful stint as a poverty and welfare reporter while working as the managing editor of the award-winning magazine *City Limits* in New York City. While there, she won recognition from organizations ranging from the James Beard Foundation to World Hunger Year. In 2013, she was named a Knight-Wallace Journalism Fellow at the University of Michigan, a year after she was named a Senior Fellow at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism. Visit her at TracieMcMillan.com or follow her at [@TMMcMillan](https://twitter.com/TMMcMillan).

Book Summary

In the tradition of Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed*, an ambitious and accessible work of undercover journalism that fully investigates our food system to explain what keeps Americans from eating well and what we can do about it. Getting Americans to eat well is one of today's hottest social issues; it's at the forefront of Michelle Obama's agenda and widely covered in the media -- from childhood obesity to store brands trying to make their food healthier.

Yet most Americans still eat poorly, and award-winning journalist Tracie McMillan wanted to know why. So, in 2009 McMillan went to work undercover in our nation's food system alongside America's working poor, living and eating off her wages, to examine how we eat. McMillan worked on industrial farms in California, in a Walmart produce section outside Detroit, and at an Applebee's kitchen in New York City. Her vivid narrative brings readers along to grueling work places, introduces them to her coworkers, and takes them home to her kitchen, to see what kind of food she (and her coworkers) can afford to buy and prepare. With striking precision, McMillan also weaves in the story of how we got here, digging deep into labor, economics, politics, and social science to reveal new and surprising truths about how America's food is grown, sold, and prepared -- and what it would take to change the system. Fascinating and timely, this groundbreaking work examines why eating well in America -- despite the expansion of farmers markets and eat local movements -- is limited to the privileged minority. *show* alongside the superstar pop group Destiny's Child.

Among the Bravos is the Silver Star-winning hero of Al-Ansakar Canal, Specialist William Lynn, a nineteen-year-old Texas native. Amid clamoring patriots sporting flag pins on their lapels and Support Our Troops bumper

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with McMillan's assertion that "Everyone wants good food"? Support or challenge using the book and outside examples.

2. Were McMillan's undercover journalism methods ethical? Why or why not? How would you have improved her methods with regard to human subjects protections?

3. In the conclusion, McMillan distinguishes between viewing food as a consumer good and as a social good. What are the policy implications of each view?

4. After reading this book, could you argue, as the industry does, that there are positive aspects to entry-level work in the food industry?

5. What did McMillan learn from working undercover that would have eluded her if she limited her methods to observation and interview?

6. Will having read this book change the way you view or interact with food workers? How so?
