itself in the face of accelerated transformations. The field thrives with every new form of life and social and political existence. In these globally repressive and depressive times, studying food rejuvenates hope. Seed is the ultimate example through which we can observe how humble beginnings, if attended with care, may evolve into transformations that bring life and vitality into existence.

—ZAFER YENAL | Professor of Sociology, Bogazici University

Food studies is a fresh and exciting field with unlimited possibilities for doing innovative research and activism in which you can genuinely help to build a better future. As you work to move the field forward, always remember the scholars who came before you, and not just in your own particular area of specialization. Food studies exists because of the pioneering work of scholars like Carole Counihan and Warren Belasco, who never received the recognition they deserved from the wider academy in terms of prestigious awards or graduate appointments. Yet reading the work of early scholars is not simply an exercise in genealogy. I continue to take inspiration from their broad vision, their deep understanding of food in society, and their moral compass, pointing them toward ways of improving food studies.

—JEFFREY M. PILCHER | Professor of Food History, University of Toronto

WELCOME TO THE WORLD of food studies, a field we at NYU adopted in 1996. That date may well be before you were born, but we view our programs as still young, hungry, ambitious, and striving to find their place in the world, just as you must be. We designed them to respond to demands for deeper and more complex analyses of the role of food in culture and society, and of how food systems operate, in practice as well as in theory. We hoped we would attract students who wanted to learn about—but also to act on—what our society needs to do to solve major food-system problems: food insecurity, chronic disease, and climate change. And here you are, ready, we hope, to take them on.

Without question, they need taking on. Food insecurity—lack of access to a reliable daily supply of adequate food—affects roughly fifteen percent of Americans and nearly a billion people worldwide. At the same time, about two billion people consume so much food that they become overweight and at increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other leading causes of premature death and disability. Furthermore, the way we typically produce and consume food depletes soil and water resources, pollutes streams, and generates unsustainable amounts of greenhouse gases—thereby affecting everyone on the planet. The urgent need to solve these problems is the obvious response to the challenge, "why study food?"

I am guessing you will hear this question often. We certainly do. To address it, we also point out that sales of food exceed a trillion dollars annually in the United States, that everyone eats, and that food is one of life's greatest pleasures. Food *matters*—physiologically, economically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally.

How to deal with all this? Study hard. Learn everything you can about everything you can. Be curious. Follow leads. Dig deeply. But never lose sight of the pleasure. Delight in what you are learning about food and what it means, but also use what you learn to take even deeper pleasure in food itself.

—MARION NESTLE | Emerita Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, New York University

I HAVE LONG HELD that the study of food should be much more than an exercise in description of the origins, traditions, or flavors of food qua food but, rather, a window onto important social, cultural, historical, and geographic forces. That food cannot be separated from power is why food movements, which have garnered so much attention in food studies, are always about more than food, involving contestation over knowledge, wealth, social privilege, and much more. At the same time, what makes food such an interesting and arguably unique object of study is that food production and consumption are at once sociocultural and ecological-biological processes. Put differently, the materiality of food matters tremendously in social processes at the same time that the sociality of food matters tremendously in biological processes.

These twin aspects of food are inescapable, and those who attempt to affect how food is produced, distributed, or consumed ignore either one at their peril. Witness public rejection of transgenic food, regulatory strictures on Olestra (a nondigestible fat substitute), or the dramatic but unexplained, escalation in gluten intolerance. All arguably reflect a failed separation of food's social life from its ecological life in landscapes and bodies—as well as a disinterest in how knowledge, science, and technology mediate between the material and social.

As a wide range of actors (e.g., social movements, engineers, cooks, entrepreneurs) are trying to remake the future of food in accordance with their ideas of the good life or to avert Anthropocene-driven dystopias, there are new questions to be asked about the material-social interface. What is food and how do its boundaries shift? How does new knowledge about the microbiome, epigenetics, and other new scientific developments shape ideas of what food does to the body? How will new technologies in food manufacturing be met by the public? It seems to me that digging deeply into these