



BOOK

Slow Cooked: An Unexpected Life in Food Politics. 1st ed. Nestle M. 2022. University of California Press, 1111 Franklin St, Oakland, CA 94607. Hardcover book, 294 pp, \$29.95, ISBN: 9780520384156.

Marion Nestle reflects on her late-in-life career as a world-renowned food politics expert, public health advocate, and a founder of the field of food studies after facing decades of low expectations.
—Publisher

Frequent *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* readers—food and nutrition academics, advocates, practitioners, and researchers—likely have read at least 1 of Marion Nestle's books. *Food Politics*¹ is a required text in course syllabi for many of us. *Unsavoury Truth*² has proved invaluable to Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior leadership discussions about industry influence on the evidence-based essential to nutrition education interventions and how best to shield Society from that influence. For decades, we've counted on Marion to speak truth to food system power and to expose the myriad food industry influences on what we eat and food, nutrition, and agriculture policy.

Now we can learn how she became that person. Thanks to the coronavirus disease 2019 lockdown in 2020 and concomitant cancellation of planned travel, she had “the time and opportunity to ponder” several persistent questions from students, media reporters, and other readers of her work; questions such as: How had she become



so interested in food, nutrition, and food politics in the first place? How did she come to be a key source for reporters? What gave her the courage to take on the food industry so relentlessly?

Nestle answers these and many more questions in *Slow Cooked*,³ a title meant to refer to her late start on becoming a named chair of New York University's Nutrition and Food Studies Department, prodigious writer, sought-after speakers, and 1 of the most important voice in the food realm. I found *Slow Cooked* to be an engrossing and beautiful memoir—personal, generous, thoughtful, and inspiring.

Nestle begins by describing a rather bleak and loveless upbringing in which she endured insults about

her looks (“ugly” being a particularly cruel family nickname) and received scant academic or professional encouragement. Her family and college advisors had low expectations for Marion.

And she met them early. She married at 19 years old, dropped out of college after her sophomore year, had 2 children in short order, got a job as a laboratory tech, and moved to the suburbs. She had conformed to what her peers were doing and were soon miserable.

In *Slow Cooked*, Nestle chronicles how she mustered the courage—through grit, determination, and talent—to radically change the course of her life, how she overcame obstacles of early low expectations, poor mentorship, and sexism to become a prolific writer, academic leader, shaper and critic of federal policy, and a powerful force for food system change. She shares the inspiration—a casual question someone asked or a simple observation she made—for each of the 15 books she has authored. She reveals her writing process and how her well-established daily routine works. In this way, Nestle's memoir continues to do something she loves—to mentor.

Marion ends *Slow Cooked* with her hopes for the food and nutrition field—she wants her colleagues “to care and be willing to do something about the social and economic inequities that act as barriers to such diets.” Instead of promoting healthy food for all, she sees our field moving “in precisely the opposite direction” toward individualistic and inequitable “precision” nutrition. Instead of perpetuating an “all foods fit” approach, she urges us to advocate for much stronger food industry regulation and reduced consumption of ultra-processed foods.

She calls on all academics, advocates, researchers, and practitioners to help bring about food system changes to promote public health, food equity,

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and sustainable diets. *Slow Cooked* will inspire readers to do just that.

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2. Nestle M. *Unsavory Truth: How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*. 1st ed. Basic Books; 2018.
3. Nestle M. *Slow Cooked: An Unexpected Life in Food Politics*. University of California Press; 2022.