



# The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food

By Dan Barber

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At the heart of today's optimistic farm-to-table food culture is a dark secret: the local food movement has failed to change how we eat. It has also offered a false promise for the future of food. Our concern over factory farms and chemically grown crops might have sparked a social movement, but chef Dan Barber, recently showcased on Netflix's *Chef's Table*, reveals that even the most enlightened eating of today is ultimately detrimental to the environment and to individual health. And it doesn't involve truly delicious food. Based on ten years of surveying farming communities around the world, Barber's *The Third Plate* offers a radical new way of thinking about food that will heal the land and taste good, too.

*The Third Plate* is grounded in the history of American cuisine over the last two centuries. Traditionally, we have dined on the "first plate," a classic meal centered on a large cut of meat with few vegetables. Thankfully, that's become largely passé. The farm-to-table movement has championed the "second plate," where the meat is from free-range animals and the vegetables are locally sourced. It's better-tasting, and better for the planet, but the second plate's architecture is identical to that of the first. It, too, is damaging—disrupting the ecological balances of the planet, causing soil depletion and nutrient loss—and in the end it isn't a sustainable way to farm or eat.

The solution, explains Barber, lies in the "third plate": an integrated system of vegetable, grain, and livestock production that is fully supported—in fact, *dictated*—by what we choose to cook for dinner. The third plate is where good farming and good food intersect.

While the third plate is a novelty in America, Barber demonstrates that this way of eating is rooted in worldwide tradition. He explores the time-honored farming practices of the southern Spanish *dehesa*, a region producing high-grade olives, acorns, cork, wool, and the renowned *jamón ibérico*. Off the Straits of Gibraltar, Barber investigates the future of seafood through a revolutionary aquaculture

operation and an ancient tuna-fishing ritual. In upstate New York, Barber learns from a flourishing mixed-crop farm whose innovative organic practices have revived the land and resurrected an industry. And in Washington State he works with cutting-edge seedsmen developing new varieties of grain in collaboration with local bakers, millers, and malt makers. Drawing on the wisdom and experience of chefs and farmers from around the world, Barber builds a dazzling panorama of ethical and flavorful eating destined to refashion Americans' deepest beliefs about food.

A vivid and profound work that takes readers into the kitchens and fields revolutionizing the way we eat, *The Third Plate* redefines nutrition, agriculture, and taste for the twenty-first century. *The Third Plate* charts a bright path forward for eaters and chefs alike, daring everyone to imagine a future for our national cuisine that is as sustainable as it is delicious.

**The Wall Street Journal**

"[F]un to read, a lively mix of food history, environmental philosophy and restaurant lore... an **important and exciting** addition to the sustainability discussion."

**The Atlantic**

"When *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan's now-classic 2006 work, questioned the logic of our nation's food system, "local" and "organic" weren't ubiquitous the way they are today. **Embracing Pollan's iconoclasm, but applying it to the updated food landscape of 2014, *The Third Plate* reconsiders fundamental assumptions of the movement Pollan's book helped to spark.** In four sections—"Soil," "Land," "Sea," and "Seed"—*The Third Plate* outlines how his pursuit of intense flavor repeatedly forced him to look beyond individual ingredients at a region's broader story—and demonstrates how land, communities, and taste benefit when ecology informs the way we source, cook, and eat."

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### **The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food By Dan Barber Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

A groundbreaking chef at one of Manhattan's first farm-to-table restaurants, Barber shares his vision of good food's future. Cooking per se doesn't constitute this chef's passion. He cares about where foods come from, how they're grown, and whether they can be harvested into the future. To learn about soil's role, he visits an organic farm in upstate New York, where an insightful, dedicated farmer diversifies crops and grows for quality and not solely for quantity. A Spanish farmer teaches Barber about producing foie gras without force-feeding. He investigates fisheries. All this leaves Barber with some innovative ideas about how people ought to be eating—a third plate of grains, vegetables, and some meat or fish, all grown with ecological awareness and commitment to sustainability. Such a change from current ideas about dining fast and cheap calls for retraining the public palate away from blandness and uniformity and encouraging eaters to demand unique and distinctive flavors. --Mark Knoblauch

Review

### *The Chicago Tribune*

"[A]uthor Dan Barber's tales are **engaging, funny and delicious...** *The Third Plate* invites inevitable comparisons with Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, which Barber invokes more than once. And, indeed, its framework of a foodie seeking truth through visits with sages and personal experiments echoes Pollan's landmark tome (not to mention his passages on wheat cultivation, which, astonishingly, best Pollan's corn cultivation chapters by many pages.) But at the risk of heresy, **I would call this *The Omnivore's Dilemma 2.0...* *The Third Plate* serves as a brilliant culinary manifesto with a message as obvious as it is overlooked.** Promote, grow and eat a diet that's in harmony with the earth and the earth will reward you for it. It's **an inspiring message that could truly help save our water, air and land before it's too late.**"

### *The Washington Post*

"Not since Michael Pollan has such a powerful storyteller emerged to reform American food.... Barber is helping to write a recipe for the sustainable production of gratifying food."

### *Pittsburgh-Post Gazette:*

"There hasn't been a call-to-action book with the potential to change the way we eat since Michael Pollan's 2006 release, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Now there is. Dan Barber's *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food* is **a compelling global journey** in search of a new understanding about how to build a more sustainable food system....*The Third Plate* is **an argument for good rather than an argument against bad**. This recipe might at times be challenging, but what's served in the end is a dish for a better future....Barber writes **a food manifesto for the ages.**"

### *The Wall Street Journal:*

"**Compelling...** *The Third Plate* reimagines American farm culture not as a romantic return to simpler times but as a smart, modern version of it...*The Third Plate* is **fun to read**, a **lively** mix of food history, environmental philosophy and restaurant lore... **an important and exciting** addition to the sustainability discussion."

### *The Atlantic:*

"When *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan's now-classic 2006 work, questioned the logic of our nation's food system, 'local' and 'organic' weren't ubiquitous the way they are today. **Embracing Pollan's iconoclasm, but applying it to the updated food landscape of 2014, *The Third Plate* reconsiders**

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**The New York Times:**

"Each grain represents an agricultural virtue: Rye, for example, builds carbon in the soil. Taken together, they **argue for a new way of thinking about the production and consumption of food, a 'whole farm' approach that Mr. Barber explores, eloquently and zestfully,** in *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food*... Mr. Barber's subjects tend to be colorfully eccentric and good talkers, capable of philosophizing by the yard. To put their efforts in context, Mr. Barber unobtrusively weaves in a hefty amount of science and food history. **Readers will put the book down having learned quite a bit... Mr. Barber is a stylish writer and a funny one, too.**"

**Publishers Weekly:**"Barber's work is **a deeply thoughtful and—offering a 'menu for 2050'—even visionary work** for a sustainable food chain."

**Vice President Al Gore:**

"Dan Barber's new book, *The Third Plate*, is an eloquent and thoughtful look at the current state of our nation's food system and how it must evolve. Barber's wide range of experiences, both in and out of the kitchen, provide him with a rare perspective on this pressing issue. A must read."

**Ruth Reichl, author of *Garlic and Sapphires* and *Tender at the Bone*:**

"In this compelling read Dan Barber asks questions that nobody else has raised about what it means to be a chef, the nature of taste, and what 'sustainable' really means. He challenges everything you think you know about food; it will change the way you eat. If I could give every cook just one book, this would be the one."

**Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation* and *Command and Control*:**

"Dan Barber is not only a great chef, he's also a fine writer. His vision of a new food system—based on diversity, complexity, and a reverence for nature— isn't utopian. It's essential."

**Malcolm Gladwell, author of *David and Goliath* and *The Tipping Point*:**

"I thought it would be impossible for Dan Barber to be as interesting on the page as he is on the plate. I was wrong."

**Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction* and *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*:**

"*The Third Plate* is one of those rare books that's at once deft and searching—deeply serious and equally entertaining. Dan Barber will change the way you look at food."

**Eliot Coleman, author of *The New Organic Grower* and *The Four Season Farm Gardener's Cookbook*:**

"After my first meal at Blue Hill, I paid Dan the ultimate farmer compliment. I told him that he made vegetables taste almost fresher after he had prepared them than when the farmer harvested them. Now I am equally impressed with his writing. Food has stories and Dan tells the stories as well as he cooks. If you want to know about food, read this book."

**Andrew Solomon, author of *Far from the Tree* and *The Noonday Demon*:**

"Dan Barber writes with the restrained lushness with which he cooks. In elegant prose, he argues persuasively that eating is our most profound engagement with the non-human world. How we eat makes us who we are and makes the environment what it is. It all needs to change, and Barber has written a

provocative manifesto that balances brave originality and meticulous research. His food is farm-to-table; his eloquent, impassioned book is farm-to-heart."

**Bill McKibben, author of *Wandering Home*:**

"Dan Barber is as fine a thinker and writer as he is a chef—which is saying a great deal. This book uses its ingredients—the insights of some of the finest farmers on the planet—to fashion something entirely new: a recipe for the future."

**About the Author**

DAN BARBER is the executive chef of Blue Hill, a restaurant in Manhattan's West Village, and Blue Hill at Stone Barns, located within the nonprofit farm Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture. His opinions on food and agricultural policy have appeared in *The New York Times*, along with many other publications, and he was recently showcased on Netflix's *Chef's Table*. Barber has received multiple James Beard awards, including Best Chef: New York City (2006) and the country's Outstanding Chef (2009). In 2009 he was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world.

@DanBarber

**Users Review**

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**Mary Manzo:**

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**Michael Anderson:**

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