

Sowing Connections

Episode 3 • What Shapes What We Eat? with Marion Nestle

00:00:00:04

Marion Nestle

So we have a food system that is set up to feed animals under industrial conditions and to fuel automobiles and airplanes. That's where our food is going. Has nothing to do with feeding people directly.

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Lissie

[music] Sowing connections.

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Melody Reese

Long before food reaches our plate, choices are being made about which varieties are preserved, which crops are planted, and what qualities we value. These early decisions ripple through everything that comes afterward, from our farms and grocery stores to our kitchens and our health. In this episode, we'll start with our farm director, Corbin with Field Notes from right here on Heritage Farm. We'll discuss one key consideration Seed Savers Exchange takes to help protect the heirloom varieties for future generations. Then we'll sit down with nutritionist and food policy expert Marion Nestle to discuss how agriculture, public policy and economics shape the food system that we all rely on. Finally, we'll introduce you to one remarkable heirloom variety from our collection the 'Corg'i pea, a delicious garden favorite that grows well in both containers and in the ground. I'm Melody. This is *Sowing Connections*, and I'm so glad you're here.

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Corbin Scholz

Welcome, everyone. My name is Corbin Scholz, and I'm the farm director here at Seed Savers Exchange. My job is to oversee all of the crop production on the farm, and to regenerate the crops for the seed bank and grow a few crops out for the catalog as well. This year, we're growing about 150 different crops for seed, and my team is in charge of growing, harvesting and processing the seed so that we can have really beautiful clean seed for long term storage.

One of the biggest things that I have to consider when creating my crop plan for the year is isolation. So in order for us to keep crops true to type, we need to make sure that they're not cross pollinating with any other of the same crop type. And we see this happening even within

things that are self pollinating, because insects can come in and kind of disrupt that natural self pollination.

There's three different types of ways that we use isolation. There's physical barriers, temporal barriers, and distance. So physical barriers just like our tunnel here is we've added mesh, kind of a mesh screen on the sides of our tunnel so that the pollinators that we release inside can't get out. And pollinators that are already existing outside can't get in.

And this helps with, you know, we're able to have things at a much closer distance because we know that the tomato in this tunnel and the tomato in that tunnel are not going to be crossing with each other. Temporal isolation is about timing. So we can plant in successions things that have quite a short life cycle from seed to seed.

So lettuce is one, peas, or another one beans. That could be one where we plant in succession. So we'll plant one, let it flower once it's starting to produce pods and getting older, then we'll plant the next one so that the flowering stages are at different points. And then the third one is distance. So some things have distance requirements of one mile 1 to 3 miles.

And so we have a lot of space on the farm where we have fields very far apart from each other so that we don't have, you know, wind being able to pollinate or bugs that can travel long distances kind of messing up those true-to-type seeds. And this is something we just have to keep in the back of our minds as we're working with these open-pollinated varieties and making sure that we're doing a responsible job stewarding them.

Seeds Savers Exchange stewards true-to-type seeds, open-pollinated, true-to-type seeds. So we want to make sure that the offspring is a direct replica of the parent plant. And this is so that we can take a variety that has been stewarded by a family for the last, you know, 5 or 6 decades and make sure that it continues to be the same crop, adapting to the climate and keeping all of that genetic diversity that the plant, the plant holds.

And we also want to make sure that when we're evaluating plants, that we can share information and knowledge on the plants that we're stewarding and sharing. And that is a really important thing that we can provide along with, you know, a family story. A lot of people grow plants based on their characteristics. And so if we can say we know exactly what this plant is going to be, and we're sure about it, because we grew this responsibly with good isolation and know that it didn't cross, then it's a happy story to share. And, you know, the story continues on for generations and generations.

One of my favorite things about working at Seed Savers Exchange is the huge diversity in the crop types that we get to grow and experience. So not only do we have thousands of tomatoes that we get to grow out and experience, but also crops that I never got to grow as a market farmer.

So we're growing cotton for seed. We're going tobacco for seed. We have peanuts growing for seed. There's a really beautiful nine foot tall variety of eggplant that we get to grow for seed, and the eggplants are only about the size of a large blueberry, and so that it just is a perfect example of not only getting to extend and expand our knowledge of, you know, the food system and growing and and learning and processing. But also, it's such a great reminder of all the diversity that exists in the seed world and how lucky we are to be able to be a part of it and to steward these, you know, for generations to come.

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Melody Reese

Protecting the genetic diversity of seeds is only the beginning. The choices made in our fields shape everything that comes afterward. To help us follow that journey, here's the conversation between Seed Savers Exchange executive director, Mike Bollinger, and Marion Nestle.

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Mike Bollinger

Marion, I'm really excited to have this conversation with you. You know, thank you so much for making the time. You know, your work has been so important in helping people understand, you know, how the food system actually functions, thinking from production to consumption. And at Seed Savers Exchange, we spend a lot of time thinking about the food system as well, but we find ourselves often starting a little earlier than that and thinking about seeds and how what gets grown and carried forward shapes everything that follows. So I'm excited to kind of be able to kind of play between between those spaces and, and connect on those perspectives.

I don't want to spend too much time on your background. People could read *Slow Cooked*, right if they want to learn more about the history of just your career and that trajectory. But I do want to just frame this a little bit. You began your career in molecular biology, shifted into nutrition and food studies, eventually focusing and doing policy work and talking about corporate influence. Doing my research, I've heard you reference that time at Brandeis as falling in love with nutrition. And I just wonder, what was it about nutrition or about that experience that that pulled you in?

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Marion Nestle

Well, there were two things. One is I loved to eat and the idea of, you know, talking about food and the nutrients that it contains was really kind of fun to think about. And also, people have such interesting ideas about nutrition, some of them backed by science and some of them less well backed by science. But I tell the story in the memoir about the first day that I was doing research on how I was going to start the class, and I opened a bunch of books to a list of the nutrients that were required in the human diet, and none of the books had the same list.

I mean, there were a lot of overlaps. They all had thiamine and riboflavin and niacin, but some of them had nutrients that were only required for animals, and some of them had nutrients that

the body can make but doesn't, maybe doesn't make enough of under certain circumstances. So I thought that was interesting.

And I was at Brandeis University and a fabulous library. I went to the library and just started . I got the book *Recommended Dietary Allowances*, which was put out by the National Academies, and it was a very small book. Then there was a compendium of summaries of the research that demonstrated that these nutrients were essential in the diet, meaning that you couldn't, that you had to get them from food. You don't make them yourself.

And I flipped open the book and picked at random thiamine , the vitamin thiamine and picked it at random. Some study and went to the library to look at it, and it was a study that had been done on six young women who were incarcerated in a mental institution, and they were put on a thiamine deficient diet, which seemed astounding to me because one of the symptoms of thiamine deficiency is mental disorders. And these women were already in a mental, a mental hospital, kind of. And the one of the assays for how deficient they were in the amount of finding they were getting was their cooperation with doing chores around the hospital.

I was totally hooked. I was totally hooked. And and then the next one I looked at, I did that the same thing for vitamin C. And there the study was done on six prisoners in a penitentiary. And during the study, two of the prisoners escaped. I thought, this is not ,this is not a well controlled clinical trial.

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Mike Bollinger

Right. There's a lot to be desired there, right. And a lot to learn. Yeah.

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Marion Nestle

I thought I was totally hooked. I thought any undergraduate student taking a nutrition course would be able to read these studies and immediately tell you what was wrong with the studies. Whereas in molecular biology that was impossible because it was too abstract. And the studies used, were they were written in a different language, but anybody could read these and do critical thinking in biological science because it was obvious what was wrong with it. Only six individuals in a mental hospital, I mean, in a prison and all you're raised ethical kinds of issues that needed to be discussed. And I thought, this is a phenomenal way to teach undergraduate biology, because students can go right to the research and deal with it. And we were off and running. That was it.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah. No, that's a really great story. Thank you for sharing. You know, you spent decades helping people understand the food system and nutrition now. And I just wonder, you know, when you look at where we are right now, what feels like it's, you know, most out of alignment between what the system produces and what actually supports health?

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Marion Nestle

Well, it's hard to know where to begin, but my favorite way of beginning is a graph that the Department of Agriculture puts out that shows the fate of all of the corn that's grown in the United States. It's an astonishing graph. You take one look at it and you say, what? Because nearly half of the corn is used for animal feed, and nearly half of the corn is used for ethanol for automobiles, there's hardly any left over for food for people. So we have an enormous food supply. And the same thing is true of soybeans. They're used for diesel fuel instead of ethanol. But the same thing is true. So we have a food system that is set up to feed animals under industrial conditions and to fuel automobiles and airplanes. That's where our food is going. Has nothing to do with feeding people directly. Yeah.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah, and we know that well being in Iowa. Well, yes, we're surrounded by it. Right.

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Marion Nestle

Iowa at one point, people keep telling me, was the place where all of the vegetables were grown in the United States, and not anymore.

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Mike Bollinger

Not anymore. Yeah, yeah. Not anymore, for sure. They're talking about ag you know, thinking about that lens of agriculture. And, you know, there are a lot of decisions about what gets grown and how it's produced. How much do those early decisions affect the kind of foods that people actually have access to now as well? You know, beyond the ethanol and the animal products, it's about kind of the, the, the additional uses of those things as well.

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Marion Nestle

Well, that's one of the reasons why the government is pushing meat is because it's got a lot of it, and it has a huge investment in subsidies for those crops. The subsidies encourage people to grow more of the crops. I mean, that's the major effect. And if all of the land is taken over for corn and soybeans to feed animals and fuel automobiles, then there's nothing left for growing food for people.

And we see the effect of that on the Midwest, the depopulation and divide of the Midwest. And I think it's got all kinds of not only health consequences, but social consequences.

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Mike Bollinger

Well, and the fact that we refer to the things that we eat as "specialty crops."

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Marion Nestle

Right, right. That's the department. That's the department. And they're listed under the "horticulture" title in the Farm Bill. Yeah. It's this little thing that little old ladies do. Yeah. Right. You know, we do horticulture, right? That's exactly right. This very, you know, sort of twee thing. Yeah. I mean, it's astonishing how little our food supply has to do with food. It has to do with fuel and feed.

You could argue. Okay, feed these animals. We eat animals. And so that's going to the right place. But Frances Moore Lappé in the early 1970s, talked about the social and environmental costs of growing food for animals, when if that food went for people, you had saved yourself a lot of trouble.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So thinking about rewinding right before I think the system or complexes evolved to the, to what we're seeing now. So much of the seed saving that used to happen was tied to qualities like flavor and adaptability and local use and recipes. And today that's shifted to yield and uniformity and transport ability and shelf life. Do you think that that shift or is there evidence that that shift in priorities has had an impact on the nutritional quality of food?

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Marion Nestle

Sure. I mean, first of all, it encourages the production of what are now called the ultra processed foods, which are heavily processed, industrially produced foods that are done from concoctions of ingredients, don't look like real food and are enormously profitable for the companies that make them, and are designed to get you as much of them as possible, whether they're good for you or not. The good for you is not part of that equation. The selling of them is the part of the equation, and there's now an enormous amount of evidence that these highly processed foods are bad for health. And so that's a consequence of the industrial food system. And the, you know, if people were eating foods that looked like foods like they kept the ground or animal or or cow or whatever, or eggs or fish or whatever, people would be healthier, the system would be healthier. And then we wouldn't be in the trouble we're in now where 75% of American adults are overweight or obese.

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Mike Bollinger

How should we be thinking about that? Agricultural diversity in the context of food security and climate change, I guess, is something that we could add on to that as well.

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Marion Nestle

Yeah, because if you're only growing one kind of corn and one kind of soybeans, then something goes wrong with it. You're in big trouble, right? You know, I mean, you want a

diversity of food because you're growing food in situations where you can't control the climate and the, you know, with climate change, everything is moving north. And, you know, it's getting too hot and it's going to kill some production and make the production of other things easier. I mean, I think people are going to have to adapt, but it's we're growing half the corn and soybeans, and we are talking about a very large amount of land for this, for feed and fuel. If we use that land for growing food and did it and did it on a smaller scale and focused on replenishing the nutrients that we're taking out of the soil, and we're dumping lots of chemicals on these things and poisoning the water supply, then you might be able to drink the water in Iowa.

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Mike Bollinger

That's right. Yeah. I mean, there's I mean, the conversations we're having about water quality in Iowa right now are, are not good.

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Marion Nestle

You should have had those conversations a long...

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Mike Bollinger

A long time ago. Yeah. You know, and so as you know, as systems consolidate and diversity declines, people also lose the ability to shape their own food supply or so much more dependent upon what is being offered. You know, how do you, how do you see that dynamic playing out in the food system? And is there a way to try to reverse that trend?

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Marion Nestle

Well, I mean, there are small efforts to try to sit there. Farmers markets, there are groups focusing on local agriculture. There are all kinds of people trying different kinds of organic and regenerative techniques for growing food. I don't know, I've got two gardens, one in New York and one upstate in Ithaca.

You know, I love the idea of school gardens. Kids absolutely love it, and it totally changes their relationship with food. You want, you want kids to eat salads? Yeah. I just was at a school that had a hydroponic garden. I mean, we can talk about whether we love hydroponics or not, but the kids were eating the salads. Yeah. You know, and this is New York this winter in New York. They couldn't grow them outside, so let's give them a break. But you have to want to do this. And a lot of people, once they start, think, oh this is really fun. And then you experiment and then you make mistakes. And you know, when you get to eat what comes up. Well, and I, I saw these kids go down to the cafeteria and, and go straight to, go right to the salad bowl. Right. And so, you know, this works. It won't work for everybody, but it works for a lot of them and certainly worth doing. So I'm all for it.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah. Well, so just thinking about when someone walks into a grocery store, right. And they're trying to eat better, you know, you describe how the system isn't really set up to help them. Right. It's set up for for profit and business and, you know, and kind of that, you know, the follow the money right conversation. But, you know, what do you wish people understood about how those environments shape their choices?

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Marion Nestle

Sure. I mean, there are two rules of grocery stores. One is that the more times you see a product, the more likely you are to buy it. The ones that are most visible are the ones that you're most likely to buy because you see them. And the longer you spend in the store, the more likely you are to impulse buy. So the stores are set up so that the most profitable products are the ones that you're likely to see most frequently. That's why sugar sweetened beverages are everywhere in a store, and companies pay the stores, particularly to place their products at eye level at the end of aisles and at the cash registers. Those are, that's prime real estate. So you're just wandering through the store aimlessly or with an aim. And there's a reason why the milk, which pretty much everybody buys, is in the furthest corner from the entrance, because that forces you to be in the store for a longer period of time.

The length of the aisles is something that has been heavily researched. They want them long enough so you have to go up and down them, but not so long that you're that you get frustrated. And there's a lot of, there's every single item in that the supermarket has research behind where it's placed, how it's priced and everything else, you know. And now stores are doing, you know, this kind of algorithm pricing, which that's kind of shocking.

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Mike Bollinger

That's yeah. Yeah. In real time.

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Marion Nestle

Right. They have to be stopped from doing that. That's really terrible.

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Mike Bollinger

And so, you know, it sounds like, you know, when we think about, you know, small farmers. You know, small acreage farmers and home gardeners, you know, that they can have an impact. But there are limits there. Do you feel like it's a, you know, a policy shift that requires, you know, more impactful change or what does that look like in your mind?

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Marion Nestle

Well, I think there are lots of things that governments could do to promote this kind of thing. I mean, what astonishes me is how much food you can produce out of a pot. And certainly out of a small plot of land and I mean really small. You know, a small raised bed will produce more squash than you can possibly consume. You know, I mean, there's a reason why people zucchini bomb.

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Mike Bollinger

That's right. Don't leave, don't lose, don't leave your window down in the summertime.

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Marion Nestle

Right. There's no way to get rid of all of it. So that, it seems to me, is, you know, what they say is that small scale, regenerative agriculture can't feed the world. But we're already producing twice as much food in the United States as we need for the population. And a third or or 40% of that is being wasted. Waste is built into this system.

We could do this much better if we had if we had the infrastructure. I love that word. If we had the ability to have a market for small farmers, a distribution system for their products, a gleaning system for what they couldn't sell, and all of these things. But we don't, we don't have those kinds of systems. Instead of we have industrial agriculture where we have, we're growing corn and soybeans in vast quantities.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We kind of pivoting a little bit to, to think more about even just the communities that we're in. We often talk about food choices as these individual decisions. But, you know, food is also deeply communal. And I wonder where do you see community playing a role in improving how people eat?

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Marion Nestle

Well, I'm concerned that lots and lots of families don't cook anymore. And so the idea of family meals means that you order in whatever everybody in the family wants. And that's becoming increasingly common. And cooking is looked at as a chore. And that's because people don't know how we used to I mean, I learned how to cook in eighth grade junior high school, and we started out with cookies. That was a very good way to start. Oh, these are really good. And on from there. And once you know how to do sort of basic, I'm not talking about gourmet restaurant level cooking. I'm talking about basic skills where you can take anything that you've got around, throw it together and make something reasonably tasty with it in no time whatsoever. And that's not terribly sophisticated.

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Mike Bollinger

You need to have the tools, right? I mean, that's some of the issues that people run into as well, right? Is maybe they don't even have a kitchen or they don't have.

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Marion Nestle

Oh yeah. You know, it's one thing to say cook, but that means you've got to have the ability to get your food. Well, okay. Now everybody delivers, so you don't need to shop anymore if you can afford the fees. But lots of people don't have equipment. They don't have knives, they don't have colander. They don't have pots, they don't have stoves, they don't have refrigerators. Lots of people.

But lots of people do. And so for the people who don't have those things, I'm thinking, there are lots of schools that don't have those things, get them or make it possible for people to have those. Because the more people who know how I think kids should be taught how to cook, you know, and then eventually that problem will be solved because they'll know how to do it.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah. And I think it's really, you know, it's part of what we do in the work that, that we do at this organization as well is that when seeds come in, come into us, we, we kind of try to, we try to find as much of that history and story of those varieties that we can, that we maintain the story and in the recipes that are associated with those things in those communities to be able to share, share that out as well, you know, because I feel like it's really important that we don't, you know, that we don't lose that.

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Marion Nestle

Yeah, I mean, those were important values, whether anybody cares about them anymore, I don't know. Yeah. Society has changed a lot. Not always for the better, in my view.

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Mike Bollinger

Right. Right. For sure. Yeah. So, you know, for someone who's listening to this podcast, you know, feels overwhelmed by, I don't know, all of this, the politics, the messaging, you know, the confusion, the changing nutritional recommendations, the food pyramid being flipped upside down, you know, is there is there a place that, you know, where do you start? You know, if somebody is trying to educate themselves and they're getting into this. Do you start at your food blog? Do you...

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Marion Nestle

Of course, whenever. You know, when everybody asks me that question, I don't know how to answer it.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah. For sure.

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Marion Nestle

You know, who should we trust in nutrition? Me. Of course. You know, I mean, I don't know. It's really tough. I certainly have plenty of books that people can look at. And, you know, if you're interested in food issues. *What to Eat Now*, which just came out, is a very large book.

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Mike Bollinger

It is. Is that nearly 800 pages?

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Marion Nestle

No, it's 700. Don't exaggerate. It's large but I'm told it's very easy to read and it's a book about food issues. It's not a book about what to eat, it's a book about how to think about food issues going through supermarkets and I tried to cover every issue I could think of. So that would be a place to start. I write a blog five days a week, Monday through Friday, where I discuss current issues.

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Mike Bollinger

Right. You know, one of the mantras that, you know, has really stuck with people is, you know, the quote from Michael Pollan's book, right, where you know, the ingredients that you're eating and, you know, not too much and mostly, mostly plants. Is there...

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Marion Nestle

Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.

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Mike Bollinger

Is there, what's the science behind that?

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Marion Nestle

Oh, I think it's enormous. You know, it's a seven word summary of decades of research on diet and chronic disease risk. And I think it covers the territory really well. You know, I really do. You know, if you define food as relatively unprocessed, real food, eat real food would be the same kind of thing. That's the only modification, you know, and not too much refers to calories. You want to balance calories, so you're not overeating. And mostly plants means you want to get most of your calories from fruits, vegetables, beans, grains, nuts, seeds, those kinds of things.

Rather than gorging on high fat meat and dairy products. Which is not to say that you shouldn't eat meat and those things.

You know, and that's why the new dietary guidelines were such a shock, because they directly contradicted that advice. So, and I will say about Michael Pollan, seven words is I said the same thing in seven-hundred pages. But Robert Kennedy Jr has modified that a little bit. He says, eat food as much as you like, mostly meat, right? So I don't think there's much evidence to back that up.

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Mike Bollinger

You know, I, I read, you know, the, the first edition of, of your book, which was *What to Eat*.

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Marion Nestle

Yeah. 20 years ago.

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Mike Bollinger

Right. And and when I started getting into your new book there, a lot has changed.

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Marion Nestle

Yeah, it was a big shock. It was a pandemic project. And I had this bright idea. You know, I looked through the book, I thought, oh, this reads pretty well. I bet I can update it in six months. And on that basis, I sold the idea to the publisher. And here we are four years later. Oh, you know, it was I basically rewrote the entire book. I tried to rescue pieces from the previous edition, but there are few and far between because so much had changed and I had not noticed, you know, it had happened gradually. I wasn't paying very close attention, and there was a lot of stuff that changed a lot. You know, just to pick one example, online ordering, it was hardly any online ordering 20 years ago. Now, you know. Every order of food is done online with either pickup or delivery, you know, and you have to crawl over all those people who are shopping in the, you know, in the aisles of supermarkets with their little devices. I was telling somebody that when I did the first edition of the book, you know, I would go into a supermarket with a notebook and take notes and managers would come up, who are you? What are you doing?

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Mike Bollinger

Oh, wow.

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Marion Nestle

And boy, does that not happen anymore because there's so many of these people doing this kind of thing or something that looks like it. So that was kind of interesting. Also, they're

wonderful. They know where everything is in the store. And they're quite generous about helping you if you're stuck.

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Mike Bollinger

Right. Yeah. I mean, you know, I mean from their opinion, right? I mean, they're, they're it's doing exactly what it's supposed to. Right. I mean, the system is designed to do what it's doing so.

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Marion Nestle

Right and does it very well.

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Mike Bollinger

And does it very well. Yeah. What what projects are you working on now? I know you've got a, you've got another book that is

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Marion Nestle

I've got a book coming out in September.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah *Sugar Coated*. Is that what it is?

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Marion Nestle

Sugar Coated, yeah. It's a book about, I've collected cereal boxes for years, and the boxes that I collected were mostly ridiculous health claims, you know, some sugary cereal suggesting that said it'll make your kids smart or stop your kid from getting colds, or, you know, will have a billion vitamins in it. And the and I, I thought it would be fun to use the materials that I had, which is a collection of about 150 boxes. And I also, for complicated reasons, have three sets of color copies of boxes of three Kellogg cereals from the year they were introduced until 2010, which is when I was given these. Okay. And so I have complete sequences of annual sequences of Fruit Loops, Rice Krispies and All Bran. So I could do a lot of historical work. And these boxes tell the story of food labeling, food marketing, lots and lots about food marketing, about how cereal companies try to sell cereal.

And then it turned out NYU. When I asked the librarian if she had anything on the special collections librarian if she had anything on cereals, she said, oh, do you mean our cereal box collection? What cereal box collection? And they had 300 boxes. Mostly. We mostly Wheaties sports figures. So we had plenty to work with. And I got a coauthor, Lisa Sutherland, who was a former vice president of Kellogg and left without signing a non-disclosure agreement.

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Mike Bollinger

Wow.

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Marion Nestle

And we had a wonderful time writing the book. We really and we're almost finished. The index just came in today, so all we have left to do is to review the index.

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Mike Bollinger

Yeah. Oh that's wonderful. Yeah. We, you know, we do the same thing with seed catalogs. You know, that was part of when, you know, the founders of Seed Savers Exchange were working to document the shift that was happening from, you know, open-pollinated varieties and seed saving and the breeding that was being done that way to hybrid varieties to then, you know, GMOs. You know, we were bringing in and trying to do an inventory of all the commercially available open-pollinated seeds. And so we often find ourselves or find people reaching out to doing the same thing with, with seed catalogs so they can there's a lot of, there's a story to be told, right. As you see as you see that shift and being able to access that document.

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Marion Nestle

The story is an interesting one. So that's what the book is about, how cereal companies market using nutrients, health claims and then marketing to target groups. So and we and has lots of illustrations of cereal boxes. Now it's University of California Press. They did a gorgeous job on it. Absolutely gorgeous. And it's already available online.

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Mike Bollinger

Oh wow. Okay.

00:37:59:15

Marion Nestle

You can preorder it. We haven't even finished the index yet and you can preorder it.

00:38:06:23

Mike Bollinger

Oh, great. Well, you know, I know that your time is precious. And I guess I'll just ask you one more question. As you're thinking about the future, is there anything that, what gives you hope as you think about the future of the work that you're focusing on?

00:38:22:17

Marion Nestle

You know, in the last, in the last couple of weeks, I've spoken at four universities. I've been at Binghamton, Hopkins, Cornell, and I was at Yale this morning. And you meet these, you got these students and you have to have hope for the future because they're fabulous. You know, they're interested in food issues. They get the connection between food politics and health. They want to know more about it. They want to know what they can do. They want to do something with it that's really valuable. I, you know, I'm I'm I'm very excited every time I get the opportunity to meet students like this.

00:39:06:19

Mike Bollinger

Yeah, yeah. No. That's great. Well, thank you for spending so much time doing the work that you're doing and educating youth and writing books that we can all read to stay informed. And your blog, that I just feel is brilliant in the way that you kind of break out, you know, the system and you know where the sponsors are coming from and right to be able to kind of track and understand all of that, so thank you for your time.

00:39:30:00

Marion Nestle

Well, thank you and keep up the great seed work. We depend on you.

00:39:34:15

Mike Bollinger

Yeah, absolutely. All right. Take care of Marion.

00:39:36:21

Marion Nestle

Okay. Bye.

00:39:39:07

Melody Reese

Throughout the conversation, Marion reminded us that the food system is shaped by countless decisions about what we choose to grow and what we choose to keep growing. At Seed Savers Exchange, that work happens one variety at a time. In this episode's Variety Spotlight, we will feature a pea that has become a favorite here at Heritage Farm and today is available only on The Exchange, the Seed Savers Exchange gardener-to-gardener seed swap. Here's membership and exchange coordinator, Josie, with an introduction to 'Corgi' pea.

00:40:14:20

Josie Flatgard

Hello everyone. My name is Josie and I'm the membership and exchange coordinator at Seed Savers Exchange. Today I'm happy to introduce you to the 'Corgi' pea. It's versatile, it's a top performer, and it can only be found from the Seed Savers Exchange Collection. This is a top performer. It grows to be about a foot and a half tall, and the pods reach about three inches long and about a half inch wide.

This pea is deliciously sweet and can be grown in containers and in the ground. It's also versatile in the way you can enjoy it. You can harvest it early at the snow stage and use it in stir fries and salads. Or you can wait a little bit longer if you have the patience and harvest it at the shelling stage. You can shell the peas, freeze them to enjoy later, or you can also, of course, enjoy it as a garden snack.

If you'd like to grow the 'Corgi' pea in your garden, you can find seed on The Exchange via the Seed Savers website. The Exchange is the gardener-to-gardener seed swap, facilitated by us and involving gardeners all across North America sharing unique seeds. Anyone can access The Exchange. Simply create an account and find unique seeds that you'd like to grow in your garden space. I hope you'll give the 'Corgi' pea a try.

00:41:58:24

Melody Reese

Every variety in our collection represents generations of stewardship by gardeners who believe it's worth saving. The 'Corgi' pea is just one example of the diversity that strengthens our food system, and why Seed Savers Exchange continues working to ensure that these varieties are available for future gardeners. Thanks for joining us on *Sowing Connections*. Subscribe so you don't miss our next episode in two weeks. We'll see you soon!

00:42:28:24

Lissie

[music] There's knowing and growing and sowing connections. *Sowing Connections*.