

Book Review

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

Barbara Kingsolver

With Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver

HarperCollins Publishers, 2007

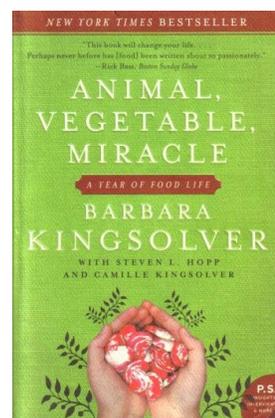
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I cannot remember when I've enjoyed a book more; non-fiction, no less. To the many who have no concept of where food comes and when it is truly in season, the story of a family who changed their way of eating—and their lives—by moving to a rural location that could feed them and ate locally for a solid year, may seem like a work of science fiction. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is the story of author Barbara Kingsolver and her family who were transformed by their “first year of deliberately eating food produced from the same place where we worked, went to school, loved our neighbors, drank and water, and breathed the air.”

From the opening pages, Kingsolver's beautiful prose, intelligence and knowledge of her subject, and ever-delightful good humor draw the reader into the book. A seasoned writer, Kingsolver's works include twelve books of fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction with

worldwide readership. Besides Kingsolver's descriptively beautiful writing, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* also draws on the talents of Steven L. Hopp, Kingsolver's husband, and Camille Kingsolver, the couple's eldest daughter. Hopp's contributions include interesting fact-filled sidebars, relating to chapter content, while Camille's personal essays delight the reader with her youthful, yet surprisingly mature, perspective. Beyond her essays, Camille entices readers with mouth-watering recipes and weekly menu plans based upon seasonal harvests.



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Animal, Vegetable, Miracle is organized around the calendar year—a year in the life of an adventurous and committed family who chose to “buy food raised in their own neighborhood, grow it themselves, or learn to live without it.” Chapter by chapter, month by month, the book unfolds

into a year of food life: what to plant, when to plant, when to harvest, when to preserve, when particular foods are in season and available, or not. On food's seasonality, insightful Camille writes: “Most of us agree to put away our sandals and bikinis when the leaves start to turn, even if they're our favorite clothes. We can learn to apply similar practicality to our foods” (311).

To persons concerned with global warming, organic gardening, humane harvesting of animals for food, fossil fuel dependency and carbon footprints—to the point they yearn to make changes—a reading of *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* may easily relate to a spiritual experience, one that may possibly change a life. In her beautiful style, Kingsolver makes this point: “...it's also true what the strategists say about hearts and minds—you have to win them both. We will change our ways significantly as a nation not when some laws tell us we *have* to (remember Prohibition?), but when we *want* to. During my family's year of conscious food choices the most important things we learned were all about that: the wanting to” (338).

I borrowed the 350-something-page book from a friend, but this one is a keeper worth purchasing and adding to one's personal library. Since my original reading, I've purchased a copy for me, another to gift my garden-loving sister. DMC



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