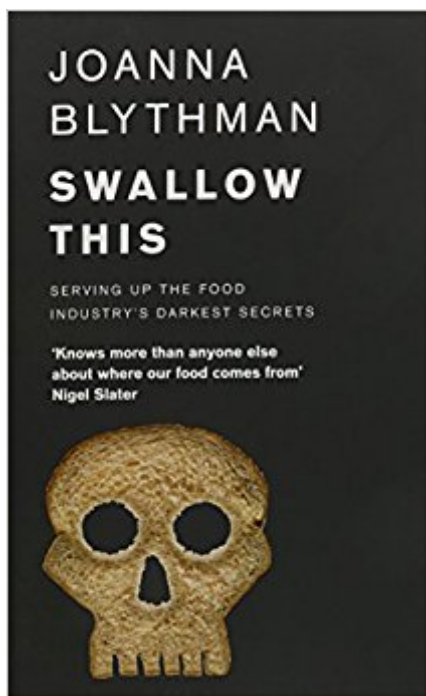


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# Swallow This: Serving Up The Food Industry's Darkest Secrets



## Synopsis

From the author of *What to Eat and Shopped*, a revelatory investigation into what really goes into the food we eat. Even with 25 years experience as a journalist and investigator of the food chain, Joanna Blythman still felt she had unanswered questions about the food we consume every day. How 'natural' is the process for making a 'natural' flavouring? What, exactly, is modified starch, and why is it an ingredient in so many foods? What is done to pitta bread to make it stay 'fresh' for six months? And why, when you eat a supermarket salad, does the taste linger in your mouth for several hours after?

*Swallow* This is a fascinating exploration of the food processing industry and its products – not just the more obvious ready meals, chicken nuggets and tinned soups, but the less overtly industrial – washed salads, smoothies, yoghurts, cereal bars, bread, fruit juice, prepared vegetables. Forget illegal, horse-meat-scandal processes, every step in the production of these is legal, but practised by a strange and inaccessible industry, with methods a world-away from our idea of domestic food preparation, and obscured by technical speak, unintelligible ingredients manuals, and clever labelling practices. Determined to get to the bottom of the impact the industry has on our food, Joanna Blythman has gained unprecedented access to factories, suppliers and industry insiders, to give an utterly eye-opening account of what we're really swallowing.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'In this fine book, Blythman uses a long spoon to sup with the devils of our daily diet.' The Times  
'Outstanding' | Blythman is never holier than thou – she recognises that people, herself

included, need and want convenience food. Her argument is simply that we have a right to know what's really in it, right down to the minor chemical processes that have known toxic properties.

| Food for thought Observer I whole-heartedly applaud her achievement. This is an important book which should be required reading for anyone who eats processed food, whether that's organic pork chops or sausage rolls from the petrol station.

Literary Review Riveting Daily Telegraph Praise for What to Eat: Joanna Blythman has one of the sanest food heads in the Western World " and this brilliant book encapsulates her admirably clear thinking in a wonderfully accessible, entertaining way. Everyone who cares what they eat and how they feed their family " that's all of us, right? " should read it.

Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall A rare book, practical, sensible, and passionate. Joanna Blythman writes with clarity, sanity and humanity. Anyone interested in food and cooking should read it.' Matthew Fort A succinct and badly needed encyclopaedia of facts and common sense on food and nutrition for which I am truly grateful. The introduction alone is worth the price of the book.

Darina Allen

Joanna Blythman is Britain's leading investigative food journalist and an influential commentator on the British food chain. She has won five Glenfiddich awards for her writing, including a Glenfiddich Special Award for her first book *The Food We Eat*, a Caroline Walker Media Award for Improving the Nation's Health by Means of Good Food, and a Guild of Food Writers Award for *The Food We Eat*. In 2004, she won the prestigious Derek Cooper Award, one of BBC Radio 4's Food and Farming Awards. In 2007, Good Housekeeping Magazine gave her its award for Outstanding Contribution to Food Award 2007. She writes and broadcasts frequently on food issues.

Very interesting information, after reading it I am avoiding processed foods. I knew it was bad, but it is worst. It is hard to believe the our governments allow the slow poisoning of the population, all done for money. The only drawback is that the book portrays the industry in the UK and I live in the US.

Lots of important info.

great research, well written - I couldn't put it down.

Before I became a stay-at-home mom to two wild and crazy guys, I worked as a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at a pediatric hospital. In this role, I provided nutrition education and

counseling to children with diabetes and their families. Knowing what is in the food is an important part of managing blood sugars. We always discussed how to read food labels to make informed decisions about daily care. Little did we know that the food label was not telling us the entire story. The new book, *Swallow This*, opened my eyes and also left me with many unanswered questions about what is really in our food. Although the author is British and this book is written about the processed food industry and food labeling in the United Kingdom, it still applies to our American system. Blythman takes us through the processed food industry from top to bottom, dividing the book into 2 sections. First, she looks at the processed food system itself, what you see and smell inside the factories, industry efforts to "clean" labels, the producers that sell to food manufacturers, and the stores where food is sold. Second, she breaks down the processes and ingredients used to make foods sweet, oily, flavored, colored, watery, starchy, "fresh", and packaged. I found the chapter on packaging to be the most surprising and alarming. Materials and chemicals used in packaging do not need to be divulged on labels, and yet, evidence is mounting that these substances may be leaching into our food. *Swallow This* is very well researched and informative, and the writing is engaging and easy to understand. I came away with a much better understanding of how to decipher food labeling and a stronger conviction to eat less processed food. If you are even remotely interested in learning more about how our food is produced, read this book. Your weekly trip to the grocery store will take on a whole dimension.

Wish it was USA based. But still some good info.

With *Swallow this*, author Blythman presents a thoroughly researched and informative book on everything that goes into store bought or restaurant food (in other words, anything you didn't grow yourself). With a distinct EU/UK perspective, nearly every chemical (whether listed on a food label or not) is exhaustively researched, cataloged, and collected into intelligent groupings for easy reference. For the most part, shock tactics and Exposé histrionics are eschewed in favor of common sense observations, making for a more grounded piece. More interestingly, since Blythman is UK-based, this is a revealing book that shows the EU really isn't all that better than the US in controlling everything from GM to chemical additives that could be harmful or deadly through long term exposure. The book breaks down as follows: Part One: How the processed food system works (why it all tastes the same, on the factory floor, clean label, at the food maker's market, fresh in store); Part Two: The defining characteristics of processed food (sweet, oily, flavored, colored, watery, starchy, tricky, old, packed). About 30% of the text is the carefully compiled references at

the end. Much of the book revolves around how preparation practices have changed to make food cheaper and last longer - often by replacing whole ingredients with chemical vestiges of the original or cheaper alternatives. Most revealing is not so much the chemicals themselves but the extraction methods that use very toxic chemicals (e.g., breaking milk down into 'milk proteins') to accomplish the purpose. Also interesting was the last decade mission of manufacturers to 'clean labels' in order to turn chemical sounding ingredients into more palatable 'natural' sounding names. Those switches were eye opening; a 40 letter chemical name could often be turned into something more pleasant such as "rosemary extract", a chemical which really has nothing to do with rosemary but instead slows down the rate at which foods go rancid (e.g., a preservative). Because the author went to specialized 'food fairs' that aren't open to the public (for obvious reasons), she was able to obtain a lot of information on the chemicals that aren't listed on a label - those used in packaging (e.g., specialized chemical 'air' to keep produce fresher) or during the production process that are supposed to dissipate by the end. Even fresh food (e.g., lettuce), has a lot of chemical coatings by the time it reaches the produce section. Or 'fresh' baked bread at the supermarket arrived there frozen and just popped into an oven. Swallow This presents an interesting quandary for the modern age and a topic that I would have liked to see addressed as well. To wit, without the chemicals and innovation that make food cheaper and last longer, how would we feed the global population? But at the same time, are we engineering our own destruction (cancer, diabetes, etc.), a 'prosperity plague' of the modern age? So while I am glad to read Blythman's book and understand more about what goes into the food I buy at the store, I wish the book wasn't such a one-sided indictment against the food industry. There is so much more to the topic. Reviewed from an advance reader copy provided by the publisher.

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