

EATER BEWARE

Roger Downey
Seattle Weekly
3/26/03 – 4/1/03

If subject matter determined sales, Marion Nestle's *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism* (University of California Press, \$27.50) would be a chart topper to rival Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation*. Nestle covers more ground, wields greater authority, and has concrete, tough-minded recommendations for change. But Schlosser is a journalist, with a journalist's sense of the vivid image, telling phrase, and gruesome example. Nestle is an academic, and her academic heritage sticks out all over her new book in great ungainly bumps. It's not that she writes badly; it's only that almost every paragraph reminds you disagreeably of all the turgid waffling prose you had to plow through on the long road to liberation from school.

Nevertheless, you must buy and even read Nestle's book, because it is destined to be the Bible—*The Art of War*, the *Guerrilla Warfare*, the *Steal This Book* of the coming battle for control over the American food supply. And you will be rewarded, because Nestle, despite her pedestrian prose, is nothing less than a revolutionary. In *Safe Food*, she calls the citizenry to arms against corporate agribusiness, industrial food processors, and their scientific and bureaucratic accomplices.

We've heard many of the horror stories in this book before: How genetically engineered StarLink corn crept into our food and how its producers tried to cover the fact up; how ConAgra shipped 20 million pounds of beef potentially infected with *E. coli* (and tried to cover it up), etc., etc. What's new is Nestle's demonstration that there is an efficient, economical, proven system to prevent such incidents (it goes by the catchy acronym HACCP: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point). She also demonstrates how the food industry has spent 20 years and 10 times as many millions to keep you from finding out about it. Find out about it now, before it is too late.