**Four *pre-publication* Amazon.com reviews of *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health,* followed by the review by Steven Milloy’s on FoxNews.com, which started the sequence.**

The first three, filed on February 22, three weeks before the book came out, are signed “A Customer.” They give the book 1 out of 5 stars. The fourth, a 5-star review, is from Sheldon Rampton, co-author of *Toxic Sludge is Good for You.*

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|  | Review #1, 1.0 out of 5 stars  **Nestle forgot a not-so-little thing called WILL POWER!**, February 22, 2002  By **A Customer**  Weak-willed people will love "Food Politics" - shame on them. Marion Nestle, one of the foremost food nannies in this country, has produced a book that heaps the blame for obesity, diabetes, and heart disease on food producers, marketing executives, and even school principals. Everyone, it seems, is responsible for those love handles except for the very people who are carrying them around.  In Ms. Nestle's world, there is no willpower, common sense, or personal responsibility. Most overweight people are simply passive "victims" of industry. She writes: "I have become increasingly convinced that many of the nutritional problems of Americans -- not least of them obesity -- can be traced to the food industry's imperative to encourage people to eat more in order to generate sales and increase income in a highly competitive marketplace." Excuse me? Ad campaigns and super-size restaurant specials may "encourage" me to eat but they don't compel me. That's because, like most people, I belong to the "a-little-of-what-you-fancy-does-you-good" school of eating. There is no Orwellian plot to hook us on certain foods and drinks from cradle to nursing home.  Ms. Nestle's book reminds me of her real agenda: the promotion of a "fat tax" or "Twinkie tax" on food and drinks, which in moderation and as part of a balanced diet, add fun to everyday life. This policy could actually work against the objectives of the food nannies. The aim would be to discourage consumers from buying certain products, yet this "sin tax" could make the goods more alluring to shoppers who are looking for a little indulgence. Of course, the biggest reason to oppose Ms. Nestle's hidden agenda is that consumers don't need another tax, thank you very much. This nagging book misses the mark. Eat, exercise, be happy.   |  | | --- | |  | |

Review #2, 1.0 out of 5 stars

**Food Hysteria**, February 22, 2002

By **A Customer**

Individuals incapable of thinking for themselves will truly appreciate, Marion Nestle's book - Food Politics. The author, a professor and of the department of nutrition and food studies at New York University puts much of the blame for the nation's weight problem on the food industry. Has she ever heard of personal responsibility, exercise, and appropriate dieting?

Nestle takes a specific aim at the impact on children and claims that the "food industry targets children and converts schools into vehicles for selling junk foods that are high in calories but low in nutritional value. Clever and slick marketing strategies target consumers from the cradle onward." She refuses to acknowledge some key facts. Obesity in children is caused in part, to the lack of exercise. Urban and other limited budget school districts across the country continue to reduce daily physical education programs, football, and other extra-curricular activities. Moreover, the lure of computer games and twenty-four hour cable programs have children sitting still for hours throughout the day.

Nestle's book only creates the kind of hysteria caused by our litigious society. The Surgeon's General's recent remarks declaring that obesity is a major health problem has greedy trial lawyers considering filing lawsuits against food and beverage companies. This whiny book only helps them "fuel the fire" and reaches their goals.

Review #3, 1.0 out of 5 stars

**Nestle needn't look down on John Q. Public**, February 22, 2002

By **A Customer**

Marion Nestle's book "Food Politics" makes clear that the political system she favors is dictatorship - with her in command. Marion is just so much smarter than us all, and so much more virtuous, and so much more in self-control, that she can be the meal planner for the world. If you disagree with anything she says, you're overweight, undereducated and stupid.

The author's motto could be "if it tastes good don't eat it." She rails against foods we've all grown up with and enjoy, and wants to make us feel like bad parents if we let our kids have any of these foods. Should we eat like pigs? Of course not. Should people who are obese have stricter diets than the rest of us? Absolutely. But there's no need for everyone, regardless of their weight and their health, to deny themselves moderate amounts of enjoyable foods. We'd all be better off is we got up off our rear ends and spent less time in front of the TV and playing video games, and more time engaging in sports and exercise to burn up excess calories and build stronger, healthier bodies.

http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,46240,00.html

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**New Nutrition Book Choking on Bad Science**

Friday, February 22, 2002

By Steven Milloy

**The food industry laughs all the way to the bank as it manipulates the system to make us fat and unhealthy.**

That's Marion Nestle's junk science-fueled message in her new book, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*.

Nestle, who portrays herself as an above-the-fray professor of nutrition at New York University, spends more than 400 pages accusing the food industry of "influencing" the government, "co-opting" nutrition professionals, "exploiting" children, and "corrupting" schools all in the name of profit.

The book won't be in stores until March, but the marketing campaign already has started with predictably superficial and uncritical reviews in *The New York Times* and *USA Today*.

Despite its length, the book was a quick read; it disintegrated from a scientific perspective on pages 7 and 8. Those two pages are where Nestle tries to establish the American diet as a health problem the necessary foundation for the rest of the book.

"The combination of poor diet, sedentary lifestyle and excessive alcohol consumption contributes to about 400,000 of the two million or so annual deaths in the U.S. about the same number and proportion affected by cigarette smoking," writes Nestle.

This assertion extends the discredited claim that obesity kills 300,000 annually.

As the *New England Journal of Medicine* recently editorialized: "The data linking overweight and death ... are limited, fragmentary, and often ambiguous. Most of the evidence is either indirect or derived from [studies with] serious methodologic flaws. Many studies fail to consider confounding variables, which are extremely difficult to assess and control. Thus, although some claim that every year 300,000 deaths are caused by obesity, that figure is by no means well established."

If you make it to page 380 in the Appendix you might discover Nestle's subtle acknowledgement of this criticism. But how many readers, much less media reviewers, will last that long and then decode her doublespeak?

Nestle parrots government claims that rates of overweight and obese children and adults are skyrocketing.

But these claims are based on dubious research (telephone surveys without any data verification) and an arbitrary definition of "overweight" based on "body mass index." The BMI, a ratio of weight to height, is problematic because it does not consider body type or state of health.

Nestle writes, "Some authorities believe that just a one percent reduction in intake of saturated fat across the country would prevent more than 30,000 cases of coronary heart disease annually and save more than a billion dollars in health care costs."

Despite the folklore developed over the last 30 years, the role of saturated fat in heart disease risk remains uncertain. A recent Harvard University study of more than 80,000 women, for example, reported no statistical association between saturated fat intake and heart disease. If the folklore were true, such a large study would likely have verified it.

Nestle doesn't seem to want readers to get bogged down in the facts about diet and health, especially since they would detract from her expose of the allegedly tobacco-like food industry.

What really needs to be exposed, though, is Nestle's own concealed bias.

Nestle derides the American Council on Science and Health, a nonprofit group that frequently comments on food issues, for not disclosing the extent to which the ACSH is funded by the food companies.

She adds, "... but ACSH's nemesis, the Washington, D.C.-based consumer advocacy group the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), has noted such connections since 1982 ..." This is only one of her numerous references to the "heroic" CSPI, the hyper-activist group best known for labeling Fettuccine Alfredo as "heart attack on a plate," and its nutritional lynching of Chinese food and movie popcorn.

But while chastising ACSH for lack of disclosure, Nestle hypocritically omitted disclosing her close and long-time connection with CSPI like her five-year stint as a CSPI board member.

This deception isn't new.

Nestle and CSPI are often presented as mutually supporting, independent sources in media reports on food controversies. Mention of the Nestle-CSPI relationship is usually omitted from this coverage.

Nestle is even presented as an independent source in articles about CSPI campaigns, such as those against Coca-Cola's sponsorship of the *Harry Potter* movie and Procter and Gamble's fat substitute olestra.

Finally, Nestle is simply biased against the food industry.

She told *The New York Times* in 1996: "I like it better when CSPI takes on the big corporations like McDonald's. I like it less well when CSPI takes on mom-and-pop outfits like Chinese restaurants."

*Food Politics* deftly glosses over and misrepresents the science on diet and health, and Nestle's personal bias. Pardon me if I'm a little skeptical of the rest of her hatchet job on the food industry.

*Steven Milloy is the publisher of* [*JunkScience.com*](http://www.junkscience.com)*, an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute and the author of Junk Science Judo: Self-defense Against Health Scares and Scams (Cato Institute, 2001).*