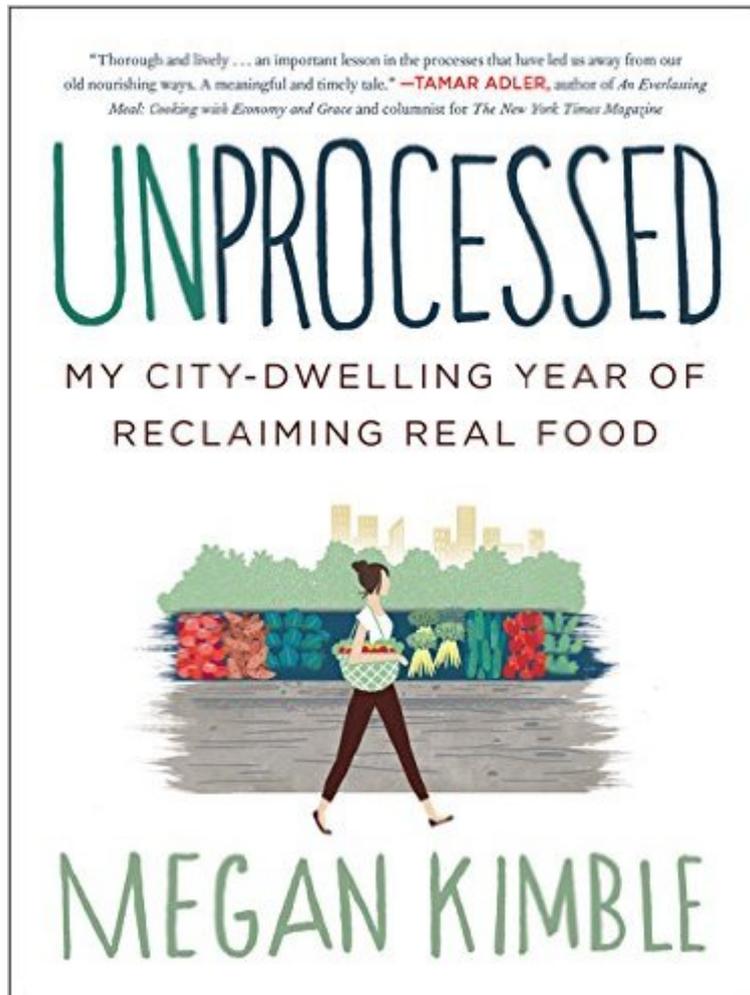


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Unprocessed: My City-Dwelling Year Of Reclaiming Real Food



Synopsis

In the tradition of Michael Pollan's bestselling *In Defense of Food* comes this remarkable chronicle, from a founding editor of *Edible Baja Arizona*, of a young woman's year-long journey of eating only whole, unprocessed foods intertwined with a journalistic exploration of what "unprocessed" really means, why it matters, and how to afford it. In January of 2012, Megan Kimble was a twenty-six-year-old living in a small apartment without even a garden plot to her name. But she cared about where food came from, how it was made, and what it did to her body: so she decided to go an entire year without eating processed foods. *Unprocessed* is the narrative of Megan's extraordinary year, in which she milled wheat, extracted salt from the sea, milked a goat, slaughtered a sheep, and more—all while earning an income that fell well below the federal poverty line. What makes a food processed? As Megan would soon realize, the answer to that question went far beyond cutting out snacks and sodas, and became a fascinating journey through America's food system, past and present. She learned how wheat became white; how fresh produce was globalized and animals industrialized. But she also discovered that in daily life, as she attempted to balance her project with a normal social life—which included dating—the question of what made a food processed was inextricably tied to gender and economy, politics and money, work and play. Backed by extensive research and wide-ranging interviews—and including tips on how to ditch processed food and transition to a real-food lifestyle—*Unprocessed* offers provocative insights not only on the process of food, but also the processes that shape our habits, communities, and day-to-day lives.

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Customer Reviews

I wanted to like this book much more than I did. Or, perhaps, to be more accurate, I should say that it's not so much that I disliked the book as it is that it wasn't really what I'd hoped it would be. Let's just start by saying that it's a well-written book that's easy to read. The author is likeable, enough. There's nothing distasteful or irritating about it. That said, I felt a bit misled by the title. The bulk of the book is more about the processes that bring food to our tables, highly processed and otherwise. If you want to know things like what differentiates white flour from whole grain flour, how milk gets from the cow to your supermarket, how produce makes it from the fields to the supermarket, or how meat is butchered, then you will enjoy this book. But even though I did pick up some new information, I felt like I'd read much of this book before. Indeed, if you've read any Michael Pollan, Mark Bittman or the like, a lot of this information will not be new to you. What I had really hoped for, based on the title, was more first-hand accounts of the experience of eating unprocessed for an entire year. Even for someone like me, whose food philosophy probably aligns pretty closely with the author's, I can't imagine doing this for a month let alone an entire year. I wanted to understand more about the challenges and practicalities of doing this, particularly on a limited budget. For example, did it take more time to cook than before she started the project? Seems like it must have. If yes, how did she find the extra time? What did she do after a long, hard day at work when the last thing she wanted to do was cook? Did she have any uncontrollable cravings for junk food? She says in the last chapter that she spent 27% of her income over the year on food.

I love this book. It's smart, gorgeously written, and never holier-than-thou. Since you're wondering: What sets *Unprocessed* apart from the rash of books released in the last decade about the shortcomings of our food system is the author's status as a broke, busy graduate student living in a city. Her garden plot is largely a failure; her income, under \$20,000. In a cheerful, clear voice, she admits her struggles and details imperfect compromises. Sometimes it's heartbreaking, sometimes downright hilarious. For those who haven't read a lot of recent food systems literature, never fear-- Kimble does an incredible job incorporating the work of those who came before her. Yet the research is never overwhelming or dry; it's woven in seamlessly, engaging and rich. I'd read much of it before, but still found myself unable to put the book down. What compelled me most were some of Kimble's conclusions about the way family and community intersect with our food systems. As she adjusts her life to accommodate bread baking and increased chopping and food-processing her

own hummus, she realizes: "It takes a village, of course... Now we are simply paying for that village." The services family and community used to provide must come from strangers, now that we scatter ourselves to the wind to attend school, to chase jobs, to move closer to that significant other; no one can really do it all alone. And yet Kimble notes as well how many of the tasks we've outsourced to others are rich experiences when shared--that slowing down, inviting friends and family to collaborate in the unprocessing of our lives, could actually enrich us much more than the time we used to "save."

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