

Book Review of FoodWISE: a whole systems guide to
sustainable and delicious food choicesGigi Berardi. USD\$18.38 on Amazon. Published by North Atlantic Books,
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Resource Review

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Dr Gigi Berardi is a professor at Western Washington University's Huxley College of the Environment and director of the Resilient Farm Project, the United States Department of Agriculture with National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) funded initiative that engages university staff and community members to explore current vulnerabilities and resilience strategies in food systems. Berardi is a Fulbright scholar who received her MS and PhD in Resources, Policy and Planning from the Cornell University, as well as an MA in dance (now, World Arts and Cultures) from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Berardi has published extensively in both academic and public audiences, and she maintains the popular food blog 'FoodWISE' (<https://wp.wvu.edu/gigiberardi/category/food-wise-blog/>), which discusses many food topics related to the content of her new book as well as topics related to dance and her first book, *Finding Balance* (2005). In *FoodWISE*, Berardi weaves her vast international experiences from living and teaching abroad, homesteading in Washington's San Juan Islands, and her decades of work in agrifood systems into a holistic narrative on how individuals may understand and address their relationship with food towards greater sustainability and personal meaning.

Berardi begins the book with an explanation and justification of her FoodWISE framework, encouraging consumers to consider how their food choices are or could be more whole, informed, sustainable and embedded in experience. In an increasingly complex and globalized agrifood system, Berardi describes how conflicting scientific information, ever-evolving dietary advice, marketing influences and personal beliefs can make it incredibly hard to make sustainable and/or healthy food choices. To begin to overcome this, Berardi shares her mantra of 'Stop—think—then act' when navigating the agrifood system, making space for the FoodWISE framework to guide our shopping, cooking and eating behaviors. Berardi also shares insights on her own personal food experiences and background and how they have led to her recommended framework, providing a model for how our personal lives influence our food-related behaviors in a myriad of ways. Berardi uses this back and forth between first- and second-person narratives to guide the rest of her book.

Part 1 is an exploration of how we can understand and seek out Sustainable food choices—sustainable for our own personal worlds as well as our shared ones. Berardi documents many of the ecological, economic, and social sustainability issues within our current agrifood system, covering current perspectives on issues like animal agriculture, genetic engineering, labor and climate change. Berardi also uses Part 1 to complicate some of our assumptions about agrifood system sustainability, including a discussion of organic farming certifications and the ramifications of pursuing greater 'efficiency' in our production and processing sectors to feed a growing global population. Lastly, Berardi shares insights on what we—individually and collectively—can do to improve the sustainability of our agrifood systems, from supporting small scale, integrated farming, to rebuilding biodiversity and healthy fisheries, to advocating for food security and policies that support resilience.

Following the big picture of Part 1, Part 2 brings the book back to the individual level by focusing on the Whole and Informed dimensions of the FoodWISE framework. Berardi provides an exploration of how we form our personal food beliefs—family and social networks, media, education, personal experiences, et cetera—and how they may intersect and conflict with available scientific information. Berardi then takes a deep dive into the marketing narrative of convenience foods and the American diet industry and how these phenomena have influenced our food cultures and practices in a way that is not 'whole' or particularly 'informed.' The second half of Part 2 is largely dedicated to how we can use the scientific method to assess common narratives about diet- and health-related information, which Berardi illuminates through evidence-driven discussions on examples like cholesterol and sugar.

Parts 3 and 4 are committed to putting the FoodWISE framework into action, from the grocery store, to restaurants, to our kitchens. Part 3 discusses how to leverage experience and empathy to make more whole and informed choices that put sustainability first, from how to prioritize products that contain desirable fats to creating intentional shopping lists before hitting the grocery aisles to seeking out alternative food sources, like community-supported agriculture ventures. A subtle theme throughout the book, Berardi also uses Part 3 to discuss

the importance of acknowledging and accepting tradeoffs in making FoodWISE choices, especially when it comes to dining out. Lastly, Part 4 offers a variety of accessible recipes for practicing new food choices and behaviors, including helpful narratives on cooking basics, ingredient sourcing and prep, and kitchen equipment. The recipes provide an even deeper connection to the author through Berardi's narratives of why these recipes are personally meaningful and why she has chosen to share them.


Overall, *FoodWISE* offers a quick, accessible read that is reminiscent of writings by Michael Pollan, Mark Bittman, Frances Moore Lappé or Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. In fact, Berardi draws on a number of resources like these as summaries and citations so the reader may turn to them next if they have not already encountered them. *FoodWISE* is not a scientific text, nor is it intended to be. That said, it contains ample evidence-based information without being too heavy on scientific jargon or embedded citations (and readers can seek more in the closing Notes section). The FoodWISE guidelines provide a solid backbone to which the author often returns and elucidates with practical applications

and relatable personal narratives. This book is most appropriate for those in the US who are new to their personal food system journey and are looking for guidance on how to practice more sustainable consumerism, from shopping to eating. It would also be appropriate for an undergraduate audience, especially if supplemented with additional resources about privilege, economic inequality, and food access; food justice and sovereignty movements; and behavioral science and the limitations of individual choice in enacting full food systems change. *FoodWISE* has also received a Living Now Book Award, hosted by IndependentPublisher.com.

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