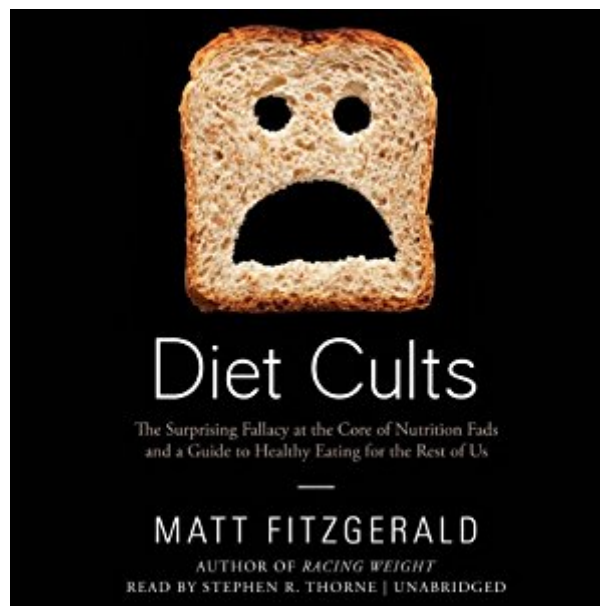


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# Diet Cults: The Surprising Fallacy At The Core Of Nutrition Fads And A Guide To Healthy Eating For The Rest Of Us



## Synopsis

From the national best-selling author of *Racing Weight*, Matt Fitzgerald exposes the irrationality, half-truths, and downright impossibility of a "single right way" to eat and reveals how to develop rational, healthy eating habits. From "the Four-Hour Body" to "Atkins," there are diet cults to match seemingly any mood and personality type. Everywhere we turn, someone is preaching the "one true way" to eat for maximum health. Paleo Diet advocates tell us that all foods less than 12,000 years old are the enemy. Low-carb gurus demonize carbs, and then there are the low-fat prophets. But they agree on one thing: There is only one true way to eat for maximum health. The first clue that this is a fallacy is the sheer variety of diets advocated. Indeed, while all of these competing views claim to be backed by science, a good look at actual nutritional science suggests it is impossible to identify a single best way to eat. Fitzgerald advocates an agnostic, rational approach to eating habits based on one's own habits, lifestyle, and genetics and body type. Many professional athletes already practice this "Good Enough" diet, and now we can too - and ditch the brainwashing of these diet cults for good.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Food and diet is a very touchy subject these days. Also we live in a society that loves labels. We live in a time where it's kind of a badge of honor to have some condition that requires you to be on some special diet. No longer can you have people over for a meal without first asking what they are allergic or sensitive to or choose not to eat. Long ago it was so very rare to come across people with

any sort of special needs diet. But not anymore. Why is that? Well, there are no easy answers of course. I am not a person who's vegan, raw, gluten free, etc. etc. but I try to understand what's behind those who are. This book is interesting to me in that the author brings out how diets do go through "cult" status for a time. For example, he brought out how a few decades ago, yeast was the big culprit to poor health. That fizzled out. Nowadays it's like half the American population is gluten intolerant. He points out that while yes, there are people who are actually gluten intolerant, there are many people eating this way just because it's a fad and they really don't need to. Gluten is looked on as BAD. The author states it's not gluten itself that's the problem, but the "trigger" that causes the body to not be able to tolerate/digest it is the problem. He mentioned how as recently as the 1960s the average American got 20 to 30 percent of his daily calories from bread; people were ingesting way more gluten back then than now. I found that interesting that bread was such a major part of the diet in the recent past. He said that some people think that genetic modification of wheat, and it's resulting higher gluten content is the cause of the rise of gluten intolerance. But he then asks why are all autoimmune diseases generally on the rise?

In *Diet Cults*, Matt Fitzgerald has written an interesting book. Those interested in diet and weight loss will probably find a lot of useful information here. I did, so I recommend the book. In particular, the author's views on potatoes make a lot of sense. People claim that potatoes are a bad food that we should avoid. The evidence doesn't support that at all. As the author notes, "Human beings can live indefinitely on a diet in which potatoes are the sole source of food energy." Sure, potato chips and french fries deserve their poor reputation. But that seems to come from the fact that they are greasy fried foods, not because they are made of potatoes. The résumé of the humble potato is an impressive one indeed, and Matt Fitzgerald provides that for us. He also cites the book *Potato: A History of the Propitious Esculent* published by the Yale University Press that no serious scholar of human diet should fail to read. Beware, though. "Potato" is not an easy read. Nor is *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, by Salaman, Redcliffe N. published by Cambridge University Press Paperback, an equally valuable work for information if not for reading enjoyment. Matt Fitzgerald's view of exercise also makes a lot of sense. While exercise does not burn a lot of calories, there does appear to be a weight-loss benefit of exercise beyond just burning calories.

Very difficult to take this seriously when it is based on fundamentally flawed beliefs/suppositions. First, that endurance and Olympic athletes are good role models when it comes to healthy eating. According to Fitzgerald, they "show us that it is possible to eat a basically 'normal'

diet and yet look and feel spectacular". This is incorrect on so many levels, but perhaps it's enough to say that looking and feeling spectacular in your 20s and 30s is no sort of criterion for achieving a long and healthy life. Second, that as natural omnivores, "people enjoy variety in their eating". Again, incorrect. Most people (and most cultures) eat from a highly restricted range of foods. Third, in his own specialist area - exercise - Fitzgerald also makes mistakes. As an example, he says, while encouraging readers - all readers - to eat more whole grains, "The amount of carbohydrate that a person needs is determined by his activity level". Incorrect. It is determined by the INTENSITY of the activity. You will see, for example, star ultra endurance athletes training low and racing high: in other words, while training at comparatively low intensities, they go low-carb and benefit from more fat (and fat burning), that gives them extended endurance; however while racing - ie at much higher intensities - they fuel on the go with carbs (and LOTS of them). Fourth - and perhaps the biggest hole in the book - he shows no appreciation of biochemical individuality, or its twin sisters of modern science, nutrigenomics and epigenetics.

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