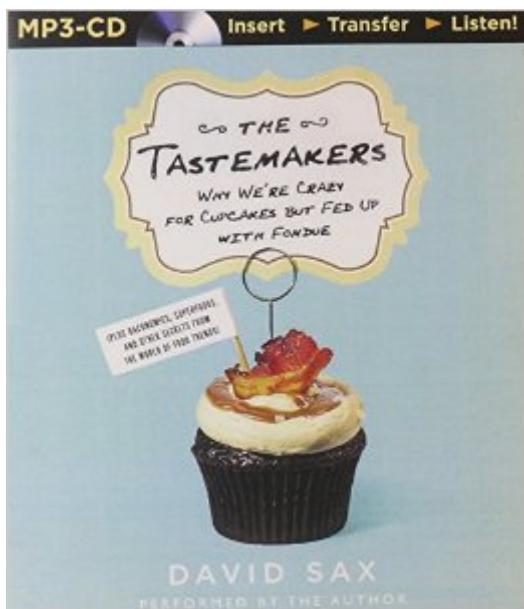


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The Tastemakers: Why We're Crazy For Cupcakes But Fed Up With Fondu (Plus Baconomics, Superfoods, And Other Secrets From The World Of Food Trends)



Synopsis

Tastemaker, n. Anyone with the power to make you eat quinoa. Kale. Spicy sriracha sauce. Honeycrisp apples. Cupcakes. These days, it seems we are constantly discovering a new food that will make us healthier, happier, or even somehow cooler. Chia seeds, after a brief life as a novelty houseplant and I Love the '80s punchline, are suddenly a superfood. Not long ago, that same distinction was held by pomegranate seeds, açaí berries, and the fermented drink known as kombucha. So what happened? Did these foods suddenly cease to be healthy a few years ago? And by the way, what exactly is a "superfood" again? In this eye-opening, witty work of reportage, David Sax uncovers the world of food trends: Where they come from, how they grow, and where they end up. Traveling from the South Carolina rice plot of America's premier grain guru to Chicago's gluttonous Baconfest, Sax reveals a world of influence, money, and activism that helps decide what goes on your plate. On his journey, he meets entrepreneurs, chefs, and even data analysts who have made food trends a mission and a business. The Tastemakers is full of entertaining stories and surprising truths about what we eat, how we eat it, and why.

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Customer Reviews

I was excited to pick up this book because I have a personal interest in food and cooking and also have a history working in marketing on food brands, which has meant first hand experience with food trend spotting. In short, this book seemed made for someone like me. I also read Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye, and the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen, also by

David Sax, so I was already familiar with his writing style and voice. Similar to *Save the Deli*, I found the strengths of this book to be the quality of the research and Sax's knack for creative descriptions. I especially love his creative descriptions because I read a lot of food writing, so I appreciate his ability to describe foods and the food scenes in ways I haven't previously heard in other books. And not only do his descriptions feel new, but they do an amazing job of bringing to life what he is talking about. Whenever he was describing a scene in this book I truly felt that he transported me to the middle of it. That said, my experience with this book was not without issues. Like *Save the Deli*, my biggest issue was with the overall organization of the book. It really didn't feel like there was a continuous narrative throughout or some kind of structure tying all the pieces together. Because of this, some of the chapters and even paragraphs within the chapters felt disjointed and it interrupted the flow of the book for me. I also felt like this book was more about telling story of individual trends (i.e. cupcakes, cornets, bacon, etc.) rather than establishing a kind of framework for how food trends form. He does touch on the latter within the individual stories, but not to the degree that I expected. Because of this, it felt like a book that was geared more toward a foodie who likes reading food books for entertainment than someone in the food industry who might be trying to understand the food trend model in order to apply it to their job. It's worth noting because if you are coming to it hoping it will make you better at forecasting food trends, you'll likely walk away disappointed. Overall I think there is a lot to like about this book, but there are also things holding it back from being more broadly applicable.

The Tastemakers: Why We're Crazy for Cupcakes but Fed Up with Fondue, provides an interesting look at food trends, exploring how and why they come about. It is broken up into three parts. Part I deals with the Four Types of Trends, Part II: How Trends Break Out, and Part III: Why Food Trends Matter. I was immediately hooked from the beginning, which explores the cultural trend with talk of my all time favorite dessert, the cupcake. It was fascinating and surprising to learn how cupcakes became so trendy in the U.S. I continued to be curious about the other types of food trends discussed: agriculture, chefs, and health. I was still very engaged with the book as I began reading the second section (about how trends break out). But somewhere in the midst of part two, the author started to lose me, and my interest began to wane. The research and writing were well executed, but perhaps the book included almost a little too much detail for my taste. Just as I was plugging along through the beginning of part three, and a bit too much detail about Indian food, things really started to lose steam. I considered tabling the book for awhile, but thankfully the author brought me back around with DC food trucks. Food trucks fascinate me, and DC is just outside my hometown.

That section was a definite win for me. Then Sax continued to bounce back into my heart with bacon. My beloved bacon. I pressed on, and enjoyed reading about fondue, and its cycle of popularity. Finally, who could resist the cronut closing? I've yet to try a cronut (a hybrid croissant/doughnut) but the idea delights and intrigues me. Overall, this was an interesting read about food trends, and why we buy the things we do. I'd highly recommend this book to all foodies, as well as those who enjoy research and learning how trends break out.*Many thanks to Netgalley for providing a free copy of this book in exchange for my unbiased review.

Very interesting look at what foods become popular and why. I didn't realize how much planning went into making something as innocuous as a kind of apple worth more than another variety of apple. I was surprised to actually be interested in pork belly futures. I was given a free e-copy to read on NetGalley a couple of months ago and I am still thinking and talking about it, so much so that I am buying a hard copy to share with friends and to read again. I will probably buy another copy as a gift for a relative who loves marketing. Highly recommended for foodies and those who like marketing or economics.

I think there is too much scene setting, and description of where the author is experiencing his research (for instance, I am not interested in the meal you are having when someone is hawking rice, or the what the room looks like where a bunch of vendors are hawking gourmet cheese), and not well balanced with the insights, lessons, models of what was being researched. It's a good book to practice speed reading too. You can avoid digesting much of the fluff, and seek out some interesting details, or insights. I don't usually like to abandon books, but this has become too laborious for my taste (I don't prefer to wait in lines in order to Instagram photos of food, and tell my friends just how much the wait in the long line was justified).

Good book, however, I am in the food marketing business so I have a great interest in the "biz". It will give all foodies some nice insight presented in an entertaining format. David really knows his stuff.

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