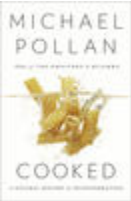
HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Information & Imagination
Published on *Highland Park Public Library* (http://hplibrary.org)

Pollan, Michael. Cooked: a natural history of transformation

By *kmaziarz*
Created *2013-05-18 08:00*

Pollan, Michael. Cooked: a natural history of transformation



Pollan, best-known for “The Omnivore’s Dilemma, starts off this new work of non-fiction with a simple question: Why, in an era in which most people go out of their way to avoid cooking, has the chef become a celebrity and the cooking show a guilty pleasure?

To answer that question, Pollan turns his journalist’s sensibility and straightforward, thoughtful powers of analysis to examining just why cooking should matter, speaking to those who still perform traditional cooking tasks and attempting to learn them himself.

The book is organized around the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth, which correspond to four basic ways to transform raw materials into nutritious, tasty things to eat. Fire is linked to grilling and barbecuing, water to cooking with liquid and braising, air to baking bread, and earth to fermenting, cheese making, and brewing. Among other culinary adventures, Pollan joins barbecue pit masters at the spit in North Carolina and New York, kneads with bread makers at Tartine in San Francisco, learns to put up sauerkraut with fermenter *extraordinaire* Sandor Katz, and observes the “Cheese Nun” (and micro-biologist) Mother Noëlla Marcellino as she creates a raw-milk cheese using techniques practiced since the 17th century.

The results of his researches into the secrets of cooking are fascinating, but the magic of “Cooked” lies not in its ability to unlock the secrets of slow-roasting a whole hog or brewing beer. Instead, he manages to illuminate the wealth of connections that stem from our time spent in the kitchen. As he writes, “Cooking — of whatever kind, everyday or extreme — situates us in the world in a very special place, facing the natural world on one side and the social world on the other.”

pollan michael and cooked
Pollan, Michael. Cooked: a natural history of transformation
Tags: Non-Fiction

- Non-Fiction

Source URL: http://hplibrary.org/bibliofiles/pollan-michael-cooked-natural-history-transformation