

A CONVERSATION WITH CATHERINE FRIEND

What inspired you to write your award-winning book?

As someone raised in the city, I was very disconnected from all of my food. But as a farmer I began to understand how much hard work and sacrifice and deep affection for animals was behind the meat we eat. I realized there is a middle ground between being totally oblivious and becoming a vegetarian, which only 5% of the population has done. So I wrote this book for the other 95% to raise the idea that farm animals deserve respect and consideration even if they're destined for the dinner table.

What interesting challenges did you encounter in writing *The Compassionate Carnivore*?

Finding the structure of a nonfiction book is always a challenge, but I really enjoy it. You want to tell the story in such a way that people are engaged and will follow you all the way through the book, and structure is the first step in doing this. What do you share with the reader, and in what order? How do you let the story unfold without overwhelming or confusing the reader? It's a great challenge.

What do you like best about the book?

I love that my editor let me mix all sorts of genres into one book: nonfiction, memoir, self-help, and humor. I also like the cover, the tone, and how it connects different ideas that you wouldn't necessarily put together.

What do you hope your readers take away from *The Compassionate Carnivore*?

I think my ridiculously-long subtitle really summarizes what I hope readers take away from the book: that it is possible to raise animals in a natural, humane environment, keep small farms in business, better protect the environment, and continue eating meat.

What has your journey as a writer been like?

My path to becoming a writer wasn't very direct. I earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in economics, worked in the field for awhile, and then decided I needed something more concrete. I turned to technical writing, which was where I really learned how to write clearly and concisely. Not until my mid-thirties did a friend urge me to give creative writing a try. It was hard at first because up to that point all my writing had been for other people, not for myself. But once I got started, the ideas just kept coming.

How does being a Minnesotan inform your writing?

I wonder if being a Norwegian living in a state that gently teases Norwegians makes it easier to poke fun at myself. My natural voice tends toward self-deprecating humor, which may have been harder to develop in a state that lacks a sense of humor. Minnesotans can laugh at themselves, which I think is incredibly healthy.

How do you enjoy spending time when you're not writing?

I enjoy reading, spending time with friends, movies, reading, playing with our three dogs and two cats, walking or biking - oh, and reading.



325 Cedar Street
Suite 555
Saint Paul, MN 55101
651-222-3242

www.thefriends.org

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A Reading and Discussion Guide Prepared by the Minnesota Book Awards

21ST ANNUAL


MINNESOTA
BOOK AWARDS

General Nonfiction Winner

THE
COMPASSIONATE
CARNIVORE

OR, HOW TO KEEP ANIMALS HAPPY,
SAVE OLD MACDONALD'S FARM, REDUCE
YOUR HOOFPRINT, AND STILL EAT MEAT



CATHERINE FRIEND
Author of *HIT BY A FARM*

The Compassionate Carnivore: Or, How to Keep Animals Happy, Save Old MacDonald's Farm, Reduce Your Hoofprint, and Still Eat Meat

by Catherine Friend

DA CAPO PRESS/PERSEUS BOOKS GROUP

The Compassionate Carnivore



SUMMARY:

Once Catherine Friend bought a farm with her partner and started raising sheep, her attitude about eating meat began to change. Her farming and livestock journey offers critical and witty insight, for meat lovers and vegetarians alike, into how our meat is raised, where and from whom we buy it, and why a change in our meat choices is possible and desirable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do carnivores have a responsibility to the animals they eat?
2. If you are someone who eats meat, how do you respond to challenges from vegetarians and animal rights activists?
3. What are the biggest challenges facing people who want to change how they eat meat?
4. Are the people you know getting more in touch with the food they eat? What resources are available in your community for people who want to learn more about where their food comes from?
5. What was the most surprising thing you learned about today's farming industry?
6. How did you experience the author's use of humor, and how would the book's message or impact be different without that humor?
7. Have you had a close relationship with any livestock, and if so, have you experienced the unique personality of farm animals?
8. Taking factory, conventional, sustainable, and organic farms into account, what does today's farming industry say about our society as a whole?

9. Are factory farms an essential part of today's society? Is it possible for animals to have a humane existence on a large factory farm, and if so, what needs to be in place to ensure that existence?
10. Has reading *The Compassionate Carnivore* changed you in any ways?

About Catherine Friend:

Catherine Friend is the author of children's picture books, nonfiction books for adults, and romantic adventure novels for adults. She and her partner farm in southeastern Minnesota. Catherine would rather write than wrangle sheep, but she's proud to do both. She has a B.A. in Economics and Spanish and a M.S. in Economics, neither of which she has used for years.

Catherine's recently published books include:

A Pirate's Heart (adult fiction), 2008

The Spanish Pearl (adult fiction), 2007

The Perfect Nest (children's), 2007

The Crown of Valencia (adult fiction), 2007

Hit by a Farm (adult nonfiction), 2006

For additional information about the author and her work, visit www.catherinefriend.com.



Photo by Scott Strebler



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