From My Bookshelf

I don’t know about you, but I feel I have so little time to read. But from time to time I find time... and a gem. Here are a few that I’ve enjoyed recently.

■ Hot off the press is Michael Moss’s Salt, Sugar, Fat (Random House). Moss, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer for The New York Times, put his superlative reporting skills to good use in this splendid new book. It is based on interviews with former executives of Campbell, Frito-Lay, Coca-Cola, and other companies, as well as confidential and publicly available documents.

The executives describe how the companies add sugar, fat, and/or salt to make their products “blissful.” Moss profiles officials unconcerned about health, as well as executives with a conscience.

One example: Jeffrey Dunn, a former president of Coca-Cola’s Western Hemisphere division, “felt his stomach sink” when he saw his company targeting children in poor neighborhoods in Brazil with its sugar drinks. After leaving Coke, he became the CEO of one of America’s biggest carrot growers, where he has applied his marketing acumen on behalf of baby carrots instead of bubbly beverages. (Full disclosure: I talked with Moss while he was researching his book and may be biased because of his generous comments about CSPI.)

■ In Blue Zones: 9 Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who’ve Lived the Longest (National Geographic Society, 2009), National Geographic writer Dan Buettner traveled to Costa Rica, Sardinia, Okinawa, the Aegean island of Ikaria, and Loma Linda, California (home to many Seventh-day Adventists)—all hot spots of longevity—to interview people who had lived to be about 100. They typically ate diets rich in fruits and vegetables and modest amounts of meat, milk, and cheese; they walked a lot; and they had many friends.

Though those centenarians are dying, they are leaving behind lessons about living longer, richer lives. See bluezones.com to learn more.

■ Behind the Kitchen Door (Cornell University Press, 2013) does for restaurant workers what Fast Food Nation did for slaughterhouse and food processing plant workers. Author Saru Jayaraman writes about tips stolen by management, lousy wages, no sick days (so ill workers get sicker while they contaminate the food we eat), and the racism that keeps people of color in the lowest-paid jobs.

She reminds us that “sustainable food” should also be sustainable for the 10 million restaurant workers. Learn more at www.rocunited.org.

■ Not hot off the press is Dean Ornish’s Love and Survival (HarperCollins, 1998). Ornish is famous for advocating diets to reverse heart disease, but in Love and Survival he highlights scientific research on the impact of friendships, stress, and other social and psychological factors that affect our health.

For instance, a study of older Dutch people found that “those with the highest self-reported feelings of loneliness had nearly double the death rates of those who said they felt emotionally connected to others.” There’s more to a good life than spinach salads.

Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Center for Science in the Public Interest

The cost of a one-year subscription or gift (10 issues) is $24; two years are $42. For bulk subscriptions, please write for details. To change your address, send us your subscriber number and your old and new address. If you don’t want us to exchange your name, send us your name and mailing-label information. Mail: CSPI, 1220 L Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005. Application to mail at Periodical postage rates approved at post office of Washington, DC, and at additional offices.

For permission to reuse material, go to copyright.com and search for Nutrition Action. Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is the nonprofit health-advocacy group that publishes Nutrition Action Healthletter. CSPI mounts educational programs and press for changes in government and corporate policies.

The contents of NAI are not intended to provide medical advice, which should be obtained from a qualified health professional.

The use of information from Nutrition Action Healthletter for commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission from CSPI.

© 2013 by Center for Science in the Public Interest.