Suggested Discussion Questions for *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto*, by Michael Pollan

1. Who is Michael Pollan and why should we listen to him regarding food and nutrition?

2. Has Pollan changed the way you think about food? If so, how?

3. Does the way we eat in the United States say anything about the character of the American people and, more broadly, this country’s shared values? How is *In Defense of Food* a statement about American culture and life?

4. Pollan quotes the words of writer and farmer Wendell Berry: "Eating is an agricultural act." What does Berry mean, and why is his message so important that it’s included in both *In Defense of Food* and in Pollan’s previous book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*?

5. Pollan claims that the Western diet has been replaced by nutrients. What does he mean by that? When he uses the term "nutritionism," to what is he referring?

6. Why did our food choices change? What social, economic and political forces triggered this change?

7. Pollan says that after 30 years of nutritional advice from health experts, we’re actually sicker than before. Do you agree? What kind of evidence does he use to support that claim?

8. Whom does Pollan blame for our dietary landscape? Again, what is the evidence? Does he make a good case?

9. Two-thirds of the way through *In Defense of Food*, Pollan points out, "You would not have bought this book and read this far into it if your food culture was intact and healthy." Are there aspects of your own eating that you would want to change? Or, are you reading this book to support your own already-made choices?
10. Pollan himself is an optimist. He believes the possibilities for eating local, organic food are the best they've been in quite some time. Can you take the opposite position? What would make this style of eating not do-able for someone?

11. Pollan asserts, “We are a people with an unhealthy obsession with healthy eating.” Would you call the general public obsessed with healthy eating?

12. Pollan would like to see us spend more money and more time on food: can you do it? How? Are there other money and time expenditures you would have to give up? Will you?

13. Consider Pollan’s example of the Aboriginal experience with diabetes. Do you think modern American eating has any parallel?

14. Did you read Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser or see the film Super Size Me? Both focus on people who eat a fast food diet already, and perhaps anticipate an audience ready to criticize a fast food diet. Pollan’s approach is much different. Are there different audiences for each? Will this book be read by fast food eaters? Was Fast Food Nation? To what degree are all of these works preaching to the choir? Does it matter?

15. What solutions does Pollan offer related to our own eating habits and to our food supply?

Some questions courtesy of LitLovers.com, Madison Public Library and UW-Madison.

Some question themes courtesy of Penguin Group.

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