



Philosophical Ponderings of a Farmer

Fad Diets and the Industrialized Food System **(c) 2018**

Atkins, Paleo, South Beach... It seems like there are so many popular diets that have come and gone in my lifetime. And it makes me wonder... why?

Post WWII, our culture began to shift from a place-based diet to a pleasure-based one. 100 years ago, the majority of a family's diet consisted of what was grown in their region. Imported food was expensive, and often considered a special treat. Industrialization and globalization of our food system allowed people to eschew their traditional ethnocultural diets. With more variety available all the time, people found it easier and less expensive to eat whatever they wanted.

One consequence of this shift was weight gain and declining health. Another was confusion over what to eat - with so much variety, how do you know what to choose?

Enter fad diets. A fad diet is one that promises quick weight loss (and other health advantages), often without much scientific backing. Some people find it easy to jump on the next diet bandwagon in a world where choice can be paralyzing. Fad diets are usually so restrictive that folks don't have to spend a lot of time thinking about what to eat or whether or not it is healthy - they just follow the rules. It's quick, easy, and provides somewhat-instant gratification.

But then again, if we all went back to our cultural roots, we would not have to spend a lot of energy choosing our next meal either.