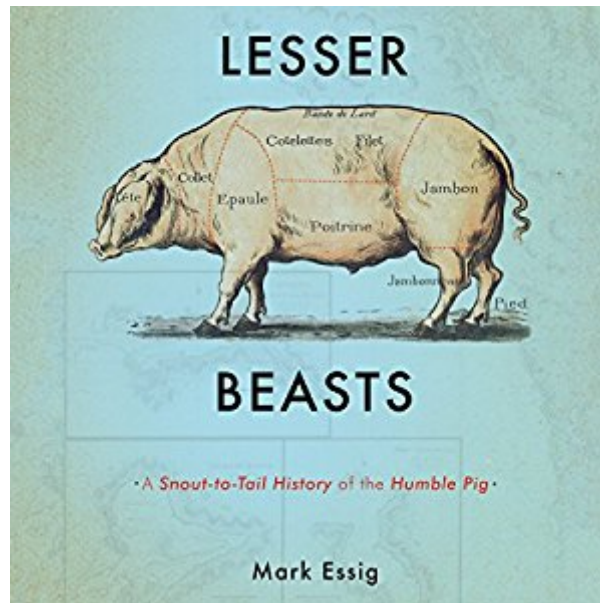




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# Lesser Beasts: A Snout-to-Tail History Of The Humble Pig



## Synopsis

Unlike other barnyard animals, which pull plows, give eggs or milk, or grow wool, a pig produces only one thing: meat. Incredibly efficient at converting almost any organic matter into nourishing, delectable protein, swine are nothing short of a gastronomic godsend - yet their flesh is banned in many cultures, and the animals themselves are maligned as filthy, lazy brutes. As historian Mark Essig reveals in *Lesser Beasts*, swine have such a bad reputation for precisely the same reasons they are so valuable as a source of food: they are intelligent, self-sufficient, and omnivorous. What's more, he argues, we ignore our historic partnership with these astonishing animals at our peril. Tracing the interplay of pig biology and human culture from Neolithic villages 10,000 years ago to modern industrial farms, Essig blends culinary and natural history to demonstrate the vast importance of the pig and the tragedy of its modern treatment at the hands of humans. Pork, Essig explains, has long been a staple of the human diet, prized in societies from Ancient Rome to dynastic China to the contemporary American South. Yet pigs' ability to track down and eat a wide range of substances (some of them distinctly unpalatable to humans) and convert them into edible meat has also led people throughout history to demonize the entire species as craven and unclean. Today's unconscionable system of factory farming, Essig explains, is only the latest instance of humans taking pigs for granted, and the most recent evidence of how both pigs and people suffer when our symbiotic relationship falls out of balance. An expansive, illuminating history of one of our most vital yet unsung food animals, *Lesser Beasts* turns a spotlight on the humble creature that, perhaps more than any other, has been a mainstay of civilization since its very beginnings - whether we like it or not.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At first glance, a book about pigs may not seem as intriguing as it is. Make no mistake: this is perhaps one of the most fascinating historical accounts you may ever read. Essig discusses the versatility of the pig as a food source, cultures and religions that have embraced and shunned the pig, and its role in good times and bad. A slight spoiler alert that the pig is an amazingly versatile and efficient food source, and its perception throughout time and within cultures and religions is reflective of its versatility. This is a fascinating read and I highly recommend it.

Brilliant, fun reading that educates. This was a fast and easy read that left me a better informed person in regard to pigs, pork, the food industry, history of how pigs came into the food chain, and much more. Must read.

Interesting read, makes you think more about the food you eat and how it got to be the way it is. Gives you a deeper appreciation of pigs. Easy and relaxing read with a good informational bend. Proceeds chronologically and weaves in political/economic/historical information. Would not recommend for an english literature class but more as an entertaining/insightful read for those curious.

Love this book. Whether you're cook, historian or economist, this tome provides an entertaining view of how the pig helped humans to develop numerous economies and civilizations. I found myself laughing out loud at some points. It's well-written and highly recommended.

Excellent history of man's second best friend. I had no idea that the pig was so fundamental to the success of settlements in the Americas. I work within the pig industry and Mark Essig gives an excellent commentary of the road to modern pig production. Essig is clearly one who loves his pigs and wants this wonderful creature to have the recognition it deserves! It does make you wonder where mankind would be without the even toed ungulate *Sus Scrofa*. Essential reading for all!

What an absolutely remarkable book!! Packed from cover to cover with well written and thoughtful information. A must read for sure

Absolutely superb. I have read many books of food and meat history, and this still managed to teach me something new on every page. It reflects many long hours of diligent reading, but even more hours of writing. It is the best-written book on food history I have encountered. The only thing I can say I didn't like about this book was the ending ... meaning that I didn't want it to end!! I am an agricultural economist at OK State University and believe the book does not sensationalize any fact nor does it ever mislead the reader, as many books on food do.

I can honestly say that --surprisingly--this is the most interesting book I have read in a long time. I picked it up on a lark and never regretted it. It is one of those books that just goes flying over your head--and you by-pass it on your own peril.

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