

The Lost Supper: Searching for the Future of Food in the Flavors of the Past

Taras Grescoe

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Taras Grescoe's investigative book *The Lost Supper* elevates the quest to eat sustainably into a jet-setting journey to nine international destinations to learn ancient foodways and acquire traditional and Indigenous ingredients.

An adventurous eater, Grescoe embarked from his home in Montreal, hoping to discover the future of food in the flavors of the past. In each country, he tracked down one foundational ingredient. But the trip that at first seemed directed by a simple goal became a pilgrimage, requiring detective work, increasing cash outlays, and resolve. Foods that were once common staples, he learned, were now more likely to be found for astronomical prices at chef's tables and luxury grocers.

As a gastronomic travelogue, *The Lost Supper* is clever. It thrills with its escapist, aspirational appeal and ripped-from-the-headlines documentary qualities. Surprising, often enthralling, facts about the past anchor Grescoe's trips—covering the long-lived, idyllic Neolithic community discovered in Turkey; the water-skimmer eggs still gathered by the heirs to the Aztecs in Mexico City; and the recreation of ancient Roman recipes for *garum* in Cadiz. The book excels at bridging these deep histories with the present, resulting in the immediacy of an epicurean and archaeological adventure.

But when it comes to modern food production and envisioning a future approach to food that melds Grescoe's triumvirate of flavor, omnivorous eating, and sustainability, the book's messaging becomes reductive, with saber-rattling about non-GMO foods and agrarianism. Whether it's romanticizing the past, a selective emphasis on success stories, or with implicit class bias, when it comes to the crux of future food security, the book's answers skew superficial and individualistic.

Covering a global culinary adventure, *The Lost Supper* melds food history with culinary derring-do.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (September / October 2023)

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