

How to Poison Your Spouse The Natural Way, A Kiwi Guide to Safer Food

By Jay D Mann Ph.D

With a title that catches the eye of any visitor, this book makes a great addition to your coffee table or book shelf.

It is a fascinating read about the many foods and food additives we eat regularly and whether or not they are hazardous. It is written with a broad readership in mind as the author states; "by making this book less technically imposing, it might get the message over to a broader public."

Jay Mann is a plant biochemist, who retired from Crop and Food in 1993. He has written over one hundred papers including a paper for Chemistry in New Zealand in 1995 entitled "Dietary Hazards, Real and Imagined". Dr Mann says that paper was part of the process, which led to the book.

The subject of food is a very topical one. There are a large number of books on the subject of safe foods but this book takes an interesting perspective from the biochemistry of nature. Dr Mann presents "a guide to avoiding non-trivial risk. My criterion for including any particular food is that there is somewhere a headstone or a hospital record confirming human harm."

Dr Mann has in most cases achieved the admirable goal of providing enough scientific evidence to reference his statements and opinions while keeping the book extremely readable. His frequent use of brief case studies keeps this book away from being just a presentation of the facts and research findings.

It also has some interesting stories about the introduction of new foods in human history including the potato. "In most of Europe, potatoes were rejected as food because they were thought to carry leprosy." His account of the acceptance of new foods culminates in a rational solution to the labelling of genetically modified foods.

The book discusses at length natural plant toxins that can affect humans. It also includes details on shellfish toxins, fungi both beneficial and harmful, herbal medicines and a brief section on food-borne infections. The book corrects commonly held views on some perceived hazardous foods including MSG and food preservatives. The final part of the book covers the more technical aspects of evaluating information presented on food risks as well as chapters on cancer and diet and how to prolong life.

The book is written in a very casual, friendly but passionate manner that makes for lively reading. The topics are broken down with clear headings thus it is an ideal book to dip into and peruse a section as well as reading from cover to cover.

The book could be improved with a little more editing because there are several typographical errors and some sections are not clear on a first reading.

Dr Mann writes "most of the facts in this book are well known to food professionals" however if food biochemistry is not your area of expertise this is an informative and useful book to own. For those who are convinced all natural foods are safe, this book will be a startling read.

The book will make ideal Christmas holiday reading, it is up to you if you decide to read it before or after you consume your Christmas lunch.

The book is published by JDM & Associates and distributed in New Zealand by Nationwide Book Distributors, retailing for \$24.99. You can find further information on the website www.saferfood.co.nz

Reviewed by Fiona Summerfield

