

# Good-bye, GoGURT

*'Locavores' launch best-selling author on nationwide book tour*

By Lisa Reisman

Special to ShoreView

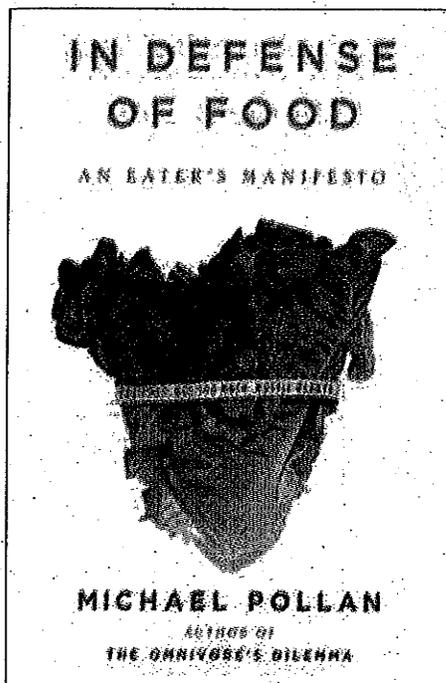
The night after author Michael Pollan's rousing standing-room-only book talk in Madison this past January, I asked my five-year-old niece Olivia if she had ever tried GoGURT.

Her face lit up. "It's awesome," she said.

GoGURT, for the uninitiated, is the first-ever yogurt in a tube. It's designed for busy kids to squirt into their mouths and comes in a wide variety of flavors like Strawberry Splash and Root Beer Float. All that and, according to its web site, "it brings kids the wholesome goodness of real yogurt."

It's also the kind of "tangible material formerly known as food" that Michael Pollan, author of the award-winning best sellers "The Botany of Desire" and "The Omnivore's Dilemma," bemoaned at Station Square, as he introduced his newest book "In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto."

The slim volume, a national—and natural—phenomenon that has soared to the top of the New York Times bestselling list, functions as a call for a return to real food that will bring pleasure and health back to eating. It also serves as a practical guide on how to eat and what to buy in what Pollan called "our currently treacherous food environment."



His answer, boiled down to seven words: "Eat Food. Not Too Much. Mostly Plants."

In keeping with the emphasis on the homegrown that runs through his work, Pollan's appearance bookended an indoor farmers' market of local and organic products from towns throughout Connecticut, and drew upwards of 575 people. The novelty of that idea con-

vinced the author with "rock-star" status, as R.J. Julia Booksellers owner Roxanne Coady put it, to choose Madison as the platform to launch his national book tour.

Even the site of the event, Station Square, had a local flavor: the structure, adjacent to the new Shoreline East train station, was built by Coady's husband with the aim of being both a "handsome gateway" to Madison and, eventually, a permanent indoor farmers' market on the model of the Grand Central Market in New York.

And Pollan himself has Connecticut roots, having lived for a decade in Cornwall Bridge, where he wrote extensively about his home and garden. His familiarity with plants and flowers no doubt informs his unusual facility for pruning the seemingly overwhelming issue of food choice to its raw essence.

The balding, bespectacled Berkeley journalism professor inspired waves of laughter as he asked the enthusiastic audience of 275 to imagine their great grandmother picking up a tube of GoGURT, holding it to the light, and trying to figure out how to administer it, or if it was even something that went in the body.

The great-grandmother question is just one of the criteria proposed by "Eater's

See AUTHOR, Page 10

# Best-selling author: Beware 'food-like substances'

From page 9

Manifesto" in the struggle to assess what is food and what's not. Among the others: "Avoid food products containing ingredients that are unfamiliar, unpronounceable, more than five in number, or that include high fructose corn syrup." There is also this counterintuitive rule: "Avoid food products that make health claims." If you can't get to a farmer's market, take the periphery of the supermarket labyrinth, the path Pollan advised the audience to follow for mostly real food.

As for the middle aisles, beware of "food-like substances" like Whole Grain Chips Ahoy Cookies: according to the food industry, said

Pollan, they're now more nutritious than Nilla Wafers. Likewise, vitamin-enriched Diet Coke and any of the other processed, packaged substances full of gobbledy-gook ingredients masquerading as healthy food.

Such claims are based on nutritionism, the dubious ideology that food can be reduced to its nutritional components without the loss of something essential. It's that proposition that extracted betacarotene from carrots and turned them into supplements, a development that was found to increase the risk of certain cancers. And it's prompted recent efforts, in response to findings of the health properties of Omega 3 fatty acids, to get cows to munch on flax seed as a way to introduce nutrients into our hot dogs and ham-

burgers.

How to crusade against the high priesthood of nutritionism that is the food industry? Pollan advocated a return to the local and the basic. He recommended that we spend more on food: not only more money but also more time. Eat less, he said, and maybe we make up the financial difference. Trade fast food for cooking, and maybe we restore some civility to the traditional idea of the meal.

As audience member Beth Lauer of Killingworth put it, "we all just have to slow down and savor what's important."

In other words, Olivia, no more GoGURT.