Book Review

MILK: Its Remarkable Contribution to Human Health and Well-Being. Stuart Patton.

Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ. 182 pp. ISBN 0765802104.

The word “apologetics” is rarely used in our language today. The historical meaning of the word meant a systematic series of arguments, constructed in a logical fashion, to defend a faith or institution. With the advent of the Internet and global media connections, a proliferation of information and misinformation regarding our food supply in general and milk in particular has occurred. The average thoughtful consumer is often confused regarding the messages presented; it is often difficult for even food science professionals to answer specific questions regarding these issues in a lay-friendly manner. Enter Stuart Patton whose in-depth knowledge, broad background, and thoughtful scientific manner allow him to become the ultimate science-based apologist for milk. In his book, *MILK: Its Remarkable Contribution to Human Health and Well-Being*, he presents clear, logical, and science-based arguments for the beneficial aspects of milk.

Although the book is written for a general audience, in today’s world of science each of us becomes a specialist in a selected area, so that professional scientists reading the book will not find the detail they know about a specific area, but they will learn or have refreshed remembrances of a plethora of other areas of dairy science. As a protein chemist, I found the discussions of milk proteins to be elementary, but I was intrigued by the sections on lipids and dairy management. I found the chapter on the media to be especially interesting. In this chapter, Patton outlines the importance of good nutrition information and research, discusses many of the prevalent criticisms of milk, and ends with a positive interpretation for most. The “Nutrition and Health”

chapter has embedded within it a clear and lucid discussion of the best current information on cardiovascular disease. This section is exceptionally well written and discusses such current topics as the roles of C-reactive protein, stress, homocysteine, and fish oils in cardiovascular disease. In the same vein, I was fascinated by the descriptions of flavor and olfaction. The chapter dealing with products and processing gives an excellent description of the handling and processing of fluid milks and ice cream. However, the section on cheese manufacture was a bit disappointing considering the rich nature of the subject. Overall, this is a good exposition of the subject of dairy products.

The 2005 food guidelines for Americans recommend three 1-cup servings of dairy a day. Critics of this policy have suggested that this represents “one of the strongest influences of the food industry” on the guidelines (Nature 433:794–799, 2005). Patton’s book, written before the announcement of the guidelines, suggests this very idea, and this book was written by a senior scientist who has thoughtfully studied dairy science and nutrition for more than five decades.

The book is well indexed, and I found it easy to retrieve good information on most topics. Overall, I heartily recommend this book to scientific professionals and predict that it will serve as an invaluable reference on every aspect of dairy science and dairying.

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