



Nourishment

What Animals Can Teach Us About
Rediscovering Our Nutritional Wisdom

Fred Provenza

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For media inquiries contact

Christina Butt

cbutt@chelseagreen.com

802.295.6300 ext.127

For author events contact

Jenna Stewart

jstewart@chelseagreen.com

802.295.6300 ext.120



Do humans still possess the wisdom to select nourishing diets?

Why *do* humans like foods that are thought to be “bad for us” such as red meat and sugary, salty, fatty foods?

Have we become so maladapted culturally that we no longer know how to enable the nutritional wisdom that resides within our bodies?

Renowned animal behaviorist Fred Provenza takes a deep-dive into these questions and much more in his new book *Nourishment: What Animals Can Teach Us About Rediscovering our Nutritional Wisdom*.

Provenza directed an award-winning research group at Utah State University that studied livestock eating behavior and appetite. He has authored over 250 publications in scientific journals and books and is a sought-after speaker. Prolific author and animal activist Temple Grandin calls him, “a wise observer of the land and the animals.”

He spent his academic career questioning the prevailing assumption that livestock are “too dumb” to make nutritionally sound choices. He and his research group demonstrated that animals respond to an intricately tuned system of flavor-feedback relationships at the cellular level—a nutritional wisdom that guides them to eat the appropriate combinations of foods to meet their dietary needs. In *Nourishment*, he extends his theory of nutritional wisdom to not only other wild animals, but humans as well. However, he points out the difference between humans and animals is that we’ve been tricked out of listening to our inner wisdom.

Most people don’t fully comprehend the many ways the food industry controls our behavior or how industry hijacks our preferences for wholesome foods as it designs energy-dense, nutrient-poor processed foods. “Nothing is left to chance,” Provenza says. “From the artificial flavors that mimic fruits to the refined carbohydrates that provide reinforcing feedback; from the packaging that entices us to buy the product to the shelf positions and locations in the grocery store aisle.” He argues that scientists in the food industry know exactly how to influence the choices we make. “Our so-called free will has nothing to do with any of our behaviors, including food selection and ingestion,” he says.

Provenza’s rigorous scientific observations call into question our blind adherence to academic, corporate, and political authorities when it comes to health and nutrition, while at the same time he offers his reflections on how to nourish the body and spirit in a world of constant change.



Fred Provenza is professor emeritus of Behavioral Ecology at Utah State and is one of the founders of BEHAVE, an international network of scientists and land managers committed to integrating behavioral principles with local knowledge to enhance environmental, economic, and cultural values of rural and urban communities. He is also the author of *Foraging Behavior* and co-author of *The Art & Science of Shepherding*.

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