

Discussion Guide



Summary

In *Ultra-Processed People*, Chris van Tulleken argues that the ultra-processing of foods is the primary reason that today's food intake results in many health problems, such as metabolic dysfunction and most chronic diseases. In a fast-paced and eye-opening narrative he explores the origins, science, and economics of ultra-processed foods to reveal its catastrophic impact on our bodies and the planet. Tulleken proposes real solutions for doctors, for policy makers, and for all of us who must eat.

Questions

1. Chris van Tulleken suggests a shorthand for identifying ultra-processed food (UPF): "if it's wrapped in plastic, and it's got something in it that you don't find in the domestic kitchen, it's ultra-processed food." Does this definition change how you view the items in your own pantry?
2. Van Tulleken argues that obesity is "commerciogenic"—caused by the interests of industry—and that the conversation is often "suppurating with shame, guilt and blame." How can shifting the blame from the individual to the "predatory corporations" change the way society addresses the obesity crisis?
3. The book highlights that UPF is often the only affordable or accessible option for many people. How does this book change your view on the link between socioeconomic status and public health?
4. Beyond human health, the book touches on the environmental impact of UPF production. Did the discussion on these add a new layer of concern for you?
5. Van Tulleken used his own body to show the effects of UPF. How did his personal anecdotes affect the tone of the book for you?
6. The author suggests we should try to eat food that "doesn't come with a health claim." In our modern, busy world, how realistic is it to completely avoid UPF? Have you tried to change your shopping habits since finishing the book?
7. What, if anything, was missing from the author's argument and analysis? What do you wish was included?

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	<p><i>Ultra-Processed People: Why We Can't Stop Eating Food That Isn't Food</i> Chris van Tulleken</p> <p>W.W. Norton & Company 2025 416 pages ISBN: 9781324036722</p>	<p>Food and Nutrition</p>
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8. If you could mandate one policy change based on this book (e.g., warning labels, taxes, banning certain additives), what would it be?
9. Are there any lingering questions from the book you are still thinking about and if you could ask the author anything, what would it be?