

by chapters discussing coatings and films based on proteins, lipids and resins, and polysaccharides, respectively. The latter chapter on water-soluble polysaccharide-based edible coatings and films is of particular interest since these materials have brought about a surge in new types of their selective permeability to oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Overall, this is an extremely informative and detailed volume that is well referenced and has a good index. It will prove to be a welcome addition to the library of any individuals with interests in areas of food science and technology, and is highly recommended.

**John F. Kennedy**  
**Charles J. Knill**

**Food: The Definitive Guide.** By T. Coulate and J. Davies, The Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge. v + 167 pp. Price £12.50. ISBN 0 85186 4317.

Almost everyone has an opinion on the food they eat or don't eat. We have our likes and our dislikes, fads and fancies, compounded by views on what is "good for you", or what is "full of chemicals", and so on. *Food: The Definitive Guide* concentrates on food from a scientific angle, enabling the non-specialist to make more informed choices about the food that they eat.

*Food: The Definitive Guide* consists of 11 chapters that can be divided into 6 sections. After a brief overview of the methods that have been developed to assess food intake, section one, 'What people are eating', moves on to assess trends in food consumption. Perhaps the largest trend over the last 20 years has been an increase in convenience foods, and a move away from eating meals in the home.

Newspapers, radio and television have recently led to a glut of information, often conflicting, about the amounts we should be eating of the various components of food. Section two, 'The quality diet', deals with each of the basic components of food (e.g. fat, fiber etc.) and details the average requirements of each as related to age and sex.

Several factors have a bearing on what people eat, for example people's attitude to food can vary considerably. In certain countries horse and dog meat are popular whilst most people in Britain would frown upon it. Religion also has a bearing on what people eat. Orthodox Hindus believe that it is wrong to kill and are, for this reason, vegetarians. Philosophy can also influence what people eat. During the 60s and 70s, South African foods were boycotted by anti-apartheid supporters. All such considerations are discussed in section three, 'Choosing food'.

Section four, 'Food components', is by far the largest section of the book, and describes in detail the basic components of food, devoting a chapter to each. Nutritional facts alone are, however, useless unless they can be translated into acceptable meals. Section five, 'Not just nutrients', enables people without the experience of the home economist or food technologist to do just that.

*Food: The Definitive Guide* concludes with a section on the 'Evaluation of food intake', by a method proposed by the authors, which, although more complex than those previously detailed, results in much more detailed evaluation of food intake.

Overall this is an extremely detailed and informative book that is extremely accessible. It will appeal to any non-specialist with a keen interest in the food that they eat.

**John F. Kennedy**  
**Tracey A. Norris**