

“The Raw Milk Revolution”: Criminalizing Nature’s Most Perfect Food: FDA’s war on private food contracts

Review of David E. Gumpert's Book

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Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#), [History](#)

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Is the FDA’s war on milk part of US strategy to ban all private food contracts?



In his latest book, *The Raw Milk Revolution: Behind America’s Emerging Battle over Food Rights*, David Gumpert details several cases of malicious prosecution against the natural dairy industry, reporting the myths, exaggerations and deceptions by authorities charged with protecting the food supply.

What you won’t get from the book is a whitewash of the raw milk movement. Even advocates were caught exaggerating claims or ignoring evidence. Gumpert also includes tender, heart-wrenching stories in the words of mothers whose children became critically ill from drinking contaminated raw milk, or so they believe. Though the link was never scientifically made in those cases, it was in others, including a raw milk herd share. Gumpert bridges compassion for those mothers with compassion for dairy owners who are financially wiped out by the government’s strategic war on private food arrangements.

From the cases explored in the book, and from recent government actions and statements,

it becomes clear that food safety authorities are using their power to destroy competition of drugged, genetically engineered, factory processed foods.

For years, writers and researchers have shown how regulatory agencies have been captured by industry. President Obama exemplifies this in [his Food Policy picks](#), recruiting directly from biotech firms like Monsanto and lobbying groups like CropLife America. His Supreme Court pick, Elena Kagan, in her capacity as Solicitor General, [intervened on behalf of Monsanto](#) in the first case to reach the US Supreme Court regarding genetically engineered food.

In the potent Foreword to the book, farmer Joel Salatin admits:

“People like me don’t trust Monsanto. We don’t trust the Food and Drug Administration. We don’t trust the Department of Agriculture. We don’t trust Tyson. And we don’t think it’s safe to be dependent on food that sits for a month in the belly of a Chinese merchant marine vessel.”

And the outcome?

“When the public no longer trusts its public servants, people begin taking charge of their own health and welfare. And that is exactly what is driving the local heritage food movement.”

Meet the FDA head of Dairy and Egg Safety, John F. Sheehan



Apparently bent on stopping the ‘local heritage food movement’ is John F. Sheehan, whom the FDA hired in 2000 to head its Dairy and Egg Safety Division. Gumpert spends much time on this elusive bureaucrat, a patent lawyer with a bachelor’s degree in dairy science. Sheehan’s actions epitomize the destruction that captive agencies can wreak on small producers when regulators cater to monopoly interests. ([Image of John F. Sheehan](#), FDA Director of Dairy & Egg Safety, by David Gumpert. Used with permission.)

Sheehan also serves as a [US delegate](#) on the Milk & Milk Products Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Codex is a United Nations offshoot that harmonizes food standards to facilitate international trade. [Some](#) believe Codex also seeks to limit trade of Earth’s natural supplements and whole foods. (See, e.g., Kevin Miller’s 2005 film, [We Become Silent: The Last Days of Health Freedom](#).)

Gumpert, an investigative journalist focused on the intersection of health and business, found Sheehan's background elusive. The FDA stonewalled Gumpert's efforts to gather information about him, only revealing that Sheehan worked in the large end of the dairy industry for 17 years. Many efforts to meet him failed. Gumpert admits with a little embarrassment that he traveled 2,500 miles just to photograph the man. Alas, Sheehan refused to speak to him, as did other FDA regulators.

Disparate Treatment of Natural Foods and Pharmaceutically-Driven CAFOs

That John Sheehan is a patent lawyer is not incidental. Concentrated animal feeding operations use patented, genetically modified drugs and feed. Having a patent lawyer head the FDA's Dairy and Egg Division benefits the biotech end of food production. That may reveal Sheehan's loyalties, which in turn may reveal what's driving the FDA's war on natural food.

Sheehan's preferential treatment of Wright County Egg, which was involved in this year's half-billion egg recall after 1,500 people were sickened by salmonella poisoning, stands in perfect contrast to his malevolent war on natural milk suppliers whose products sickened no one.

Providing a timeline of infractions covering decades, [The Atlantic](#) said, "[Wright County Egg owner, Jack] DeCoster has left a trail of illness, injury, mistreatment, and death in his wake for decades. That he has been left to police himself for so long is a stunning testament to the failure of federal regulators."

The [AP reported](#) that "his facilities tested positive for salmonella contamination hundreds of times in the two years before this summer's outbreak."

Congressman Henry Waxman told the [New York Times](#) that for decades, "DeCoster farms have had warning after warning. Yet they continue to raise chickens in slovenly conditions and to make millions of dollars by selling contaminated eggs."

So what concerned the Dairy and Egg Safety Czar during all of this? Rawesome Foods, a natural food distributor in Venice Beach, California, whose products sickened no one. In June, authorities burst onto the premises of this private food-buying club with guns drawn, in a shockingly excessive show of terrorizing force. And, for what? A misdemeanor infraction, [improper licensing](#)? They physically searched all the employees and confiscated product. The now notorious [Rawesome Raid](#) epitomizes the disparate treatment Sheehan affords natural foods compared to drugged, genetically modified ones. Security cameras [caught the action](#) on film.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5zPhhNUakc>

"I think the Rawesome raid, conducted by agents from a half dozen agencies, with their guns drawn, was meant to send a strong message to farmers and consumers alike that the government is intent on discouraging private food distribution arrangements," Gumpert told me via email.

Lest anyone doubt this, in a [2010 court filing](#), the FDA and its bureaucratic superior, the

Department of Health and Human Services, asserted that Americans have “no fundamental right to freedom of contract.” They went even further, denying that we have a right to eat foods of our choice, and that we don’t even have the right to health.

Think about that for a moment: *the federal agencies in charge of food safety and protecting human health believe we do not have a right to health.* Is this who we want determining what food and drugs are safe for us? Would you trust your diamonds to someone who didn’t believe you had a right to them?

In furtherance of the FDA’s war on private food contracts, in September, Rawesome supplier, Morningland Dairy, was ordered to [destroy all of its cheese](#). Working closely with Morningland, Doreen Hannes [noted](#) that this was done after authorities reported finding “*listeria monocytogenes* and *staph aureus* in two cheeses.” She stated that regulators showed up without proper documentation for these tests: no batch numbers, no product code numbers, no chain of custody, and no bacteria levels — just a picture of cheese with the Morningland label and the word of gun-toting uniforms.

No one became ill from any of Morningland’s or Rawesome’s products, yet 1,500 people were sickened by salmonella tainted eggs over a *period of months*, before Sheehan finally did something about it. What he did not do was order the destruction of all of DeCoster’s chickens and eggs. What he also did not do was hold DeCoster at gunpoint.

“The shutdown of Morningland Dairy was a pathetic attempt by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, acting through California and Missouri agriculture agencies, to justify the Rawesome raid,” Gumpert told me. “No food producer in this country gets shut down because traces of *listeria* are found in their food, so long as no one has become ill and the company has shown a willingness to work with regulators, as Morningland has.”

Ironically, Morningland sits between two sections of the Mark Twain National Forest in southern Missouri. An apt quote of this famous anti-government writer might be: “The government of my country snubs honest simplicity, but fondles artistic villainy.” Is it not villainous of corporate giants to place their managers inside regulatory agencies to remove competition?

Germ Theory vs. Biological Terrain Theory



Raw Milk Revolution also explores the debate between the germ theory of illness, to which Western (allopathic) medicine subscribes, and the holistic theory (homeopathic), which the probiotics community hails. One seeks to wipe out all microbes (via drugs, vaccines and pasteurization) to make food sterile. The other recognizes that microbes act in accord with the biological terrain in which they live, and so promotes consuming live foods that boost “friendly” bacteria. (This [chart](#), which also appears in the book, nicely lays out the differences. For a more detailed explanation, see [Biological Terrain vs Germ Theory](#).)

Gumpert quotes the probiotic argument: “People certainly can and do get sick from pathogens, but they do so because of failures in their own immune systems, rather than because the germs are so strong.” He then refers to “an entire body of research [that] has emerged on the benefits of probiotics in preventing illness.”

Recognizing these ideological differences on what causes illness, Salatin asks, “Is not freedom to choose our food at least as fundamental a right as the freedom to worship?”

An Inalienable Right to Risk Eating Natural Food

The essence of *Raw Milk Revolution* boils down to a chapter title: “When it comes to food, how much freedom should we have to take risks?” Government does not grant rights, but if we don’t assert them, it will trample them.

Given free reign, the FDA would deny the American people the right to believe as they wish, to eat as they wish, and to make private food arrangements outside the industrial food system. Legislation like S 510, the Food Safety Modernization Act, would [give the FDA even more power](#) to “modernize” foods by sterilizing them via heat, drugs and chemicals, or by secretly adding nanoparticles and genetically modified ingredients.

Mark Twain might have a comment on this: “No man’s life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session.”

Humans have been drinking and trading raw milk and its products (cheese, yogurt, kief, etc.) throughout history. The bulk of the world favors raw milk. France, for example, provides [vending machines](#) for travelers. Even England’s monarch is a raw milk fan. Brian Lewis [reports](#):

“It’s also said that Her Majesty is so keen on it that when grandsons princes William and Harry were at Eton, raw milk from the monarch’s Windsor dairy herd was delivered daily to them at the school.”

Risk aside, I tried my first raw milk while writing this. So far, so good. Not dead and not strapped to the porcelain bowl.

By denying our right to eat food with which we evolved, the FDA ignores science. Just as the biotech industry ignores scientific reality that genes operate on an entire genetic platform that is influenced by an internal and external environment, the myopic Germ Theory also ignores the role that our entire organismal system plays on whether we become sick or stay healthy. To quote Joel Salatin once more:

“This industrial food experiment, historically speaking, is completely abnormal. It’s not normal to eat things you can’t spell or pronounce. It’s not normal to eat things you can’t make in your kitchen.... And as more people realize that this grand experiment in ingesting material totally foreign to our three-trillion-member internal community of intestinal microflora and -fauna is really biologically aberrant behavior, they are opting out of industrial fare.”

Not just natural milk fans, but all who seek private food arrangements will appreciate *Raw Milk Revolution*. The number of cases discussed and his close look at the scientific arguments provide solid ground for defending the right to make our own food choices. He also reveals just how far CorpoGov will go in shutting down all competition to industrial food. The book is indispensable for anyone writing about the food wars: key arguments, cases, people, and organizations are listed in the expansive index for easy reference.

Gumpert closes his book with a warning:

“If secretive government regulators are successful in their efforts to deprive consumers of unpasteurized dairy products, they will be emboldened to push us farther toward their vision of reliance on sterile factory food.”

[*The Raw Milk Revolution: Behind America’s Emerging Battle over Food Rights*](#)

by David E. Gumpert

Foreword by Joel Salatin (reproduced [here](#))

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Additional Sources:

David Gumpert’s blog, [The Complete Patient](#)

[Weston A. Price Foundation](#)

[Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund](#)

[U.S. Map of Raw Milk Laws](#)

Some natural milk distributors by state: [Real Milk.com](#).

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