

Book details where farm-to-fork fell short

By Chris Macias, Sacramento Bee

The feel-good nature of farm-to-fork is hard to deny.

But imagine a time when tomatoes aren't grown every year, or a spring that passes with no strawberries at the downtown farmers market – all so secondary crops flourish and the area can retain the richest possible soils.

This sounds like sacrilege, but for Dan Barber, author of “The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food,” (Penguin Press, \$29.95, 496 pages) this scenario brings the farm-to-fork ethos to its proper fruition.

Despite the good intentions of farm-to-table, Barber writes that the movement “celebrates a kind cherry-picking of ingredients that are often ecologically demanding and expensive to grow. ... It makes good agriculture difficult to sustain.”

Barber knows what it is to be a locavore cheerleader, and he still is in many ways. Barber's the chef/co-owner of Blue Hill, a Michelin-starred New York City restaurant that's been tagged as “farm-to-table” for more than a decade. He also oversees Blue Hill at Stone Barns, an educational center and nonprofit farm in Pocantico Hills, N.Y. But he explores a much more nuanced take on farm-to-fork in “The Third Plate,” one that challenges the movement for enabling farming practices that value consumerism over the best use of the land.

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