



Food Documentary Insomnia

I really need to be more careful what I watch before bedtime.

Cherie Langlois

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

Photo by Cherie Langlois

Cherie's free-range broiler chickens roam happily around the farm.

I really need to be more careful what I watch before bedtime.

Of course, I (usually) know better than to view a terrifying movie like Paranormal Activity right before turning in, but who would have thought a mere documentary about food and farming could make me lay awake at night, simmering with anger and disgust?

Make that two documentaries.

This month I coaxed my husband into watching *Food, Inc.* (2008), an excellent—if profoundly disturbing—documentary that explores the hidden world of our industrial food industry, and *The Future of Food* (2004), another fine (and shocking) documentary that examines genetically engineered foods, seed patenting and the corporization of our food supply.

Watching these films, I kept thinking about one of my favorite science fiction movies, *The Matrix*, and the scene where Morpheus tells Neo he has a choice between taking the red pill, which will show him the ugly truth about the Matrix, and the blue pill, which will allow him to keep living the lie.

Photo by Cherie Langlois Sadly, when it comes to our food, I think most of us here in the U.S. live in a kind of Matrix, believing—or pretending—that the conventional chicken meat we eat comes from happy birds on a bucolic farm rather than from suffering creatures packed like sardines inside huge closed barns (if we realize it comes from a real live chicken at all).

Or that the corn, strawberries and other conventionally-grown crops we devour are wholesome foods nurtured on scenic family homesteads rather than produced in vast, corporate-owned and chemical-inundated monocultures.

As a hobby farmer and farm writer who has read quite a bit about industrial farming, I feel like I'm half in and half out of the Matrix. Still, witnessing the horribly inhumane conditions within an industrial broiler barn in *Food, Inc.*, and seeing the pain and weariness written on the face of a farmer sued by corporate agri-giant Monsanto for patent infringement in *The Future of Food* made me feel much like Nero did after he took the red pill and saw the Matrix for what it was.

Sick to my stomach.

By the way, I knew this Matrix metaphor was too apt not to have been used before, and sure enough, I just found and watched a short animated spoof, called *The Meatrix* (2003), made to educate people about factory farming and motivate change.

So what about you? Will you take the blue pill or the red pill?

Me, I can't wait to get my heirloom seeds in the ground, hit my local farmer's market when it opens, and raise my next flock of contented, free-range chickens.



~ Cherie

« More Country Discovery »