

THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA

ALSO BY MICHAEL POLLAN

Second Nature

A Place of My Own

The Botany of Desire

THE
OMNIVORE'S
DILEMMA

A NATURAL HISTORY
OF FOUR MEALS



MICHAEL POLLAN

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FOR JUDITH AND ISAAC

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THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA

INTRODUCTION

OUR NATIONAL
EATING DISORDER

What should we have for dinner?

This book is a long and fairly involved answer to this seemingly simple question. Along the way, it also tries to figure out how such a simple question could ever have gotten so complicated. As a culture we seem to have arrived at a place where whatever native wisdom we may once have possessed about eating has been replaced by confusion and anxiety. Somehow this most elemental of activities—figuring out what to eat—has come to require a remarkable amount of expert help. How did we ever get to a point where we need investigative journalists to tell us where our food comes from and nutritionists to determine the dinner menu?

For me the absurdity of the situation became inescapable in the fall of 2002, when one of the most ancient and venerable staples of human life abruptly disappeared from the American dinner table. I'm talking of course about bread. Virtually overnight, Americans changed the way they eat. A collective spasm of what can only be described as carbopho-