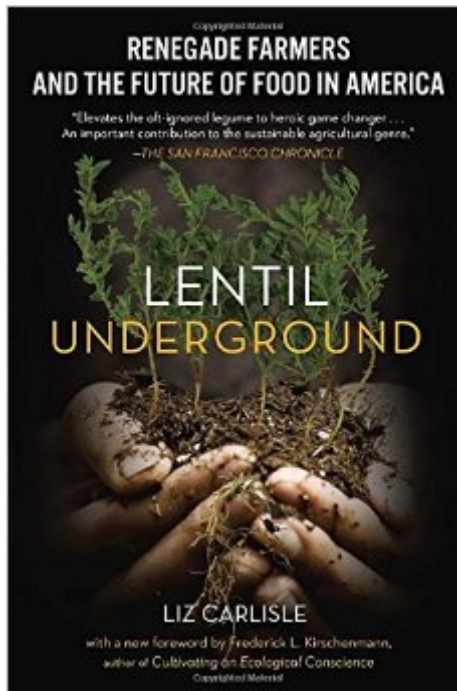


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# Lentil Underground: Renegade Farmers And The Future Of Food In America



## Synopsis

A protégé of Michael Pollan shares the story of a little known group of renegade farmers who defied corporate agribusiness by launching a unique sustainable farm-to-table food movement. The story of the Lentil Underground begins on a 280-acre homestead rooted in America's Great Plains: the Oien family farm. Forty years ago, corporate agribusiness told small farmers like the Oiens to "get big or get out." But twenty-seven-year-old David Oien decided to take a stand, becoming the first in his conservative Montana county to plant a radically different crop: organic lentils. Unlike the chemically dependent grains American farmers had been told to grow, lentils make their own fertilizer and tolerate variable climate conditions, so their farmers aren't beholden to industrial methods. Today, Oien leads an underground network of organic farmers who work with heirloom seeds and biologically diverse farm systems. Under the brand Timeless Natural Food, their unique business-cum-movement has grown into a million dollar enterprise that sells to Whole Foods, hundreds of independent natural foods stores, and a host of renowned restaurants. From the heart of Big Sky Country comes this inspiring story of a handful of colorful pioneers who have successfully bucked the chemically-based food chain and the entrenched power of agribusiness's one percent, by stubbornly banding together. Journalist and native Montanan Liz Carlisle weaves an eye-opening and richly reported narrative that will be welcomed by everyone concerned with the future of American agriculture and natural food in an increasingly uncertain world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is the inspiring story of a group of dryland prairie farmers in Montana who broke the yoke of large corporate agribusiness to develop an organic way of farming where they, rather than large companies, controlled their destinies. A young farmer, Dave Oien, was the first of the group to begin experimenting with organically grown lentils that would both restore the soil and provide a healthy food to market to the public. Over the years these farmers moved from a monocropping, chemically based system dependent on large agribusiness to an organic one that ended their dependency on expensive chemical fertilizers. With little information available at the time from state universities, they developed their own methods, experimenting with crops, learning to process the lentils and creating their own markets. Under the name, "Timeless Natural Food", they now sell on the internet and to natural food stores and popular restaurants all over the country. In addition to growing their lentils and other crops that restore fertility to the land, some have created habitat in their fields for wildlife, including bees and other pollinators so necessary for the crops. This success story is a wonderful example of what our agriculture can become in an era where small farmers are challenged to make a living, our land and climate are under assault and people have difficulty finding healthy foods to feed their families. This book is well written and easily understood by non-farmers such as myself. *Lentil Underground* is a great book for those interested in how our food is grown and the future of farming in this country.

In *Lentil Underground* Liz Carlisle pulls together many important concepts related to food in America, in particular the growing and distribution of food. The story begins at David Oien's farm in Montana on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. When Oien decided to plant acres of organic lentils, this was a radical act. This book traces the ups and downs of organic lentil farming in Montana over the years. In time other farmers in Montana started planting acres of organic lentils. Why grow lentils? The lentil is a member of the legume family. Lentils create their own fertilizer. Legumes are often planted as cover crops because of the nutrients they bring to the soil. They do not need to be fertilized with chemical brews. The species grown in Montana are more tolerant of wind, heat, and lack of rainfall than other commercial crops. Why eat lentils? They are extremely nutritious. Lentils are an excellent source of dietary fiber, they are a complex carbohydrate, and are a low GI food with high protein. Lentils play a prominent role in Indian cuisine, often called dals. I learned so much from this book. What it's like for a small farmer to get an order from Trader Joe's or Whole Foods. Just how hard it is to get financing for your organic farm. Why small organic farmers can't get crop insurance. What the Farm Bill means to small farmers. Carlisle's writing style is engaging and descriptive. She does an excellent job weaving

various farmerâ€™s stories together. Given that much of American agricultural policy is designed for huge corporate farms, the activities of the â€œlentil undergroundâ€• are revolutionary and encouraging. This is an important book. Do read it.\* This review is based on receipt of an Advance Uncorrected Proof from the publisher via LibraryThing \*

As a new Montana resident with an interest in organic farming, healthy eating and food politics, I greatly appreciated this book. It is an interesting, well-written and inspiring read. I heartily support the underground farming movement. Rock on, lentil farmers!

Luckily I began this book one Saturday morning because I could not stop reading. So inspiring I ditched my garden plan, switching to community planting and changing my grocery buying habits. Most important I have an understanding of family farming in the USA no other book has been able to describe.

Terrific read. Liz Carlisle gracefully compiles the stories she's collected during years of research such that they together trace the arc of a beautiful, unlikely local agricultural revolution. The impressive breadth and number of individual life stories that she manages to weave together create a really powerful sense of place, and the lessons quickly become self-evident within her fluid prose. This is one of those books that I, immediately upon finishing, sent off on a journey, to bounce across my friends' nightstands as their fingers softened the pages and their eyes extracted those same fundamental lessons. Liz Carlisle's created a great community-building resource in *The Lentil Underground*, a great contribution to the burgeoning sustainable farming movement, and it's well worth the sticker price.

I like the insights into the growing lentil world. I was looking for a broader brush stroke. I am writing a book to be published in about two months called *Lean In Closer Gotta Get Back to the Garden* which is my second book in the series. I am looking for huge themes people are interested in to advocate or become small market farmers or support in a more vigorous way. We need to do facebook live for pioneering farmers in USA. I teach urban ag at Metro State Denver and students in a class of 25 might have two who even know what to do with a seed . Your sustainable messages are awesome. Try and get on your local news stations and get them to get you on national news. I am looking for partners to do FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS - farmers must plan for profit. Farmers must first have coach to assure they will make money and make it for the long haul.

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