

PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: FAT: A DOCUMENTARY 2

June 23, 2025

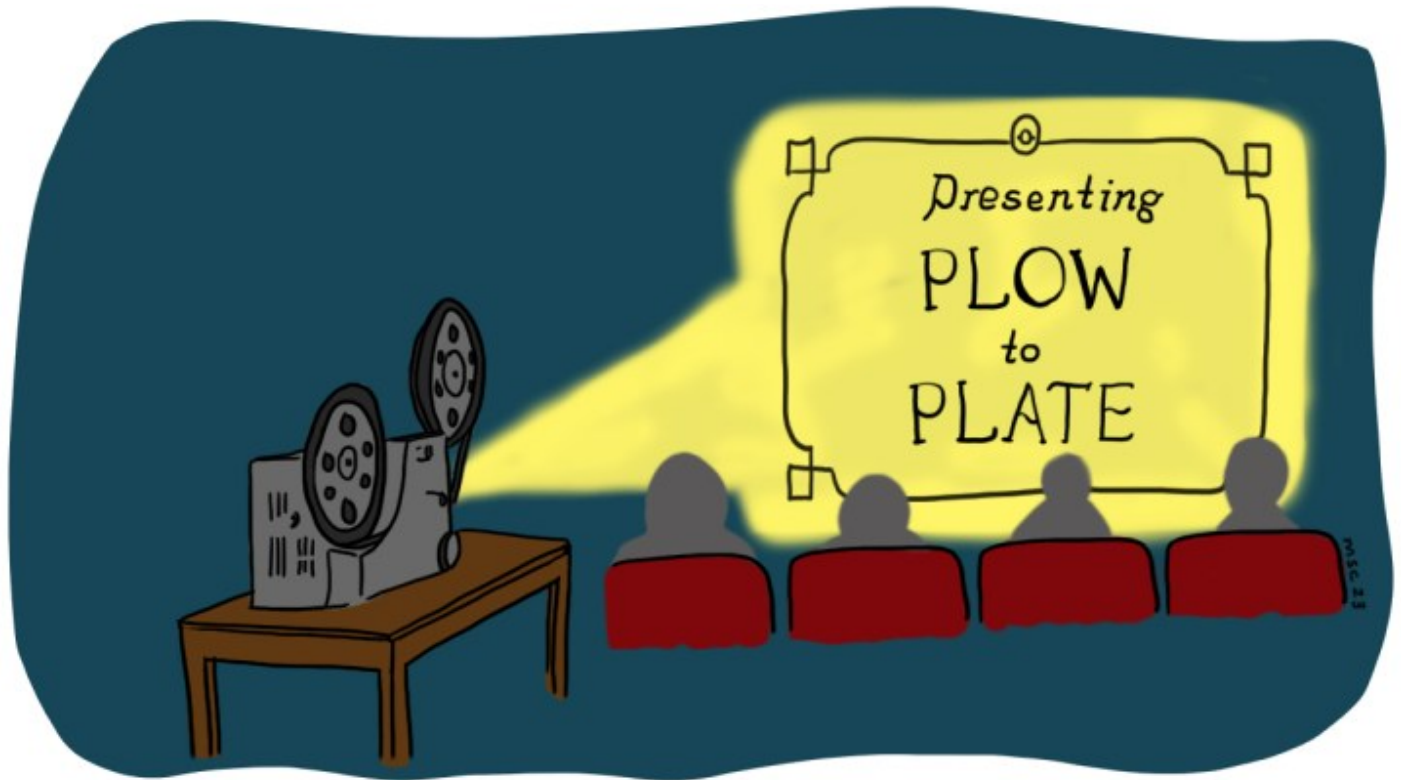


Illustration by Maggie Carson

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By Adam Rabiner

Vinnie Tortorich, fitness trainer to the stars, podcaster, speaker, author and filmmaker hosts this second installment of *Fat: A Documentary*. But he is less angry here than in *Beyond Impossible: The Truth Behind the Fake Meat Industry*, screened in February. You might even say he is sympathetic. The film begins by acknowledging the constant media stream of different and often conflicting claims about food, health and nutrition. The steady barrage of information, blame and never-ending cycles of fad diets have “Flooded the Zone” and left even so-called experts confused. So where does that leave us?

Tortorich’s calmer tone here is intentional. He’s trying not to be polemical or too partisan. He notes that many of the nutritional battles waged over the years have been

based not on sound science and empirical evidence but on group ideology, politics, tribalism and almost religious fervor. So, he aims to be rational, reasonable, understanding and ultimately persuasive. He's happy that the pendulum has begun to turn with acceptance of the high-fat, low-carbohydrate keto and paleo diets. Tortorich assembles a crack team of allies to reinforce his basic message that butter, cheese, eggs, certain oils and meat (even fatty hamburgers and steaks), belong in a healthy diet. These include researcher and journalist Nina Teicholz, author of *The Big Fat Surprise*, and many doctors who buck the establishment.

Teicholz and the cardiologists, family physicians, psychiatrists and practitioners of internal medicine and nutrition science are convincing, even as they defend so-called "bad" trans fats. One primary argument is that these fats were indicted by bad science, namely inappropriate epidemiological studies conducted at the Harvard School of Public Health by Professor Walter Willet. These are long-term longitudinal studies of individuals who self-report on their eating habits. The responses to these surveys have been found, however, to not always be reliable. More damning is that the best these studies can claim are associations, which is weak evidence far different from established cause and effect. To prove causation, hypotheses must be subject to more expensive randomized, controlled clinical trials which can often take two years or longer to complete.

The problem with epidemiological studies is that it is impossible to disentangle all the variables that affect health. Eating well is just one factor in an overall lifestyle that includes not smoking, exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, responses to stress, an active social life and the love and support you have in your home and from your community, etc.

"YOUR GOOD INTENTIONS ARE STOLEN, I'M JUST HERE TO HELP YOU GET THEM BACK."

VINNIE TORTORICH

Besides the documentary's indictment of the science behind the vilification of fat and the demonization of meat, it also makes some interesting ancillary points. The film observes that meat has long been associated with a "warrior ethos"—virility and masculinity—and that the anti-red meat movement began in the 1970s at the same time as the emergence of the peace movement. *Fat: A Documentary* also points out that it was about this time that obesity rates began to escalate.

Another fascinating sidenote relayed by Teicholz is that the various campaigns asserting that tropical oils are unhealthy—namely coconut and palm oil—stem not from any hard evidence but rather from commercial interests and trade wars launched as early as the 1920s between competing industries.

At the end of the day, I have mixed feelings about the more measured and less bellicose Tortorich. He is gentle and less combative; he appears to want to win you over with reason, rather than pick a fight. He has a definite point of view but does not want to come across as a religious zealot or kook like his predecessor Robert Atkins was accused of being and whose 1972 book *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution* had people saying, "It'll kill you."

This approach has its merits. *Fat: A Documentary* does a great job of challenging orthodoxy, cancel culture and self-censorship against the dominant hypothesis. It makes a strong case that the experts are misleading us. Tortorich ends the film by saying, "Your good intentions are stolen, I'm just here to help you get them back." If that means a guilt-free second slice of bacon, I'm all in. But I also miss the entertaining Vinnie Tortorich who some call "America's ANGRIEST Trainer."

Fat: A Documentary 2 Tuesday, July 8th, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

Screening link: <https://plowtoplatefilms.weebly.com/upcoming-events.html>

To be added to our mailing list for future screening announcements, please email a request to plowtoplate@gmail.com.

Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife, Dina, and child Ana.