Paragraph 5
4. Glassner discovers two myths about food and nutrition. List them and explain each one.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Paragraph 7
5. According to Glassner, what is McDonald’s role in the obesity epidemic?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Paragraph 9
6. How would you compare the caloric value of food in fast-food chains and expensive restaurants?
   __________________________________________

Paragraph 11
7. Who benefits the most when research tells us a certain food is bad for our health?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

8. What does the term functional food mean?
   __________________________________________

Paragraph 13
9. According to Glassner, what are the benefits of eating organic foods?
   __________________________________________

Paragraph 15
10. What did Glassner learn about the causes of obesity?
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

Paragraph 17
11. Paraphrase Glassner's answer to the following question: Is being obese as bad as we think?
    __________________________________________

Paragraph 19
12. According to Glassner, what is the relationship between diet and living longer?
    __________________________________________
Sociologist Barry Glassner thinks Americans have a warped relationship with food. We simultaneously obsess over celebrity chefs and consider cutting out entire nutrient categories—like fat or carbohydrates—because we think doing so is more healthful. Glassner takes on some of our entrenched beliefs about nutrition, restaurants, and health in his new book, The Gospel of Food, and wonders what would happen if we spent a little less time torturing ourselves about what we eat and a little more time enjoying a good meal.

What's wrong with Americans' relationship with food?

Many people believe in a "gospel of naught." This is the view that the worth of a meal lies not in what it contains but in what it lacks: the fewer calories, less sugar, less fat, less carbs, fewer preservatives, the better the food. It's an oddly self-depriving notion.

What things did you believe about food until you looked into them?

One [myth] is that you can rely on restaurant reviewers to know where to eat. Reviewers think they’re dining anonymously, [but] when I went behind the scenes, most successful restaurateurs know what most of the reviewers look like—as well as how they dress, what disguises they use, and what they tend to order—and they cater to them. On the nutrition side, I certainly subscribed to the notion that fresh is best. But fresh isn’t always best. Long pastas actually taste better dried; the full flavor of tomato sauces and salsas emerges days or weeks after being prepared. And flash-frozen foods tend to retain more of their nutrients than fresh.

McDonald’s gets quite a beating in the media. Is it deserved?

I neither praise nor condemn McDonald’s, but the notion that fast-food chains are responsible for all the world’s ills just goes way too far. One writer blamed McDonald’s for Asian children not being able to use chopsticks as well as their parents’ generation. And it’s not clear at all that fast food is responsible for the obesity epidemic: The fast-food industry exploded way before the upsurge in obesity. At the same time, a regular
diet of fast food would be unhealthy and unsatisfying, and the critics of chains have done a great service in raising questions about their treatment of workers and animals.

8  The fast-food chains get a lot more criticism than higher-end restaurants. Is there a class issue at work here?

9  Foods at the expensive restaurants in any community are likely to be at least as high in calories, fat, and the substances we’re supposed to watch out for as in fast-food restaurants. If you go to Starbucks and buy a Frappuccino, you’re going to be getting a tremendous number of calories, too.

10  So what do you think about the new trans-fat ban in New York City?

11  We certainly want to protect our food supply, but when we get hung up on a particular component, like refined carbs or a certain type of fat, we can oversimplify it and go too far. Whenever a category of food gets demonized, there’s a huge opportunity for the food industry; when you condemn one kind of supersizing, you open up the door to another kind. For example, no one would defend the nutritional benefits of supersizing soft drinks, but what about the supersizing in the functional food market, where omega-3 oils are in everything? Are we overdosing?

12  Did you find any good reason to eat organic foods?

13  Except for special populations, like those with compromised immune systems or young children, I found little evidence for the health benefits relative to the additional costs.

14  What did you learn about obesity?

15  What I found out is that there are many causes. The notion that it’s just people eating more is simplistic. For example, antismoking campaigns [may have played a role]. When people’s weight increased, smoking was going down.

16  Is being obese not as bad as we think it is?

17  There’s no question that truly obese people face health dangers. But it’s a far cry from acknowledging that reality to saying that people who are a few pounds overweight should be worried about it and condemned to eating meals that don’t satisfy them.

18  Did you see any evidence that diet can make us live longer?

19  The deeper I looked into the studies, the clearer it became that while my diet partly doesn’t meet the current recommendations from the preachers of the gospel of naught, I probably wouldn’t live any longer—or maybe only a little bit longer—if I followed their dictates.

20  So how do you eat?

21  The moral of the story for me, and what has become my own mantra, is to eat well and enjoyably and moderately over the long haul rather than according to any of these pathological patterns that have been common.

22  What’s the best meal you ate in your five years of researching the book?

23  It was at Daniel [in New York City]. I had a terrine of foie gras with pheasant. Then tuna tartare with fresh wasabi followed by a Meyer lemon coulis. I had Nantucket Bay scallops served with wild mushrooms and bacon in a rosemary-infused lentil broth and, finally, whole roasted squab with crispy spinach and seared foie gras.