Discussion Guide

1. The book attempts to have two distinct storylines that converge at the end. Were these apparent to you?
2. It was suggested that the "Cambodian mugging" scene in chapter two be cut. Do you think the book would have been better served without it?
3. In Chapter 5, "The Day the Chickens Came" there are many collisions between ideals and realities causing drama. Which ones stood out for you?
4. The activist who messages the author regarding "liking" the Facebook page and her concern for spent hens aims to change the industry. How are both she and Locally Laid aiming for similar goals? How are they going about it differently?
5. The author decides not to move to the farm, despite its financial and material benefits. Why was this an important decision?
6. Given what you learned about middle agriculture, are you aware of any midsized farms in your area that are departing from the commodity economy and selling directly to businesses?
7. The book is a narrative nonfiction, meaning that while is it based on a story, it is laden with popular non-fiction facts about farming and America's food system. Did this combination work for you as a reader? Would you have preferred more of one over the other?
8. NOT IN THE BOOK: The author tested some of this material at a storytelling night in Duluth. After one reading, an annoyed woman said, "I see what she was doing making all terrible stuff funny – you're COPING!" Is the use of humor to cope with difficulties a good thing or simply the masking of pain?
9. What is most central to this book — the characters, the voice of the narrator, the "plot" or main story line?
10. What do you think the author most wants us to take away from this book?