

## Anti-GMO activist Food Babe tries to do good things but arguments are ‘silly’

Vani Hari’s followers hail her as a savior of food activism who reaches hundreds of thousands of readers eager for straight talk on the American processed-food machine.

But in interviews with food-policy advocates and academics, she is criticized for sensationalized and overblown claims. Other activists say she takes more credit than she deserves. And in some cases, the Observer found evidence of errors and inconsistencies.

Like food-world celebrities from Paula Deen to Rachael Ray, Hari has carved a niche for herself that is heavily focused on her personal life and appearance. On her website, [Foodbabe.com](http://Foodbabe.com), the Food Babe brand covers everything from her favorite recipes to shopping links for her favorite brand of granola (Kaia Foods Buckwheat) and deodorant (Vermont Soap Sage Lime Organic).

Being a consumer advocate, which is what Hari calls herself, appears to be lucrative. While Hari declined to disclose what she makes from the website, she and her husband, Finley Clarke, both left what she says were “six-figure incomes” as technology consultants to work full time for foodbabe.com.

Her campaigns have attracted increasing scrutiny, particularly on what critics call her lack of food science credentials. In her recent post about beer ingredients, for instance, critics point to how she makes common ingredients seem alarming, such as the use of isinglass in brewing. Isinglass is a protein derived from fish that’s been used since the 18th century to remove yeast and clarify beer.

What does Hari say about charges of mistakes? “I’ve never claimed to be a nutritionist,” she says. “I’m an investigator.”

However, many of Hari’s critics aren’t from the food industry. They’re academics who say they’re disturbed by errors in how she explains science.

Dr. Joe Schwarcz is a chemistry professor at McGill University in Montreal. He writes frequently on a university website, the Office of Science and Society ( [Mcgill.ca/oss/](http://Mcgill.ca/oss/) ), which aims to spread the knowledge of science to lay people. Hari tries to do good things, he says. But he’s troubled by her lack of knowledge of chemistry.

“It isn’t hard to deconstruct her arguments,” he said. “Most of them are so silly. Her basic tenet is guilt by association.”

**Read the full, original article:** [Charlotte’s Food Babe has lots of fans – and some critics](#)