

# Bill Marler

*Food Safety Attorney & Advocate*

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*For thirty years, Bill Marler has been a leading voice in food safety—as an expert, advocate, and attorney. His work has changed laws, saved lives, and made America's food supply safer for everyone. But ask him what drives him, and he'll tell you about Brianne, Stephanie, Linda, and the thousands of others whose suffering could have been prevented—and his determination to make sure their stories lead to real change.*

## **The Beginning: A Case That Changed Everything**

Bill Marler is a national expert in food safety and America's most prominent food safety advocate and attorney. His three-decade journey began with a tragedy that would reshape his career and the nation's approach to food safety. In 1993, he represented Brianne Kiner, the most seriously injured survivor of the historic Jack in the Box E. coli O157:H7 outbreak. The landmark \$15.6 million settlement he secured for Brianne wasn't just a legal victory—it was the beginning of a three-decade mission to hold the food industry accountable and protect consumers.

That pivotal case is now part of American history, chronicled in the 2011 book *Poisoned: The True Story of the Deadly E. coli Outbreak that Changed the Way Americans Eat* by best-selling author Jeff Benedict, and in the recent Netflix documentary of the same name.

## **Fighting for Those Who Can't Fight for Themselves**

Over the last 30 years, Bill has represented thousands of individuals whose lives were forever altered by contaminated food. Through Marler Clark, The Food Safety Law Firm, he has secured over \$850,000,000 for victims of E. coli, Salmonella, Listeria,

Hepatitis A, and other foodborne illnesses—compensation that helps families rebuild shattered lives.

He has represented victims of every major foodborne illness outbreak in the United States over the past three decades, holding powerful corporations accountable—from Chipotle and Cargill to ConAgra and the Peanut Corporation of America—and has consulted on cases across Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Among his most memorable cases: Stephanie Smith, a nineteen-year-old dancer whose life was forever changed by a contaminated hamburger. New York Times reporter Michael Moss won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of her story, which Cargill settled in 2010 for an amount "to care for her throughout her life."

And Linda Rivera, a mother of six whose devastating illness and courageous fight made the front page of the Washington Post and became Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's rallying point for successfully advancing the Food Safety Modernization Act in 2010.

## **Taking on the Giants**

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## **Beyond the Courtroom: Advocate, Educator, Change-Maker**

Bill's work as a food safety expert and advocate extends far beyond the courtroom:

### **Changing the System**

He has petitioned the United States Department of Agriculture to better regulate pathogenic E. coli and played a crucial role in spurring passage of the 2010-2011 FDA Food Safety Modernization Act. Bill has testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce and regularly addresses local, national, and international gatherings on food safety issues.

### **Media Expert**

Bill is a frequent guest commentator on food safety issues and has been profiled in ABC News, The New York Times, The New Yorker, and The Wall Street Journal.

### **Educator**

He travels widely to speak to food industry groups, fair associations, and public health organizations about outbreak litigation and prevention. Bill teaches at prestigious institutions including Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the University of Washington Law School. He has established numerous collegiate science scholarships across the nation and gives frequent donations to promote improved food safety.

### **Writer and Publisher**

Bill is a prolific writer on foodborne illness topics, with articles including "Separating the Chaff from the Wheat: How to Determine the Strength of a Foodborne Illness Claim," "Food Claims and Litigation," "How to Keep Your Focus on Food Safety," and "How to Document a Food Poisoning Case." He publishes the online news site Food Safety News and his award-winning blog, [www.marlerblog.com](http://www.marlerblog.com), which is widely read by food safety and legal communities worldwide.

### **Education and Recognition**

Bill earned degrees in English, Economics, and Political Science from Washington State University before graduating from Seattle University School of Law in 1987. He returned to Seattle University in 1998 as the Law School's "Lawyer in Residence" and received the university's Professional Achievement Award in 2011.

The 2023 Netflix documentary "Poisoned: The Dirty Truth About Your Food," which chronicles Bill's work and the landmark Jack in the Box case, won an Emmy in 2024 for Outstanding Current Affairs Documentary.

Bill continues to share his expertise globally, teaching at institutions including Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the University of Washington Law School, and speaking at food safety conferences across North America, Europe, and beyond.

**Awards**

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2013</b><br><b>Seattle University</b><br><b>Distinguished Law Graduate</b><br><b>Award</b>       | <b>2002 to Present</b><br><b>Bar Register of Preeminent</b><br><b>Attorneys</b>                                             |
| <b>2011</b><br><b>Seattle University</b><br><b>Professional Achievement</b><br><b>Award</b>         | <b>2008</b><br><b>Public Justice Award, Washington</b><br><b>State Trial Lawyer’s Association</b>                           |
| <b>2011 to Present</b><br><b>ABA Journal “Blawg 100”</b><br><b>Best Legal Blogs</b>                 | <b>2008</b><br><b>Outstanding Lawyer Award,</b><br><b>Seattle/King County Bar Association</b>                               |
| <b>2010</b><br><b>NSF Food Safety Leadership</b><br><b>Award: Innovation in</b><br><b>Education</b> | <b>1998 to 2004</b><br><b>Governor Appointee, Washington</b><br><b>State University Board of Regents</b><br><b>Chairman</b> |

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**2009 to Present**

**Best Lawyers in America**

**1997**

**Distinguished Achievement Award,  
WSU College of Liberal Arts**

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## **The Man Behind the Mission**

Based near Seattle, Washington, Bill is a devoted husband to Julie Marler and proud father to three daughters: Morgan, Olivia, and Sydney. It's a perspective as a father and husband that deepens his commitment to ensuring every family can trust that the food they eat won't harm the people they love.