



A Cook's Tour: Global Adventures in Extreme Cuisines

Anthony Bourdain

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From the star of *No Reservations*, Anthony Bourdain's *New York Times*-bestselling chronicle of travelling the world in search the globe's greatest culinary adventures

The only thing "gonzo gastronome" and internationally bestselling author Anthony Bourdain loves as much as cooking is traveling. Inspired by the question, "What would be the perfect meal?," Tony sets out on a quest for his culinary holy grail, and in the process turns the notion of "perfection" inside out. From California to Cambodia, *A Cooks' Tour* chronicles the unpredictable adventures of America's boldest and bravest chef.

Fans of Bourdain will find much to love in revisiting this classic culinary and travel memoir.

A Cook's Tour: Global Adventures in Extreme Cuisines Details

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From Reader Review A Cook's Tour: Global Adventures in Extreme Cuisines for online ebook

Hannah Eiseman-Renyard says

He's Still Got It - and Now He's On the Road

If you loved Kitchen Confidential Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly, then imagine all that again, with some incredible travel writing (ie even more exotic delicacies, and the occasional threat of death) chucked in for good measure.

Also wonderful are the behind the scenes story about filming Bourdain's show (*Reasons You Don't Want to Work in Television, sections 1, 2 and 3*)

There's something magical and infectious about letting someone, anyone, talk about what they love - and when they're as smart, funny and talented as Bourdain you have gold.

The only reason it doesn't have the full five stars from me is that (unsurprisingly) there isn't really a sense of overall plot - it's a series some amazing travel/food articles.

I devoured this book in a few days, and would recommend it to just about anyone with a sense of humour, a high shock threshold, and who likes their food. Even if (like me) you're a vegetarian, and therefore the butt of Bourdain's every joke.

Karen Foster says

Book Club Read.... Loved this travel memoir so much.... Anthony Bourdain's writing captures a precarious balance of cynicism and true wonder that's very hard to achieve. His genuine passion for good food and good people leaps off the page, as he revels in the simplicities of tradition and family in the places he explores. My mouth watered, my feet itched and I laughed my arse off. This book really spoke my language... Off now to binge watch the accompanying tv show, now streaming on Hulu...and crush on him just a little ;)

Rob says

Although he occasionally comes across as a Jeremy Clarkson of food, all bombastic arrogance and impatient with anything that infringes his right to do what he likes, I am rather fond of eating, so Anthony Bourdain's perspective is one I largely share, even if his playful likening of vegetarians to the hezbollah is something of a one angled view.

In particular, he has no time at all for the lily-livered, western-centric tendency towards fussiness - if it's there to be guzzled, be it the still beating heart of a cobra, haggis, bone marrow on toast or the bile of a snake, he'll be up for it (although he draws the line at iguana and bird's nest soup). This tour of the world's nourishment stops is never less than entertaining - with particularly good coverage of South East Asia (Vietnam and Cambodia in particular).

Also good are the English and Scottish sections with deep fried mars bars consumed north of the border and Fergus Henderson's magnificent St. John restaurant in London rightly lauded. Many have followed Bourdain down the path of food tourism since but few have done so with more gusto.

Emily says

I enjoyed this a lot more than Kitchen Confidential, primarily because Anthony Bourdain allows himself to fade into the background in several chapters of the book. I loved his descriptions of meals across the world, and almost every single chapter made me hungry and/or made me laugh out loud. There's a pig roast in Portugal, a market in Vietnam, taco stands in Oaxaca, vodka-soaked dinners in Russia and sake-soaked dinners in Japan.

Bourdain has a true gift for writing about food and about meals. This book is about the search for the perfect meal, but he makes sure to qualify that - the perfect meal is "very rarely the most sophisticated," because "context and memory play powerful roles in all the truly great meals in one's life." This is absolutely true, at least for me. The thought of venison sausage brings me back immediately to the Texas hill country in the early 2000s, and there's probably nothing better (or less authentic) than my mom's spaghetti. The adventure in this book is less about the search for the perfect meal, and more about reading other cultures through his culinary explorations. The chapters that I enjoyed the most were the most contained and conveyed an absolute sense of place through the meals (Basque, Morocco, Russia, and Portugal).

I found the structure of the book a little odd, as well as the choice of locations. Bourdain has three separate chapters about Vietnam. I could certainly read about Vietnamese food forever, but because the chapters are split up through the book I was continually surprised by each return. There's also, rather shockingly, a chapter set in Cambodia, where he pays locals to take him to a Khmer Rouge stronghold. The history lesson on Cambodia is useful, but I found the entire idea that Bourdain would drag (1) his crew and (2) a bunch of local Cambodians to Pailin to be so distasteful that it soured the second part of the book for me. Bourdain repeats a couple of times that he wants to have Adventures, potentially in the style of a Joseph Conrad villain (!); he also mentions that his TV producer gently suggests that he look at a map before he goes to a country. This is certainly an honest representation of why he's choosing to travel, but it veers into a reckless arrogance that I don't particularly like.

Bourdain also spends part of an entire chapter defending Gordon Ramsay for being crass and confrontational in his kitchen (I wonder why Anthony Bourdain would do that?), and writes a chapter about San Francisco that seems to be specifically targeted towards demeaning vegetarians. It's certainly possible to go to San Francisco after visiting Cambodia and feel that Americans are lucky to have accessible meat, at all, but Bourdain's attitude towards vegetarianism is so antagonistic and puzzling. If kids in Cambodia are starving, should everyone around the world say, "You're right! We should be consuming as much factory-farmed meat as possible, because that's an authentic expression of our cuisine?" There's a world of difference between Bourdain's elevation of the Portuguese pig farm slaughter and his cursory few sentences about the bland and fattening mass-produced food of the Midwest. Are we all supposed to ignore climate change until we've solved world peace? If he didn't want to go to a vegan restaurant in Berkeley, couldn't he have decided to visit India, or Israel, or Ethiopia? You don't have to be popping entire roasted birds in your mouth in Vietnam in order to experience the world's cuisine.

Anyway, I liked this a lot, and Bourdain is a gifted writer. But I'm still puzzled by his position as an elder statesman of American food culture. I don't think I particularly like him.

Richard says

I can't figure what holds me back about his book. I love Anthony Bourdain's attitude about food and his philosophy about what makes a great meal. I love his desire for absolutely fresh food, right off the bleeding stick or never touching a refrigerator, and I admire the distinctions he makes about how food looks and how it tastes--my wife is one who cannot get over the appearance of food and lets it affect her enjoyment of it, while I don't care how food looks, but simply want good-tasting stuff. I love Bourdain's sense of experimentalism, his willingness to try live cobra heart, and his sense of adventure, how he searches out a fugu chef (who knows how to properly prepare poisonous blowfish), and my wife is now relieved that I take Bourdain at his word that the stuff doesn't really have much flavor and wasn't quite worth all the excitement.

The concept of this book is fantastic--Anthony Bourdain travels to Vietnam, Japan, Cambodia, Portugal, Russia and other fine spots for the adventure of eating. And we're not just talking about the food itself--Bourdain wants the whole experience of food, from the killing of the livestock to the last shot of vodka before heading out into the night. He understands that food comes from a place and people, and he wants to know both as intimately as he can to get a true sense of what the food is about. It is a brilliant gesture in a category of writing that I find all too sterile, a style of writing often taken over by self-professed food gurus sitting in palaces removed from the real cooks and snubbing their noses at true cuisine while only praising what is served in delicate portions in a fine atmosphere. That Bourdain continually bashes Food Network stars is wonderfully brilliant and it makes me trust the man implicitly--were he to serve me brains wrapped in pig cheek and smothered with mayonnaise, I would gladly eat it if he told me it would be some good stuff.

But for whatever reason, I found this book as a whole not so engaging to read, and I can only attribute that to the writing itself. I don't know if this book suffers from Bourdain's inexperience at writing, or if this simply has been edited to death to remove a lot of life from the prose. I would love to praise this book as one of the best that has ever crossed my path, for the content itself is comforting in that it expresses the heart of a true food lover, one I will probably emulate for years to come, but as a book itself, I must say that I skipped over passages that I found highly tedious to read.

Kim says

Anthony Bourdain's second book has him traveling the globe looking for the "perfect" meal. Visiting locales like France, Portugal, Morocco, Japan, Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as a little bit of his home country, Bourdain's goal is to try true, authentic, fresh food and not be afraid to join in and eat like the locals. No matter what their speciality is. Lamb testicles in Morocco, the beating heart of a cobra in Vietnam, haggis in Scotland, natt? in Japan. He's willing (though sometimes understandably reluctant) to try it all and along the way discover that it might actually be good. Except natt?. That just looked disgusting.

Told in vignettes each section focuses on one part of the location he is currently in. There are quite a few from Vietnam and even though they happened concurrently and interspersed throughout the book which can be a little odd to read. The journey he went on was also filmed by the Food Network for the show of the same name and I have that ready to watch to add another dimension to the story. From looking at the episode titles on that it seems that is just as mixed up but in a completely different order to the book.

I've always been an adventurous eater, willing to try anything once, though I don't have a very wide or refined palate. That said I'd be willing to give his trip a try (minus part of the time in Cambodia where he visited a Khmer Rouge-ran city) and hopefully have my horizons expanded. One of Bourdain's beliefs is that nothing should be wasted and all the places he visits are cultures which also embrace that philosophy. Just because some people may be squeamish with things like offal doesn't mean it should be thrown away. The more that can be used out of one animal means the less total number of animals needed to feed people. And it can be quite tasty. Liver and kidney are both nice, though I'm not really a fan of brain, heart or tongue.

One of my issues with the book is it didn't venture to enough places. He visited 5 European countries, 3 in Asia, 2 in the Americas and 1 in Africa. Maybe a little less time in Europe and some more elsewhere would have been good. But his current show, No Reservations, has taken care of that. I really liked Bourdain's attitude - self-deprecating, honest, harsh but always respectful of other cultures and willing to give things a try. And also passionate about the eradication of vegans. A great book I look forward to watching the show and then probably grabbing his next book.

MacK says

Goals for my life:

- 1) Write better
- 2) Cook better
- 3) Travel more

Redefined goal for life:

BE LIKE ANTHONY BOURDAIN.

I've listened through this book twice now, and I've loved it both times. In every case there's a new discovery to be had, a new element to enjoy, a new allusion to catch. Bourdain's voice doing the narration, a comforting mix of professor with a smoking habit and friendly guy at the bar, is perfect--naturally because it's his voice reading his words.

The meandering journeys through Asia, Europe and Latin America encourage wanderlust in even the most entrenched home bodies. The accounts of food and meals will give you hunger pains even if you're full to the brim on grandma's beef stroganoff. The wit and wisdom and unedited work of America's foremost connoisseur of all things international makes this book a most read for anyone, everyone who enjoys literature, food or travel--which should be (one, two, three--all of you)

Daniel Jr. says

As someone who grew up poor, ate cheap, salty stuff out of boxes and cans (powdered milk was a staple of my childhood), and never traveled, I'm a culinary dilettante at best and likely always will be. Much of the insider foodie stuff is over my head if not interesting and often fascinating. But like all quest narratives,

Bourdain's--under the guise of a quest for the elusive "perfect meal"--is a quest for identity. And the guy can write. At his best, he's as good as any of the too-many memoirists out there and better than most. I'm about half-way through the book and really enjoying it.

...AAAAAND it held up very well indeed. #finished

Obsidian says

My Goodreads account is not keeping up with my books currently reading. I started this on Saturday (December 9th) and finished it yesterday.

Anthony Bourdain is always a good read to me. I really loved his first memoir, Kitchen Confidential. I think due to what is going on in the U.S. right now, I have been reading a lot of cooking memoirs the past few weeks. There is something wonderful about reading about other cultures and their love of food. And I have tried to recreate some menus (did not attempt any in this book though for obvious reasons).

Off the bat you get that Bourdain loves food. He loves meeting/talking to other food obsessed people. Starring in a television show that is taking him around the globe to eat food seemed like a win-win. Some scenes were rather hard to read about (the one describing how ducks are stuffed to make foie gras---no thank you), others are humorous, and at times you get a feeling of sadness depending on what Bourdain is going on about in a particular chapter.

I have to say that the book itself jumps around a lot. I don't know if this is the order he filmed or what. We go to Russia, Tokyo, Scotland, France, England, Saigon, and other countries with Bourdain and his camera crew along with local men/women who show Bourdain how to eat/prepare their favorite dishes.

I would say don't read this if you have a weak stomach though. You read about a pig being slaughtered, a goat, and about Bourdain hunting rabbits (seriously).

I think my favorite chapters has to be about Bourdain waxing enthusiastically about Gordon Ramsey and Hubert Keller. I really wish I could eat at The French Laundry cause it sounds wonderful.

I didn't rate this five stars since the book jumped around a lot and I didn't know what angle Bourdain was going for in the final execution of this book. Was it to share his love of food? His realizing there is no such thing as a perfect meal, rather it's the memory that you go chasing when thinking of your favorite food? Or was it to showcase other cultures and how they got really screwed by other countries (Vietnam and Cambodia).

Gabrielle says

"Dear Anthony,

This is awkward because I am married and you are dead, but... I think I'm in love with you. I guess developing a posthumous crush is a tad creepy, but hey, no one ever called me normal. Besides, I know you wouldn't have given me the time of day: I eat too much vegetarian food for things to have ever worked out

between us. But damn, man, you were truly one of a kind. I've been reading your books and watching old episodes of your shows on Netflix; it breaks my heart a little bit every time, because of the way you left us - but what a legacy you left behind! This book is clearly the ancestor of "The Layover" and "No Reservations"; I devoured every page and wished you'd written a much bigger book. Or a bunch of sequels.

This book gave me a glimpse of you that "Kitchen Confidential"

(<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) simply didn't. This time, I got to know you, not just your job. You put your soul on those pages, which makes this book vastly superior to its predecessor. I found out here that you were actually a romantic (not something I would have guessed from the other book!), who watched a lot of amazing movies and then went off to find out what happened off-frame in "Apocalypse Now", "Dr. Zhivago", "Laurence of Arabia" and "The Quiet American". What a crazy, beautiful thing to do!

I must say, I am a bit jealous. You figured out a way to get paid to travel, eat your heart out and get drunk with the locals. Where do I get that job?! Even if the stuff you did for "A Cook's Tour" was grittier than "The Layover" and "No Reservations", it was still pretty damn epic. The way you describe how people live in mysterious places I have never had the chance to visit is so evocative and vivid: I learned some incredible things, and not just about their food! You truly had a way with words, and a gift for observing the world around you: you saw its beauty even in the seediest, most dangerous spots on the planet. You make me want to go there.

I mentioned the vegetarian thing being a potential obstacle to our ever-lasting love, but frankly, as much as I love my tofu, reading what you write about foie gras somehow makes me question all my lifestyle choices (though I am truly sorry you had to suffer that vegan potluck in San Francisco; these people clearly don't respect the vegetables they eat, which is just sad). This book contains a few very frank passages about where the meat that's on people's plates comes from and I actually find that fascinating - if a bit repulsive. My thinking is that if you are going to eat the stuff, you do need to know where it comes from, and if that offends some readers, well... fuck 'em. They can read something else if they want: I personally loved your thoughts about the dietary habits of North Americans and why a lot of them are silly at best, and hypocritically privileged at worse.

I read your writing and it makes me want to pack a bag and just go to all the places I haven't been yet, to see how people live there, what they eat and if they'll be my friends. And don't worry about selling out to the Food Network: most of us are whores to a corporate overlord somewhere. You took their money and did exactly what you wanted with it, which is the best way of dealing with this. Your unflinching honesty and shamelessness has a disarming charm that makes me go completely gaga. Your appreciation for all the things (food, obviously, but people's hospitality, their traditions and their work) is so intense that it makes me feel like I've only lived half a life. Your fearlessness inspires me so much.

Goodbye, Anthony. I would have tramped all over the world with you."

Leela says

After fourteen years of contented vegetarianism, it takes a lot to make me want to try roasted lamb testicles. I could almost stop writing here: the book is that good. Bourdain's attitude is part of his charm. I'm not sure I'd want to work in his kitchen, but he writes a damn good story. From one end of the earth to the other, he and his faithful camera crew take on whatever is local, exotic, beloved, and edible. Then he eats it. The way this man writes about food is incredible--last time someone made meat sound so good I was in Minneapolis and

the local restaurant reviewer had my taste buds in a vice grip.

This writing is not for the squeamish, not for the faint of heart. If you can't stand profanity, read something else. Bourdain pulls no punches, but that means he gives everything a fair shot. Read it. Enjoy it. Then go find a really good dinner.

Travis says

Now, I love Anthony Bourdain. He's basically full of shit and insane, but honest enough to be aware of it. He's smug, cynical, occasionally snobby and has all the tact of hammer to the forehead.

At the same time he's very aware that he's stumbled into a job most people would kill for, he's getting paid to eat good food and travel anywhere he wants in the world. Someone is paying him to go live out his boyhood dreams and fantasies.

He also loves going places, meeting people and food. He has a soft romantic streak that keeps coming through to remind you all that New York City cynicism will fade the second you show him a breath taking view or a good meal

He writes like he's sitting somewhere, with a drink in his hand, telling you a story.

This book is basically food porn. Anthony goes places 90% of his readers will never get to, and eats food 90% of his readers will never be able to afford or eat. It only occasionally crosses paths with reality, but despite knowing that he makes you want to go to those places (well, maybe not Cambodia) and eat those foods, even when they are way out of your price range or slightly disgusting sounding.

He had me craving foods I generally don't even like.

If that's not enough, the scene where he talks about his dad will cause you to tear up and how can you not love any author that references Tintin as one of the things that made him want to travel the world.

Leftbanker says

I read this in the wake of my lament on hearing of the author's death. His posthumously aired episode on Berlin on CNN was something of a minor masterpiece and makes me want to pack up and move there.

His short chapter on Gordon Ramsey totally turned my opinion around about that guy, at least until I see him again on TV.

Part of Bourdain's shtick is to bust on all things vegetarian, but his screed in this book is sort of childish and lacks something that is infused in almost everything he writes: humor. I just think that going through life without ever eating meat is dumb. I always mention goiters in my argument, a horrible condition brought on because of the lack of just a trace amount of iodine in the diet. What could people who avoid animal products be missing? All of their former arguments in favor of never eating meat have mostly been invalidated. It just seems stupid and random to say that you don't eat this or that. I could probably survive if I ate less pork, but to swear off this delicious animal for a lifetime is simply a profound error. It smacks of religious fanaticism, and everyone hates religion, right? Most vegetarians are suffering from an eating disorder. It's a way to

control what you eat, which is pretty much the definition of an eating disorder.

RandomAnthony says

Kim says I have a man crush on Anthony Bourdain.

So what's a man crush?

My favorite urban dictionary definition of the term reads:

Respect, admiration and idolization of another man. Non-sexual. Celebrities, athletes and rock stars are often the object of the man crush.

Let's see. Do I have a man crush on Anthony Bourdain by that definition? Let's frame the question around my recent reading of *A Cook's Tour*.

This is Bourdain's second, book, after *Kitchen Confidential*. The title is a "double dip", a technique Bourdain has utilized throughout his career, in which he mines the same experience for both a book and television series. In this case the frame is Bourdain's search for a perfect meal. However, the "perfect meal" question turns out to be of minimal importance to the narrative, which has the author traveling across the globe, sampling local cuisine and riffing on his responses to the people and culture. Bourdain's strengths are myriad. First, he's not some dumbass showing up in Morocco or Paris, trying a snail, and saying, "this tastes good." He knows his food and he knows it well. The San Francisco chapter, including a visit to Keller's French Laundry, shows off the author's encyclopedic food knowledge. Second, he treats the people and cultures he encounters with great respect. Bourdain values consistency and hard work and seems equally awed by both the best chefs in the world and the Bedouin riders that get him high on a desert night. Third, he seems like the kind of guy who doesn't take himself too seriously but takes his work very seriously. While he'll mock himself silly for his corporate whoredom to the Food Network pimp, you can tell he doesn't want to write a crappy book or make a lame episode (although in his own estimation he's done both). Finally, he writes and talks about food and traveling like a crime fiction fan with a couple of his own crime novels under his belt. All of which is true. He notices the guy who brings the salsa and wonders what he does after work.

In some ways I don't want to like Anthony Bourdain. I'm a vegetarian, in his eyes a sworn enemy (his shredding of a Californian vegetarian potluck is *priceless*). He never shuts the hell up about New York, and I'm from Chicago. If I saw him on the street I wouldn't approach him, because I would feel like an asshole and, while he would probably try to be civil, from what I can tell he's just want to get the hell away from anyone who ever wanted to talk with him about his books. I admire that. If he wanted to bask in fans' attention I doubt I'd be a fan.

But do I have a man crush? Two out of three. I respect and admire Bourdain, but I don't idolize him. I don't want to be him. I love his books, and I can't think of a better show to which to work out than *No Reservations*. *A Cook's Tour* reads like a murderless noir novel where the characters eat a lot and taunt the cameramen. And I like that idea. Bourdain is an original; there's no one like him, and imitators, well, they sound stupid when they try to sound like Bourdain.

So sorry, Kim, no man crush. But I'm reading *Twilight* next, and there's always Edward...

Patricia Pham says

Bourdain - a privileged, hypocritical, crude bastard - manages to write prose that is intriguing, funny, and surprisingly poetic. I began the book as a critic of Bourdain, having just read *KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL*, which I found to be shallow and boring at best, and also having watched his show *NO RESERVATIONS*, which often leaves a bad taste in my mouth for several reasons. Despite all this, there has always been something in Bourdain's writing that has kept me coming back. After reading this book, I've been unwillingly converted.

A COOK'S TOUR is actually about FOOD - where it comes from, our relationship to it, and what it reflects - all unfolding through a narrative of vivid, hilarious, and usually grotesque anecdotes. Bourdain's arrogance and self-righteous tirades are quelled by more substantial moments of sensitivity, humility, and romantic introspection. I laughed out loud a minimum of twice per chapter and, at times, was choking with overwhelming sadness. In the end, he might be unfairly frolicking around milking his celebrity, but Bourdain has and will continue to experience the entire world in ways most of us cannot. Again, a lucky asshole who writes a damn good story.
