

Great Books on Food: There's So Much More to Food than Just Recipes....

All titles available as e-books or e-audiobooks through the West Haven Library

Descriptions adapted from publishers

***Food: A Cultural Culinary History* by Ken Albala (*The Great Courses Series*)**

Professor Albala explores the history of how humans have produced, cooked, and consumed food, from the earliest hunting-and-gathering societies to the present.

***The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food* by Dan Barber**

Chef Dan Barber (of Blue Hill at Stone Barns) offers a new way of thinking about food that he asserts will heal the land and taste good, too. Looking to the detrimental cooking of our past, and the misguided dining of our present, Barber points to a future "third plate": a new form of American eating where good farming and good food intersect. It charts a bright path forward for eaters and chefs alike, daring everyone to imagine a future for our national cuisine that is as sustainable as it is delicious.

***Kitchen Confidential* by Anthony Bourdain**

More than two decades ago, the *New Yorker* published a now infamous article, "Don't Eat before You Read This," by then little-known chef Anthony Bourdain. Bourdain spared no one's appetite as he revealed what happens behind the kitchen door. The article was a sensation, and the book it spawned, the now classic *Kitchen Confidential*, became an even bigger sensation, a mega-bestseller with over one million copies in print. Frankly confessional, addictively acerbic, and utterly unsparing, Bourdain pulls no punches in this memoir of his years in the restaurant business.

***Heat: An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany* by Bill Buford**

A highly acclaimed writer and editor, Bill Buford left his job at *The New Yorker* for a most unlikely destination: the kitchen at Babbo, the revolutionary Italian restaurant created and ruled by superstar chef Mario Batali. Finally realizing a long-held desire to learn first-hand the experience of restaurant cooking, Buford soon finds himself drowning in improperly cubed carrots and scalding pasta water on his quest to learn the tricks of the trade. His love of Italian food then propels him on journeys further afield: to Italy, to discover the secrets of pasta-making and, finally, how to properly slaughter a pig. Throughout, Buford stunningly details the complex aspects of Italian cooking and its long history, creating an engrossing and visceral narrative stuffed with insight and humor.

***My Life in France* by Julia Child**

In her own words, here is the captivating story of Julia Child's years in France, where she fell in love with French food and found "her true calling."

***Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* by Roxane Gay**

A searingly honest memoir of food, weight, self-image, and learning how to feed your hunger while taking care of yourself.

***Blood, Bones & Butter: The Inadvertent Education of a Reluctant Chef* by Gabrielle Hamilton**

Before Gabrielle Hamilton opened her acclaimed New York restaurant Prune, she spent twenty hard-living years trying to find purpose and meaning in her life. *Blood, Bones & Butter* follows an unconventional journey through the many kitchens she inhabited through the years.

***Life from Scratch: A Memoir of Food, Family, and Forgiveness* by Sasha Martin**

Over the course of 195 weeks, food writer and blogger Sasha Martin set out to cook—and eat—a meal from every country in the world. As cooking unlocked the memories of her rough-and-tumble childhood and the loss and heartbreak that came with it, Martin became more determined than ever to find peace and elevate her life through the prism of food and world cultures. From the tiny, makeshift kitchen of her eccentric, creative mother, to a string of foster homes, to the house from which she launched her own cooking adventure, Martin's heartfelt, brutally honest memoir reveals the power of cooking to bond, to empower, and to heal—and celebrates the simple truth that happiness is created from within.

***The Apprentice: My Life in the Kitchen* by Jacques Pepin**

In this captivating memoir, the man whom Julia Child called "the best chef in America" tells the story of his rise from a frightened apprentice in an exacting Old World kitchen to an Emmy Award-winning superstar who taught millions of Americans how to cook and shaped the nation's tastes in the bargain. *The Apprentice* is the poignant and sometimes funny tale of a boy's coming of age. Beyond that, it is the story of America's culinary awakening and the transformation of food from an afterthought to a national preoccupation.

***Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation* by Michael Pollan**

Michael Pollan explores the enduring power of the four classical elements—fire, water, air, and earth—to transform the stuff of nature into delicious things to eat and drink. Apprenticing himself to a succession of culinary masters, he learns how to grill with fire, cook with liquid, bake bread, and ferment everything from cheese to beer.

***In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* by Michael Pollan**

Pollan proposes a new (and very old) answer to the question of what we should eat that comes down to seven simple but liberating words: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." Pollan's bracing and eloquent manifesto shows us how we can start making thoughtful food choices that will enrich our lives, enlarge our sense of what it means to be healthy, and bring pleasure back to eating.

***The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan**

What should we have for dinner? Fourteen years ago, Michael Pollan confronted us with this seemingly simple question in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and demonstrated that how we answer it today may determine not only our health, but our survival as a species. In the years since, this book has changed the way Americans think about food. Bringing wide attention to the little-known but vitally important dimensions of food and agriculture in America, Pollan launched a national conversation about what we eat and the profound consequences that even the simplest everyday food choices have on both ourselves and the natural world.

***Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen* by Julie Powell**

Nearing 30 and trapped in a dead-end secretarial job, Julie Powell reclaims her life by cooking every single recipe in Julia Child's legendary *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in the span of one year. It's a hysterical, inconceivable redemptive journey—life rediscovered through aspics, calves' brains, and crème brûlée.

***Tender at the Bone: Growing Up at the Table* by Ruth Reichl**

At an early age, Ruth Reichl (of *The New York Times* and *Gourmet Magazine*) discovered that “food could be a way of making sense of the world. If you watched people as they ate, you could find out who they were.” This deliciously crafted memoir is the story of a life defined, determined, and enhanced in equal measure by a passion for food, by unforgettable people, and by the love of tales well told.

***Garlic and Sapphires: The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise* by Ruth Reichl**

Reichl's riotous account of the many disguises she employs to dine anonymously. There is her stint as Molly Hollis, a frumpy blond with manicured nails and an off-beige Armani suit that Ruth takes on when reviewing Le Cirque. The result: her famous double review of the restaurant: first she ate there as Molly; and then as she was coddled and pampered on her visit there as Ruth, *New York Times* food critic. What is even more remarkable about Reichl's spy games is that as she takes on these various disguises, she finds herself changed not just superficially, but in character as well. She gives a remarkable account of how one's outer appearance can very much influence one's inner character, expectations, and appetites.

***Save Me the Plums: My Gourmet Memoir* by Ruth Reichl**

When Ruth Reichl was offered the top position at America's oldest epicurean magazine, she declined. She was a writer, not a manager, and had no inclination to be anyone's boss. Yet Reichl had been reading *Gourmet* since she was eight; it had inspired her career. How could she say no? This is the story of a former Berkeley hippie entering the corporate world and worrying about losing her soul. It is the story of the moment restaurants became an important part of popular culture, a time when the rise of the farm-to-table movement changed, forever, the way we eat. This was the golden age of print media—the last spendthrift gasp before the Internet turned the magazine world upside down.

***The Making of a Chef: Mastering Heat at the Culinary Institute* by Michael Ruhlman**

Ruhlman donned a chef's jacket and houndstooth-check pants to join the students at the Culinary Institute of America, the country's oldest and most influential cooking school. But *The Making of a Chef* is not just about holding a knife or slicing an onion; it's also about the nature and spirit of being a professional cook and the people who enter the profession. As Ruhlman—now an expert on the fundamentals of cooking—recounts his growing mastery of the skills of his adopted profession, he propels himself and his readers through a score of kitchens and classrooms in search of the elusive, unnamable elements of great food.

***Yes, Chef: A Memoir* by Marcus Samuelsson**

It begins with a simple ritual: Every Saturday afternoon, a boy who loves to cook walks to his grandmother's house and helps her prepare a roast chicken for dinner. The grandmother is Swedish, a retired domestic. The boy is Ethiopian and adopted, and he will grow up to become the world-renowned chef Marcus Samuelsson. This book is his love letter to food and family in all its manifestations.

***Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schlosser**

To a degree both engrossing and alarming, the story of fast food is the story of postwar America. Though created by a handful of mavericks, the fast food industry has triggered the homogenization of our society. Fast food has hastened the malling of our landscape, widened the chasm between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled the juggernaut of American cultural imperialism abroad. That's a lengthy list of charges, but Schlosser makes them stick with an artful mix of first-rate reportage, wry wit, and careful reasoning.