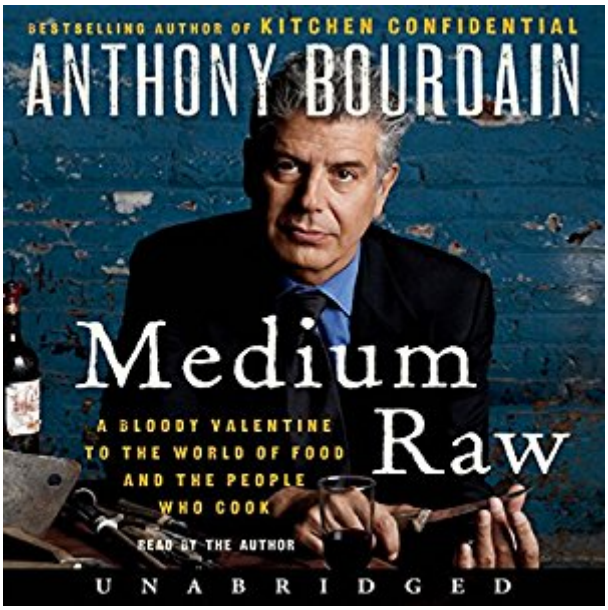
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Medium Raw: A Bloody Valentine To The World Of Food And The People Who Cook



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Synopsis

The long-awaited follow-up to the mega-best-seller Kitchen ConfidentialIn the 10 years since his classic Kitchen Confidential first alerted us to the idiosyncrasies and lurking perils of eating out - from Monday fish to the breadbasket conspiracy - much has changed for the subculture of chefs and cooks, for the restaurant business and for Anthony Bourdain. Medium Raw explores those changes, moving back and forth from the author’s bad old days to the present. Tracking his own strange and unexpected voyage from journeyman cook to globe-traveling professional eater and drinker, and even to fatherhood, Bourdain takes no prisoners as he dissects what he’s seen, pausing along the way for a series of confessions, rants, investigations, and interrogations of some of the most controversial figures in food.Beginning with a secret and highly illegal after-hours gathering of powerful chefs that he compares to a mafia summit, Bourdain pulls back the curtain, but never pulls his punches, on the modern gastronomical revolution, as only he can. Cutting right to the bone, Bourdain sets his sights on some of the biggest names in the foodie world, including David Chang, the young superstar chef who has radicalized the fine-dining landscape; the revered Alice Waters, whom he treats with unapologetic frankness; the Top Chef winners and losers; and many more.Always he returns to the question "Why cook?" Or the more difficult "Why cook well?" Medium Raw is the deliciously funny and shockingly delectable journey to those answers, sure to delight philistines and gourmands alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First off, it should go without saying that people love Anthony Bourdain. His ineffable command of language drives the reader onwards making no attempt to soften the message nor dumb-down the Chef jargon.Bourdain speaks from his heart and speaks about what he knows, and he knows chefs. He knows what good food is and what good food isn't. He's a rogue, a "devil may care" romantic with a clear disdain for application of doing anything in life without passion.He pulls no punches when expressing his opinion about any dining experience whether friend or foe and in doing so likely upset a lot of people in the industry. With a brute force he manages to shine an amiable light on his perceived villains in a manner that still displays a redeeming respect.I could go on and on about the many virtues of this book and Anthony Bourdain himself but if you got this far into my review chances are you are already familiar. A great 5 hour read with many whimsical trappings.

Honestly, I don't know why I read Bourdain's books ... he is smug and smarmy and uses the curmudgeon role to do all the things we all wish we could do with our lives. But damn, he is a good writer. It is clear that he paid as close attention in English class as he did in culinary school because Tony writes with the same talent that he used to cook (apparently). Blending true life with a touch of novella, Tony weaves a tapestry of interesting stories and tales about travel, life and the culinary world. A true sequel, it does mention what has become of some of the characters he last left in the pages of his break out book, Kitchen Confidential.My favorite chapters were the early ones ... especially his chapter about an ex-girlfriend who was rich, spoiled and sociopathic ... which I've experienced more times than I'd care to. I felt that some of the chapters rambled a bit, especially the two chapter long take on Momofuku and it's tempermental chef owner. I honestly had to skip the rest of the chapter several pages into it because it was just going nowhere and was pretty much a flowery tribute that Marc Anthony would have called 'over the top'.I do love Tony's use of prose and cursing ... it makes the book entertaining and after a while the curmodgeon thing starts to get grating and it's almost like Tony reads your mind and switches to humble mode for a page or two. This is a guy who plays the whole 'I can't believe I am famous!' card and means it ... but at the same time, he knows how amazing his life turned out to be and how jealous most of the readers are about his many travels, riches and fame.I see this book not as a literary work of art but more of a combination of a way to pad the bank account and get some free stream of conscious therapy by Tony. This book skips around like a .22 caliber bullet at close range. It seems like there is no real organization ... a few funny personal stories, followed by a list of Tony's most influential restaurantaurs, a rehash of Kitchen Confidentail and then a detailed self personality analysis. Seems like the type of book that someone bangs out in a week because the advance has already

been spent and the deadline is getting closer. Not to say that each word isn't agonized over because it is clear that Tony is a wordsmith of the utmost magnitude. But don't expect more than it is, which is stream of consciousness Hunter S. Thompson style gonzo/rebel musings.

This book is one third beautiful food prose, one third autobiography, and one third therapy session. This is a solid offering from Bourdain, but suffers from occasional confusion about its overarching thesis. One moment he's describing the taste of a raw oyster, one moment he's pouring his (apparently damaged) heart out to you about his deep personal issues. Some of Bourdain's best food writing can be found here, but the book lacks a coherent structure and theme to tie it together. I firmly believe that in 100 years, people will still be reading Bourdain- and they'll look at this book as a transitionary offering between a young, angry Tony and an older, refined, more nuanced writer and personality.

Anthony Bourdain seems to be a "love him or hate him" personality. Over the years I've read many criticisms of him, saying that he's egotistical, "wasn't a great chef", tries too hard to come across as a "bad boy", among other things.I find his books to be very honest and open, and his tv shows in general are excellent, but don't always have the same opportunity to present how he really feels. Which in my mind is fine - tv is a different medium and he likely has much different expectations put on him by the network.Personally, I don't think he really tries to cultivate any particular image and I think he brings a tremendous amount of insight, sensitivity, empathy and eagerness to explore and understand other cultures in a genuine way, not just what will look good for the cameras (or to the reader, as it were).I think he's an excellent writer, as well. He's not afraid to wax poetic, go into lyrical prose to describe something of beauty, or to call himself on his own BS.This book is the spiritual successor to Kitchen Confidential (one of my favorite books of all time). It is a series of semi-unrelated essays on various topics - one of which is the best description/justification/explanation of "selling out" I've ever seen. (He says he arrived at this conclusion after discussing the topic with Emeril - one of his former targets of scorn). You get insights into the food industry, great meals he's had, life at The Food Network (where his original "A Cook's Tour" was shown), cooking as a profession, food writers, and fine dining in general, among other things.If you don't like Bourdain, this won't change your mind about anything, most likely. If you already like him, then this is just more of his view on things, and you'll probably enjoy it.He's crass and profane, so be aware that this is him, uncensored. (Just in case you haven't read his books before). To me this is a better book than The Nasty Bits, which I liked just fine, but it felt more

disjointed, being a collection of previously published essays - at least I think they were all previously published.As I said, I really enjoy AB's writing. Though he can be vulgur, sure, he is also capable of elegant descriptive prose and he's particularly good at delving into topics beyond surface expectations or preconceptions. What I also like about this book is that AB reassesses his past, his prior views on various things, Kitchen Confidential, his career and his previously-stated views on others. He's not trying to live up to an image at this point and has come to realize that there are more important things in life. He also repeatedly states how lucky he is and how blessed his life has been, considering the dark corners he'd previously inhabited.Recommended highly. I can't wait for the next one.

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