

Comfort Me with Apples: More Adventures at the Table

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In Ruth Reichl's latest book - one that will delight her fans and convert those as yet uninitiated to her charming tales - the author brings to life her adventures in pursuit of good meals and good company. Picking up where *Tender at the Bone* leaves off, *Comfort Me with Apples* recounts Reichl's transformation from chef to food writer, a process that led her through restaurants from Bangkok to Paris to Los Angeles and brought lessons in life, love, and food.

It is an apprenticeship by turns delightful and daunting, one told in the most winning and engaging of voices. Reichl's anecdotes from a summer lunch with M.F.K. Fisher, a mad dash through the produce market with Wolfgang Puck, and a garlic feast with Alice Waters are priceless. She is unafraid - even eager - to poke holes in the pretensions of food critics, making each meal a hilarious and instructive occasion for novices and experts alike. The *New York Times* has said, "While all good food critics are humorous .. few are so riotously, effortlessly entertaining as Ruth Reichl." In *Comfort Me with Apples*, Reichl once again demonstrates her inimitable ability to combine food writing, humor, and memoir into an art form.

Ruth Reichl's first book, the autobiographical *Tender at the Bone*, disarmed readers with its droll candor. The former restaurant critic of *The New York Times* and editor in chief of *Gourmet* magazine told great stories about growing up and loving food. *Comfort Me with Apples* begins where the first book ended, tracing Reichl's evolution from chef to food writer while detailing the dissolution of her first marriage, the start of a second, and motherhood at the age of 40. The book also limns a sensual journey, Reichl's awakening to the pleasures of sex as well as food, and also to love. Reichl interweaves her diverse coming-of-age narratives with passion (especially on the subject of food), wit, and a no-nonsense grace, all of which add up to a wonderful read--entertaining, but moving, too.

The story begins when Reichl, living in a '70s Berkeley commune, gets her first real job as a restaurant reviewer. Despite the incredulity of her in-the-movement roommates ("You're going to spend your life telling spoiled, rich people where to eat?" asks one), Reichl persists, traveling widely to polish her palate. In the doing she meets food luminaries such as Wolfgang Puck (a mad encounter in a produce market), M.F.K. Fisher (lunch and sweet reminiscences), and Alice Waters (a garlic feast), among others. Her trip to China, which includes clandestine dealings with a former chef, is particularly well handled. The ungluing of her first marriage is depicted in adroit emotional counterpoint to her soaring career, as is her discovery of love with her second husband, unspooled against her father's death. Reichl also provides recipes, such as Fall Mushroom Soup (made to comfort herself and her mother) that, unexpectedly and delightfully, deepen the narrative. --Arthur Boehm
"Reichl writes with gusto, and her story has all the ingredients of a modern fairy tale: hard work, weird food, and endless curiosity."

-The New Yorker

"So many memoirs annoy by telling either too much or too little. This one tells just enough....The book reads not like life described but like life lived and then shaped....Each story affirms [Reichl's] desire to get beyond the surface, even as she celebrates its unlikely depths."

-The New York Times

"Magnificent, riotous, erotic...[Comfort Me with Apples] is an extended, lilting song about lovesickness and the restorative succor of good food...Two courses of Reichl's literary cooking will leave still-ravenous readers hoping for a third serving soon. [Rating:] A."

-Entertainment Weekly

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