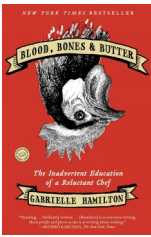


Blood, Bones & Butter



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Before I became a librarian, I worked in the restaurant industry for 10 years. I learned to cook from my dad and had dreams of going to culinary school to become a chef. Career changes happen, but I am still drawn to cooking shows and spend a lot of time reading books about food, food policies, eating, and food history --think [Bittman](#), [Kurlansky](#), & [Kingsolver](#). When it came out recently, I knew I had to read *Blood, Bones & Butter: the Inadvertent Education of a Reluctant Chef* by Gabrielle Hamilton.

Hamilton is owner and head chef at Prune, a well-reviewed and established restaurant in New York. This book sets out her love of food from her parents to her on-the-fly education in New York City catering. Her path to recognition and establishment later in life is both gory and determined. Being a woman in this business can be ugly and Hamilton both investigates and dismisses this fact. What she does well is understanding the connection between food and family and what it means to be part of this process on both an intimate and grander scale.

I was drawn to this memoir for the cooking and restaurant explorations alone. The food descriptions are truly glorious. For other food readers, easy comparisons can be made to Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*. But this book also has wider appeal. If gritty insider accounts are your thing, I would also suggest *Tattoo Machine* by Jeff Johnson.

Outside of the food and fringe work environments, I think this book would also appeal to readers of dysfunctional family memoirs. The path to Prune began with her family -- an interesting cast of characters and continues through her marriage and secondary family in Italy. It isn't always pretty. In this way, I am also reminded of other funny and not-so-funny family dynamics explored in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* by Alexandra Fuller and *Liar's Club* by Mary Karr.

Hamilton isn't always sympathetic but like Karr and Fuller, you see the intimate process -- burns, warts and all.

Posted by sbowman on May 22, 2012

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