



The Table Comes First: Family, France, and the Meaning of Food

Adam Gopnik

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Never before have we cared so much about food. It preoccupies our popular culture, our fantasies, and even our moralizing—“You *still* eat meat?” With our top chefs as deities and finest restaurants as places of pilgrimage, we have made food the stuff of secular seeking and transcendence, finding heaven in a mouthful. But have we come any closer to discovering the true meaning of food in our lives?

With inimitable charm and learning, Adam Gopnik takes us on a beguiling journey in search of that meaning as he charts America’s recent and rapid evolution from commendably aware eaters to manic, compulsive gastronomes. It is a journey that begins in eighteenth-century France—the birthplace of our modern tastes (and, by no coincidence, of the restaurant)—and carries us to the kitchens of the White House, the molecular meccas of Barcelona, and beyond. To understand why so many of us apparently live to eat, Gopnik delves into the most burning questions of our time, including: Should a Manhattanite bother to find chicken killed in the Bronx? Is a great vintage really any better than a good bottle of wine? And: Why does dessert matter so much?

Throughout, he reminds us of a time-honored truth often lost amid our newfound gastronomic pieties and certitudes: What goes on the table has never mattered as much to our lives as what goes on around the table—the scene of families, friends, lovers coming together, or breaking apart; conversation across the simplest or grandest board. This, ultimately, is who we are.

Following in the footsteps of Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, Adam Gopnik gently satirizes the entire human comedy of the comestible as he surveys the wide world of taste that we have lately made our home. *The Table Comes First* is the delightful beginning of a new conversation about the way we eat now.

From the Hardcover edition.

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