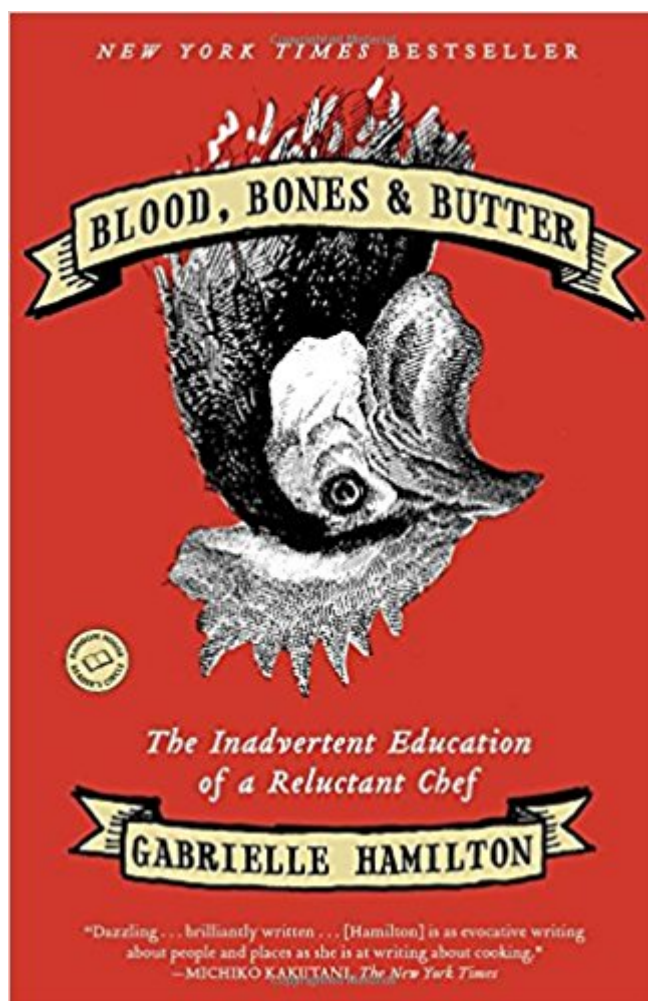


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# Blood, Bones & Butter: The Inadvertent Education Of A Reluctant Chef



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The Miami Herald • Newsday • The Huffington Post • Financial Times • GQ • Slate • Men's Journal • Washington Examiner • Publishers Weekly • Kirkus Reviews • National Post • The Toronto Star • BookPage • Bookreporter

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 Hamilton has inhabited through the years: the rural kitchen of her childhood, where her adored mother stood over the six-burner with an oily wooden spoon in hand; the kitchens of France, Greece, and Turkey, where she was often fed by complete strangers and learned the essence of hospitality; Hamilton's own kitchen at Prune, with its many unexpected challenges; and the kitchen of her Italian mother-in-law, who serves as the link between Hamilton's idyllic past and her own future family—the result of a prickly marriage that nonetheless yields lasting dividends. By turns epic and intimate, Gabrielle Hamilton's story is told with uncommon honesty, grit, humor, and passion. Features a new essay by Gabrielle Hamilton at the back of the book. Look for special features inside. • Join the Circle for author chats and more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, March 2011: Gabrielle Hamilton's memoir, *Blood, Bones & Butter: The Inadvertent Education of a Reluctant Chef*, is just what a chef's story should be--delectable, dripping with flavor, tinged with adrenaline and years of too-little sleep. What sets Hamilton apart, though, is her ability to write with as much grace as vitriol, a distinct tenderness marbling her meaty story. Hamilton spent her idyllic childhood on a wild farm in rural Pennsylvania with an exhilarant father--an artist and set builder--and French mother, both "incredibly special and outrageously handsome." As she entered her teens, however, her family unexpectedly dissolved. She moved to New York City at 16, living off loose change and eating ketchup packets from McDonald's; worked 20-hour days at a soulless catering company; traveled, often half-starved, through Europe; and cooked for allergy-riddled children at a summer camp. The constant thread running through this patchwork tale, which culminates with the opening of her New York City restaurant, Prune, is Hamilton's slow simmering passion for cooking and the comfort it can bring. "To be picked up and fed, often by strangers, when you are in that state of fear and hunger, became the single most important food experience I came back to over and over," Hamilton writes, and it's this poignant understanding of the link between food and kindness that makes *Blood, Bones & Butter* so satisfying to read. --Lynette Mong Guest Reviewer: Anthony Bourdain on *Blood, Bones, and Butter*

Anthony Bourdain is the author of the novels *Bone in the Throat* and *Gone Bamboo*, in addition to the bestseller *Kitchen Confidential* and *A Cook's Tour*. His work has appeared in the *New York Times* and *The New Yorker*, and he is a contributing authority for *Food Arts* magazine. He is also the host of the Emmy Award-winning television show *No Reservations*. Very quickly after meeting Gabrielle Hamilton, I understood why she was a terrific and much-admired chef. I knew that her restaurant, Prune, was ground-breaking, that she seemed to have come out of nowhere, instead of being a product of the "system" (she'd emerged from the invisible subculture of catering), to open one of the most quirky, totally uncompromising, and quickly-embraced restaurants in New York City. Her purportedly (but not really) Franco-phobic menus were intensely, notoriously personal, her early embrace of the nose-to-tail attitude was way, way ahead the times, and chefs--all chefs--seemed to like and respect her. Almost as quickly, it became apparent that this chef could write. Short pieces appeared here and there over the years and they were sharp, funny, incisive, unsparing of both author and subjects--straight to the point and pretense-free, like Hamilton herself. She could write really well. And she had, from all accounts, a story to tell. So when it was announced that *Blood, Bones, and Butter* was in the works, I was very excited. It was a long wait. Five years later, I finally got my hands on an advance copy and eagerly devoured it. It was of course brilliant. I expected it to be. But I wasn't prepared for exactly how goddamn brilliant the thing was, or how enchanted,

difficult, strange, rich, inspiring and just plain hard her life and career--her long road to Prune--had been. I was unprepared for page after page of such sharp, carefully-crafted, ballistically-precise sentences. I was, frankly, devastated. I put this amazing memoir down and wanted to crawl under the bed, retroactively withdraw every book, every page I'd ever written. And burn them. Blood, Bones, and Butter is, quite simply, the far-and-away best chef or food-genre memoir...ever. EVER. It certainly kicked the hell out of my Kitchen Confidential, which suddenly, in a second, felt shallow, sophomoric and ultimately lightweight next to this...this monster of a book, this--at times--truly hardscrabble life. Blood, Bones, and Butter is deeper, better written, more hardcore, more fully fleshed-out; a more well-rounded story than every sunflower-and-saffron account of soft-core food porn in France. It's as bullshit and pretense-free as AJ Leibling--and at least as well written, but more poignant, romantic--even thrilling. It makes any "as told to" account of famous chef's lives look instantly ludicrous and bloodless. I've struggled to think of somebody/anybody who's written a better account of the journey to chefdom and can't think of anyone who's come even close. Writing a memoir of one's life as a chef--or even writing about one's relationship with food--has, with the publication of this book, become much more difficult. Hamilton has raised the bar higher than most of us could ever hope to reach. This book will sell a gazillion copies. It will be a bestseller. It will be an enduring classic. It will inspire generation after generation of young cooks, and anyone who really loves food and understands the context in which it is best enjoyed, NOT as some isolated, over-valued object of desire, but as only one important aspect of a larger, richer spectrum of experiences. Each plate of food--like the menu at Prune--is the end result of a long and sometimes very difficult struggle. Read this book and prepare to clean your system of all that's come before. It's a game-changer and a truly great work by a great writer and great chef. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Starred Review. Owner and chef of New York's Prune restaurant, Hamilton also happens to be a trained writer (M.F.A., University of Michigan) and fashions an addictive memoir of her unorthodox trajectory to becoming a chef. The youngest of five siblings born to a French mother who cooked "tails, claws, and marrow-filled bones" in a good skirt, high heels, and apron, and an artist father who made the sets for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus, Hamilton spent her early years in a vast old house on the rural Pennsylvania-New Jersey border. With the divorce of her parents when she was an adolescent, the author was largely left to her own devices, working at odd jobs in restaurants. Peeling potatoes and scraping plates--"And that, just like that, is how a whole life can start." At age 16, in 1981, she got a job waiting tables at New York's Lone Star Cafe,

and when caught stealing another waitress's check, she was nearly charged with grand larceny. After years of working as a "grunt" freelance caterer and going back to school to learn to write (inspired by a National Book Foundation conference she was catering), Hamilton unexpectedly started up her no-nonsense, comfort-food Prune in a charming space in the East Village in 1999. Hamilton can be refreshingly thorny (especially when it comes to her reluctance to embrace the "foodie" world), yet she is also as frank and unpretentious as her menu-and speaks openly about marrying an Italian man (despite being a lesbian), mostly to cook with his priceless Old World mother in Italy. (Mar.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Finding this book was like finding a bright shiny new good luck penny in the street. Wonderful writing and brutally honest with an eye opening look at the inner workings of a restaurant. Having said all of that, it appears that Chef Hamilton is totally committed to her small, regimented world and needs to expand her horizons to outside interests; perhaps that would help her not appear so lost.

I didn't appreciate the way an artful memoir about the unusual development of a world-class chef devolved into a rant about an ill-fated marriage, and it certainly went off way too far in that direction, but otherwise the descriptive style really brought the food and Italian culture to life.

Wonderful recollections of a cooks life. Very vivid pictures created that any passionate human would appreciate. Loved this telling and cannot wait to read another of her stories.~ Enjoy

I love good food, am somewhat familiar with the northeast area, with the city, and with the trials of growing up, reinventing your identity, etc. This book is excellent in relating the feelings of always changing, always looking for more in life.

All things wonderful, if you've ever worked in the service/food industry this is a must read.

This was a good read and an interesting story. Having eaten at Prune, I was eager to see how Gabrielle got there. To say her journey and life surprised me is an understatement. She did not follow a conventional path at all. There was no culinary school, just the school of experience. Her private life is no less unconventional. Though married for several years and having two sons, she and her husband rarely lived together. Hmm, I always thought if my husband and I had lived

separately we could have stayed married longer. In summary, I enjoyed this book.

One of my favorite reads. A story of life itself. The author takes us on a journey through her life but not just in an autobiographic sense. Not just the when and how, but also the why she became who she is. The journey begins in a rollercoaster way from her tumultuous childhood, teens and early adulthood, through her "maturity" and realisation of who she is. Not sparing us anything but sharing the reader all. From the moment of recognition that she is on the path to becoming a chef to the realisation of the total meaning of that choice "be careful what you get good at doin' because you'll be doin it for the rest of your life" as the author quotes). We get a first hand view and experience of life on the lines in the kitchen. Of dealing with upheavels in the family and of dealing with dichotomy of ideals versus reality .If you are looking for a glorification of cooking, "chefdom" or restaurantuerism don't look for it here. If you want a riveting read of life, proceed to the book.

If you are into food you'll love it. Hamilton is a talented writer and has an interesting story to tell but I felt her commentary on her complicate relationships fell short. Would have liked to understand more about those....I do feel however like I could cook and understand the chemical reactions to cooking a rabbit from reading this book - and I am not a cook!

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