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Fresh Off The Boat: A Memoir



Synopsis

NOW AN ORIGINAL SERIES ON ABC “Just may be the best new comedy of [the year] . . . based on restaurateur Eddie Huang’s memoir of the same name . . . [a] classic fresh-out-of-water comedy. “People “Bawdy and frequently hilarious . . . a surprisingly sophisticated memoir about race and assimilation in America . . . as much James Baldwin and Jay-Z as Amy Tan . . . rowdy [and] vital . . . It’s a book about fitting in by not fitting in at all. “Dwight Garner, The New York Times NATIONAL BESTSELLER NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY KIRKUS REVIEWS Assimilating ain’t easy. Eddie Huang was raised by a wild family of FOB (“fresh off the boat”) immigrants his father a cocksure restaurateur with a dark past back in Taiwan, his mother a fierce protector and constant threat. Young Eddie tried his hand at everything mainstream America threw his way, from white Jesus to macaroni and cheese, but finally found his home as leader of a rainbow coalition of lost boys up to no good: skate punks, dealers, hip-hop junkies, and sneaker freaks. This is the story of a Chinese-American kid in a could-be-anywhere cul-de-sac blazing his way through America’s deviant subcultures, trying to find himself, ten thousand miles from his legacy and anchored only by his conflicted love for his family and his passion for food. Funny, moving, and stylistically inventive, *Fresh Off the Boat* is more than a radical reimagining of the immigrant memoir—it’s the exhilarating story of every American outsider who finds his destiny in the margins. Praise for *Fresh Off the Boat* “Brash and funny . . . outrageous, courageous, moving, ironic and true. “New York Times Book Review “Mercilessly funny and provocative, *Fresh Off the Boat* is also a serious piece of work. Eddie Huang is hunting nothing less than Big Game here. He does everything with style. “Anthony Bourdain “Uproariously funny . . . emotionally honest. “Chicago Tribune “Huang is a fearless raconteur. [His] writing is at once hilarious and provocative; his incisive wit pulls through like a perfect plate of dan dan noodles. “Interview “Although writing a memoir is an audacious act for a thirty-year-old, it is not nearly as audacious as some of the things Huang did and survived even earlier. . . . Whatever he ends up doing, you can be sure it won’t look or sound like anything that’s come before. A single, kinetic passage from *Fresh Off the Boat* . . . is all you need to get that straight. “Bookforum From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Q&A with Eddie Huang Q. You're a chef, but your restaurant doesn't show up in this book until pretty late. If you're not writing about your restaurant--the fabulous Baohaus in New York--then what are you writing about? A. Food is at the core of the book, but I examine it beyond the plate, almost as a symbol. There's only one recipe in this book and there are no measurements. I want people to understand the power that food has as a gateway drug into culture and history, but, first and foremost, my book tells a story about growing up Taiwanese-Chinese in America. It's a story about unpacking your identity, purging yourself of the things your environment has imposed upon your consciousness, and trying to set yourself free. I refused the American Experience I was sold, remixed it for myself, chopped it up, and sold it back. Q. One of the powerful aspects of the book is the language you use, which feels completely original. Where does your voice come from? A. Language is constantly changing and the biggest disservice you can do to yourself and your reader is to write how you think you're "supposed to" write. My parents didn't really speak English at home, so I had to develop my English voice independently and mostly through pop culture--I grew up speaking Chinese, listening to hip hop, and watching cable television. Learning to trust my own voice was probably the most important thing I ever did. When I was in college, Richard Ford visited during a speaking series and criticized Ha Jin, who had just won the National Book Award, for writing in English because it wasn't his native tongue, implying that Ha Jin should stick to Chinese. I was just a half-assed student at the time, but I stood up and argued with Ford from my seat till they made me sit down. My mother speaks broken English but even with her comic disregard for

subject-verb agreement, she throws mad knowledge darts. You should never worry about what others think about the language you use, as long as it's truly your own. Q. What do you want readers to take away from *Fresh Off the Boat*? A. The simple surface reading of this book is to be yourself by any means possible. That's the basic theme, but I want people to see how implementing a simple concept like that takes a struggle between you and your country, you and your city, you and your reference group, you and your family, you and your race, you and the sub cultures you subscribe to, and on and on. It's about the constant battle between that little voice inside you and the people you love, the legacy you carry, the cultures that make you curious, the country that tells you who you're supposed to be. It's about the complexity of being an individual--about finding love in family, in friends, in food, in music and culture, and a million other surprising places, and figuring out how to bring all that together inside of you. It's about learning to be fearless, but it's also about the cost of those lessons and the literal and psychic violence you encounter when you try to break free. There are tons of books about the struggle to be an individual, but with each one we reach more and more people who were never spoken to. I was always a weirdo growing up, but I believed that there were weirdos like me, and my writing this book is like Professor X putting on cerebro to find the other mutants. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Born in the U.S. to Taiwanese immigrant parents, Huang refuses to be a "lapdog under a bamboo ceiling," and his colloquial, furious memoir is as open about his struggling, screaming, sometimes abusive parents as it is about the prejudice he encounters growing up in Orlando and then in New York, where to this day "someone tells me to go back to China at least three times a year." He hates that everything he does is a statement about his people and where they are from, even as he refuses to be reformed, assimilated, apologetic. Always refusing to fit in, he wants to hurt people like they hurt him, and he succeeds. Now he runs a big New York City gourmet restaurant and a food store, and, throughout the book, food is front and center, including his mother's recipe for the best beef noodle soup. Readers will leave hungry, and many immigrants will recognize the refusal to go with the model minority myth. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Haven't read Eddie's latest but finally cracking open *FOB* motivates me to hit that next. As he finishes by saying, Eddie may not speak for all Asian Americans, but his voice is needed just as much today as ever. Sometimes the book dwells a little too much on his exploits, but it always tells it like it is.

I usually love books that expose me to other cultures and experiences. I didn't care for this one. I wasn't turned off by language as some others seem to be, but I was turned off by tone. Rather than giving the reader insight, it's merely a personal success story written in a "I'm too cool for you" tone. I finished it, but I don't know why.

Eddie Huang has been able to share a new perspective on the Asian-American experience. His is a distinct voice influenced by growing up on hip hop and basketball, the avenues in which he found for voicing his anger, pain and some modicum of acceptance. It's both humorous and thought-provoking at the same time. It's funny, his memoir has more closely captured my experience growing up than any other Asian-Am author has. I highly recommend. Rotten bananas forever! PS. Don't let the various articles regarding his "rant" over the watering down of his memoir for network TV put you off. The focus has been on his dissatisfaction and not on his eventual realization that the show has managed to capture the true moments in his life while still being broad enough for the general public.

Nice to see real live Asian man's thoughts that isn't emasculated. Many relatable moments of going through life as an "other." Vernacular a little hard to follow. Arc of his story seemed to change as the book progressed which was ok but I expected the Asian version of the angry black man and then finished the book with someone who was much more toned down. I felt like I couldn't quite see the crazy genius anymore.

A little on the angsty side, but very relatable. We didn't live the same life, but our life paths ran parallel and crisscrossed in a way that I can understand his motivations. One of the rare authors that I can relate to, and a funny, easy read. I've seen in other reviews that some Asian Americans can't relate to it well. I think there is a fork in the road for every Asian growing up in North America - you either choose to assimilate and throw away your family's culture, or you do what Eddie and I and half of us did and cling to it. Fight for it. I fought every day, both with fists and words, and it was quite validating to hear of someone else's similar struggle. This is Eddie's life, not your life, so I'm not sure why some people have a fantasy where Eddie will mirror their childhood 100%! I happen to like reading memoirs of people with different lives. It was a big surprise to see he had also attended Loveboat in Taiwan, and it was strange to feel oddly "connected" with a stranger because of that shared experience. His outlook on life and food is interesting, and well worth the read. I've sent a

few snapshots of quotes from his book to friends that I connected with exceptionally.

I just admit I was late to the party on Eddie Huang. I had seen *Fresh Off the Boat* on television and thought it was cute. Eventually I learned there was a book and read more about Eddie Huang. This weekend I finally bought the book and couldn't put it down. The writing is unconventional, but the storytelling is strong. I realized quite soon that the real Huang family only superficially resembled the TV version. The book does not hold back on the life they lived and how it affected not just Eddie but his brothers. The book is important as it delves into the challenges that an immigrant family faces in trying to "make it" while also keeping their culture. Get over the profanity and all the hip hop references you probably won't get. The story is compelling and worth the read.

It starts off as a cute childhood mirror that reflects the tone of the tv series, but in a much more nuanced, complex, and more humorous way. As the book delves into Eddie's teenage years, it gets darker, and certain parts are filled with slang and brands associated with hip hop culture that may not hold a reader's attention as much if you're not familiar with or particularly interested in these kinds of things. In the end, though, it rounds itself out to be a nice coming of age story where a boy searches for a way that he can be true to himself in the world, despite competing social pressures from both the United States and Asia that impose certain characteristics on him because of his appearance. As an Asian American, I could relate to some things, but mostly found it interesting to read how someone else dealt with similar identity pressures in a very different way.

This book isn't for everyone. But everyone should read it. Being an immigrant from Taiwan myself, I related to much of the frustrations the author experienced growing up in the US. This book is as honest as it comes. Before reading this book, I thought the author's criticisms of the new mega hit TV show based on his book, was self centered and "sour grape", but after reading it, I understood more his gripes, and I even agree with him, though I still love the TV show.

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