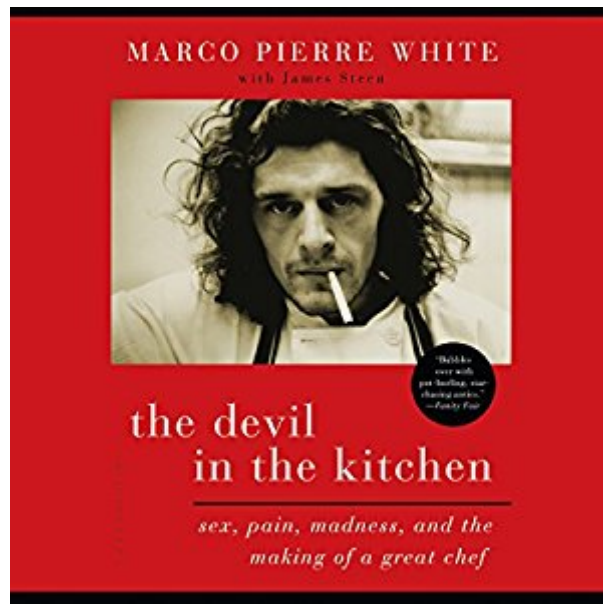


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The Devil In The Kitchen: Sex, Pain, Madness, And The Making Of A Great Chef



Synopsis

Without question, the original rock-star chef is Marco Pierre White. Anyone with even a passing interest in the food world knows White is a legend. The first British chef (and the youngest chef anywhere) to win three Michelin stars - and the only chef ever to give them all back - is a chain-smoking, pot-throwing multiply married culinary genius whose fierce devotion to food and restaurants has been the only constant in a life of tabloid-ready turmoil. In *The Devil in the Kitchen*, White tells the story behind his ascent from working-class roots to culinary greatness, leaving no dish unserved as he relays raucous and revealing tales featuring some of the biggest names in the food world and beyond, including: Mario Batali, Gordon Ramsay, Albert Roux, Raymond Blanc, Michael Caine, Damien Hirst, and even Prince Charles. With candid honesty and wicked humor, he gives us insight into what it takes to become a great chef, what it's like to run a three-star kitchen, and why sometimes you really do need to throw a cheese plate at the wall.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is a fascinating story in this book, but unfortunately it never emerges. Marco White has all the elements - talent, glamour, flamboyance, brilliant chef and restaurateur, and a real flair for drama and theatrics. In telling his own story, however, he settles for a recitation of all the bad-boy behavior told with a tedious lack of insight and an unattractively smug tone. How long can you go on tossing people out of your restaurant (customers, employees and business partners alike) and your life (friends, colleagues, mentors and wives) before it occurs to you that the problem isn't other people, but you? For White, it seems that the answer is "Forever." White's personal story is compelling - up

from a working class background, raised by an emotionally distant father after his mother's early death, inspired by food and cooking to reach the pinnacle of British cuisine (stop snickering - it does exist and he did it) at a very young age and thereby gaining entry into the glitzy jet set that he both loves and is uncomfortable with. The problem is that he lists the facts ("This is how I got this job; this is where I worked under brutal conditions that would fell a lesser man and where I loved it until I hated it and was fired or quit; this was a cooking genius I deeply admired and learned enormously from until I stopped admiring and now we don't speak; and I did this all because I am driven by an unslakeable thirst to brag about what a pain-junkie I am") without conveying any of the excitement and enthusiasm that must have fueled this. Other than being self-congratulatory ad nauseum about what a tough bastard he is, White has nothing to offer a reader trying to understand how he became the culinary rock-star that he is - a phrase he cannot get enough of. And that is a pity, because a book by a chef should at least be able to convey his knowledge of and passion for food. Three Michelin stars are not just handed out like Halloween candy, and a chef with his talent, knowledge and experience - aaah, it's just plain frustrating that the food part of this takes a distant second place to Big Bad Bullying Chef stories. Where is all the sublime food that he must have cooked? The hunt for superb ingredients? The remarkable techniques that transformed a simple rice dish into "the best risotto he ever ate"? Missing, that's where. Foodies everywhere will be disappointed. Oh, yeah - if you are going to list sex first in your subtitle, there should be more of it in the book other than an acknowledgment that you are shy with the birds and that you preferred cooking to sex. Especially when you are also saying that you routinely shagged customers in your office during dinner service. One chapter of the book relates his law suit against the NY Times for publishing a mildly defamatory profile of him, where one of his successful claims was that the piece damaged his reputation among American diners who might now avoid his restaurants. Considering what he has done to himself with this book, White should return the money.

Marco Pierre White is the original rock and roll chef and the first person I'm aware of to consistently go into the dining room and tell people to shove off. When I was on an ACF Jr. Culinary Olympic Team in the late 90s, this was not a fact we overlooked, and for it White was instantly a hero of ours. I grabbed up all his cookbooks; the best of which was the tough to find White Heat. Through it, we discovered strange foods like caul fat, that we, as young cooks, had never seen, had, or even heard of. Needless to say, when I saw he was writing a biography, my interest was peaked. There's a funny story in the book that sums it up for me. A Michelin 3 star chef dined at White's restaurant, and afterwards, came into the kitchen to say everything was great except the fish -- which was salty.

White told the cook who prepared it to tell the chef to "F off". White seems to tell everyone to "F" Off, and as interesting as this book was to me, a fan, I'm sad to say, overall, it is pretty poor. White has a tremendous ego, and comes off sounding like a real jerk that ruins every meaningful relationship he's ever been apart of both personally and in business.

I have only ever read three other autobiographies and that was enough to put me off the genre for good. However I picked this one up because Marco lived on the same estate as my grandparents whom I visited regularly as a child and I thought local references and memories might be interesting. I was intending to skim read it but I was engrossed from the first page. The loss of his mother at such a young age was by far the most traumatic thing that ever happened to him and whilst he acknowledges this and recognises how the experience, amongst other things, might have shaped him, he doesn't use it as an excuse. In fact it's interesting to see how a person's attributes and failings can be traced to parents, upbringing and early experiences. I enjoyed his tales of escaping to the Harewood estate to go fishing and his first jobs, his days on the Kings Road with the Chelsea crowd through to his success as a Michelin starred chef. Most of all I admired his hard work, determination and passion for creating which comes through almost obsessively. Even if you have no interest in fine dining or 'cheffing' you can't help but enjoy his mischievous streak as he describes people he worked with and stories of pranks both in the kitchen and out. Interestingly the title of this book in Britain is simply 'The Devil In The Kitchen' which I feel is a better description as the book isn't about sex or madness and the additional title just isn't needed.

A touching and enduring love story between Mr. White and his temper tantrums, most of which happen to take place in a kitchen, which is as close as this book comes to being about food. Mr. White's father was mean to him as a child, and Mr. White as a supposed grown up is mean to others, told 100 times over. Insanely boring. Kitchen Confidential was infinitely better although yes, Mr. White was quite the hottie back in the day and looks great on the cover.

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