



A Cook's Tour

By Anthony Bourdain
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Introduction When author and chef Anthony Bourdain exposed the "culinary underbelly" of our nation's finest eating establishments in the best-selling *Kitchen Confidential* -- using his inimitable combination of wit, candor, and bravado -- readers and reviewers alike were smitten. Having tackled the American eating scene, Bourdain travels the world in *A Cook's Tour*, scouring the continents, befriendng the natives, risking death and deportation -- and eating his way towards the Perfect Meal. Among other places, he visits the France of his boyhood summers, where he tasted his life-changing first oyster; he hits Vietnam to sample an authentic bowl of pho; in frigid Russia he consumes luscious caviar and enough vodka to sink an elephant; in sweltering Morocco he has the roasted lamb of his desert-adventure fantasies; Japan offers not only the ultimate sushi experience, but a chance to try fugu, the poisonous puffer fish; in crumbling, post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, the food is as shady as the politics. But this cook's tour is more than just a breezy jaunt to exotic lands -- it's a lesson in diplomacy, a study in cultural history, and often times, a test of human endurance. As he savors these foreign delicacies, Bourdain discovers the inextricable link between food and country -- and that even when you've traveled across time zones, good food can always make you feel at home. **Questions for**

Discussion

1. Bourdain tastes some pretty exotic dishes in *A Cook's Tour* -- T'te de veau (calf's face), snake wine, and sheep testicles, to name a few. What is the wildest thing you've ever eaten? What is the thing you've always wanted to try? What is the thing you'd never try no matter what?
2. When you travel to other places, how important is trying the cuisine of the region to you? Do you make a point of sampling as much regional food as possible or do you tend to stick to the tried and true, eating at McDonald's more often than not? Where that you've visited has had the best food and why?
3. After reading *A Cook's Tour* -- and from your own personal experience -- what are some basic differences Americans have in their attitude towards food, meals, and eating, compared to people in other countries?
4. Is *A Cook's Tour* more of a travel book, more of a food book, or equal parts both? If you could, would you want to embark upon a globe-trotting adventure similar to Bourdain's? What seemed most appealing and most unappealing about his trip?
5. How did the fact that Bourdain is a professional chef affect his account? Would it have been better or worse if he was an "ordinary" person? Did his background make him more willing to try different things or more of a "food snob" about what he ate?
6. What do you think the food of a country says about the politics, customs, people, and general way of life of that culture? Compare, for instance, the food/cultures of Japan, Cambodia, and Portugal.
7. Bourdain makes many of his descriptions of eating good food sound almost like a religious experience. Do you agree that good food can have this affect -- or is it, in the end, just sustenance? If not food, what in your life do you feel this passionately about?
8. In both of his books, Bourdain discusses the phenomenon of the celebrity chef. How does he use his celebrity? How does he compare to other well-known chefs in terms of his appeal, his honesty, and his style?

About the Author: Anthony Bourdain is the best-selling author of *Kitchen Confidential*, two satirical thrillers, *Bone in the Throat* and *Gone Bamboo*, and the urban historical *Typhoid Mary*. A 28-year veteran of professional kitchens, he is currently Executive Chef at Brasserie Les Halles in Manhattan. He lives -- and will always live -- in New York City.