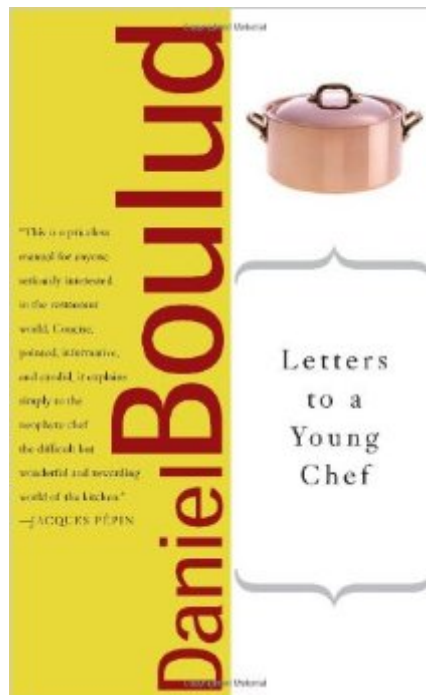


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Letters To A Young Chef (Art Of Mentoring (Paperback))



Synopsis

From the reinvention of French food through the fine dining revolution in America, Daniel Boulud has been witness to, and creator of, our contemporary food culture. A modern man with a classical foundation, he speaks with the authority that comes from a lifetime of experience, and no small amount of passion, about the vocation of creating and serving food. Part memoir, part advice book, part recipe book, this delicious celebration of the art of cooking will delight and enlighten chefs of all kinds, from passionate amateurs to serious professionals.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This essay recommends practices which an aspiring chef of haute cuisine should follow in order to succeed in this very demanding profession. Many of Boulud's recommendations are as applicable to a professional in information systems as they are to a culinary professional, but some are distinctly applicable to crafts where one works with ones hands. For example, one of the things which distinguish professional chefs from the home chef or, for that matter, from culinary journalists, is the fact that they have prepared some dishes thousands of times over, so they can judge the doneness of a cooked material by the simplest sound or feel or smell. They are so well practiced at knife skills that many kitchen aids are, for them a waste of time. So, there are some suggestions which may actually be better advice for a carpenter than they are for a statistician. The recommendations are golden. I find nothing here which runs counter to anything else I have read about the culinary profession. Two of the most distinctive aspects are the importance of mentoring

in a culinary education and the need to be prepared to give up a normal life at home. The first aspect repeats the similarity between culinary arts and other manual trades. Carpentry and plumbing still follow mentoring career paths dating back to the middle ages. Boulud also effectively describes the difference between haute cuisine and bourgeoise cuisine, a distinction in French which I have seen in no other cuisine, although I suspect there are some Japanese culinary disciplines which embody the same distinctions with their intensive discipline in knife skills and pasta making.

This book had me believing. I must say, it still does. The advice is visceral. It's an invaluable guide to sharpening your focus. Daniel is a motivator and it is a true gift to be able to read through these letters. These are the conversations and the answers to the questions you want to spend an entire day asking a great chef, but whom would never have the time of day to speak to you. There is but one issue I have. The title of this book should not be Letters to Young Chef, but rather, Letters to an Adolescent/Teenager/Early 20 somethings Chef. You see, when I picked up this book I interpreted the title as being directed to someone who is either preparing to cook professionally or has been (even for some time) cooking but still feels young in regards to the knowledge they have. Then while reading Pg.85 para 1, Daniel straight up says that this is not a book for a cook who is 30. For him/her it is too late, except in the rarest of circumstances. This is where Daniel and I disagree, and where I have now become disenchanted with having to finish the rest of the book, although of course, I will. I'm a professional cook who has been working for 4 years starting at 27 now 31. I have always pushed myself to keep up with my younger peers and in the process have realized one thing. They cannot keep up with me! And what I notice most of all, is that my age brings to the table a degree of maturity and obedience to the chef that youth just can't seem to bare. I don't work in the ultra-competitive New York scene but age has absolutely nothing to do with intention and drive. Cooking is not about age. It is about the fire of passion, will and desire to learn and grow, and Daniel completely squelches that fire out of existence with his remarks.

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