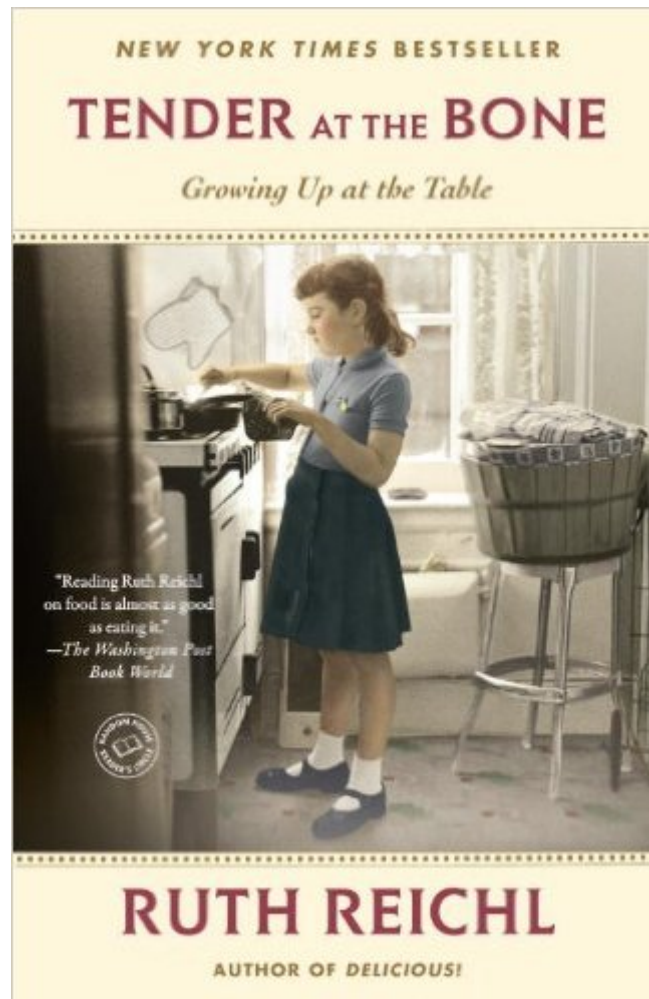


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# Tender At The Bone: Growing Up At The Table (Random House Reader's Circle)



## Synopsis

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER** At an early age, Ruth Reichl discovered that "food could be a way of making sense of the world. . . . If you watched people as they ate, you could find out who they were." Her deliciously crafted memoir, *Tender at the Bone*, is the story of a life determined, enhanced, and defined in equal measure by a passion for food, unforgettable people, and the love of tales well told. Beginning with Reichl's mother, the notorious food-poisoner known as the Queen of Mold, Reichl introduces us to the fascinating characters who shaped her world and her tastes, from the gourmand Monsieur du Croix, who served Reichl her first soufflé, to those at her politically correct table in Berkeley who championed the organic food revolution in the 1970s. Spiced with Reichl's infectious humor and sprinkled with her favorite recipes, *Tender at the Bone* is a witty and compelling chronicle of a culinary sensualist's coming-of-age.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this autobiography, Ruth Reichl, the longtime food critic for the NY Times, now the editor in chief at Gourmet, explains how she came to love food. The book weaves a tapestry of stories, including some about her mother (dubbed the Queen of Mold for serving completely unpalatable dishes) and her early childhood (how an early trip to Paris and her time spent at a French-Canadian boarding school influenced her tastes) to her adulthood, working in a collaborative kitchen and becoming friends with influential foodies. The stories are often laugh out loud funny, and some are very

touching (her mother's manic behavior is explained later in the book). The book allows the reader to see Reichl's influences and her deep love of food through the stories, without Reichl ever coming out and saying "these are my influences." Food lovers in particular will probably adore this book, but lovers of autobiographies will probably also enjoy it. The book is not about food, exactly, but about a woman's coming of age (and part of that coming of age is that she simply loves food and the art of its creation). A delicious read--I couldn't put it down.

This is a very enjoyable autobiographical account of a foodie discovering a range of cooking and eating possibilities way beyond her first, rather ghastly, home experiences. Reichl introduces us to memorable characters who accidentally or deliberately guided the development of her taste/s. I read it through at a sitting the first time. Now I am reading it more slowly and photocopying some of the recipes because I don't want to cover the book in grease. Highly recommended as a story of a personal "getting of wisdom", as well as a narrative which is crowded with memorable characters. P.S. I ordered as a companion, and am still reading, the 1998 compilation of essays about food, *We are What we Ate*, edited by Mark Winegardner.

The friend that I borrowed this book from was devastated when I returned it and she (subsequently) couldn't find it. Synchronously, I received it in a recycling effort from one of her dear friends. Imagine how excited she's going to be to receive it back! With good-humored perspective, Ruth Reichl, NY Times Food Editor, lovingly introduces the significant people in her life and the way she managed to find a path for herself and build a wonderful life in spite of a tumultuous childhood. A childhood that was filled with emotional trauma and rather ghastly home experiences, (imagine) Ruth's Mother picks her up from middle school, and without any preparation or explanation, drives to Canada, where she deposits Ruth in a Catholic boarding school where only French is spoken. When Ruth begs not to be left there, her Mother reminds her that she is the one that wants to learn French! Reichl introduces us to quirky, memorable characters that thankfully guided the development of her love of fine food. A story filled with wit, sadness, resourcefulness and occasional mishap, Ruth will tell you she learned early in life that the most important thing in life is a good story! You will be as amazed as I by the life Reichl led and discover a range of cooking and eating possibilities way beyond today's lifestyle. Excellent!

Why I like this book can be best summed up by the beginning of the second-to-last chapter: After reading Reichl's first restaurant review, her editor remarks that she was born to do this, and she

replies softly, "No, but I was very well trained." Although she was gifted with an appreciative palate and a knack for cooking, Reichl acquired her knowledge of foods from a series of good teachers, ranging from the eccentric quilt-maker Mr. Izzy T to exacting French winegrowers and tart-makers. Her ease with a wide variety of people, and her willingness to learn, were as crucial to her success as her way with words. She's a good storyteller, but there's genuine warmth beneath the engaging (and sometimes scary) portraits of her friends, family, and mentors. (I was a graduate student at Berkeley during some of the time she lived there, and her picture of commune living and the restaurant business was dead on -- but, unlike many other writers who came out of the same milieu, she neither romanticizes the hippie lifestyle nor sneers at the political mind-set.) The book is like having lunch with a friend who's knowledgeable about food and wine, but not pretentious or smug, and I found it perfectly delightful.

Light, yet rich and tasty. Restaurant critic Ruth Reichl's memoir is all of these. Easy to read, yet filled with insight and well-rounded characters. The author's mother suffered from manic depression, and one way it manifested itself was in bizarre - and often downright poisonous - culinary creations. The author describes herself as having been shaped by her mother's handicap, beginning at an early age to use food as a way of making sense of the world. She effectively conveys this food-sense in a series of funny and poignant tales that take us from her childhood in New York up through young adulthood in California. She lovingly introduces the significant people in her life, revealing them to us in how and what they cooked. Her stories are punctuated by recipes (I didn't cook any of them, but they look like they should work). The author is equally effective when she moves away from the table to tell more directly of her relationships with friends and family. She describes some episodes that could be seen as time-bound clichés - living in a commune, working in a collectively managed restaurant - with a perspective sometimes lacking in baby-boom memoirs. She brings similar good-humored perspective to her mother's mental illness and her own struggle with anxiety attacks, never wallowing in graphic description of symptoms. You don't have to be a "foodie" to enjoy *TENDER AT THE BONE*, just a lover of warm, tender memoirs.

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