

Further Reading

Delicious!
Ruth Reichl (2014)
REICHL

Working as a public relations hotline consultant for a once-prestigious culinary magazine, Billie Breslin unexpectedly enters a world of New York restaurateurs and artisanal purveyors while reading World War II letters exchanged between a plucky twelve-year-old and James Beard.

My Kitchen Year: 136 Recipes That Saved My Life
Ruth Reichl (2015)
COOKING REI

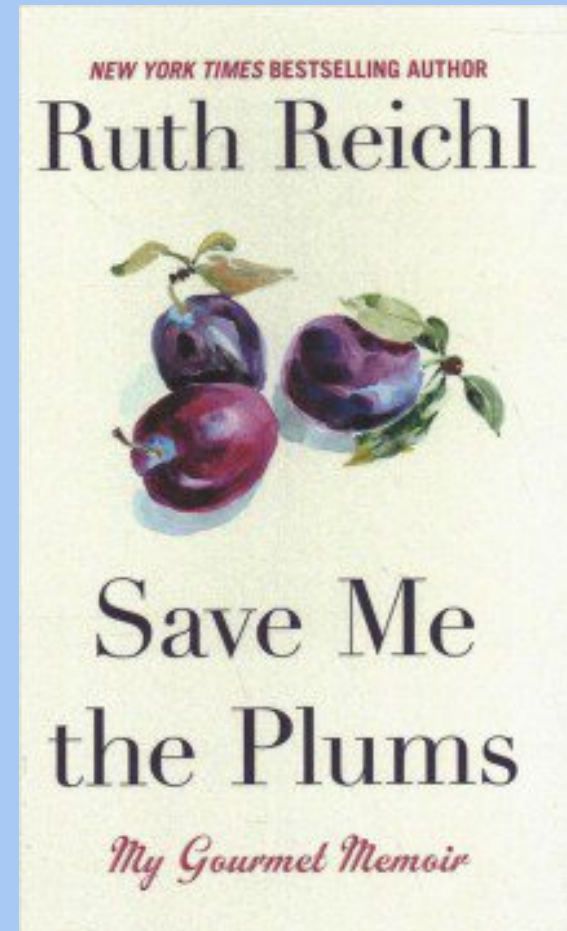
Recounts the author's emotional healing through cooking, with the recipes she used, after losing her job when Gourmet magazine was abruptly closed.

Not Becoming My Mother: And Other Things She Taught Me Along the Way
Ruth Reichl (2009)
BIOGRAPHY REICHL

Reflects on the author's mother, focusing on her early life as a bookstore owner and housewife and the diaries she kept which had been retrieved by her daughter after her death.

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Book Discussion Guide



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About the Book

When Conde Nast offered Ruth Reichl the top position at America's oldest epicurean magazine, she declined. She was a writer, not a manager, and had no inclination to be anyone's boss. Yet Reichl had been reading *Gourmet* since she was eight; it had inspired her career. How could she say no? This is the story of a former Berkeley hippie entering the corporate world and worrying about losing her soul. It is the story of the moment restaurants became an important part of popular culture, a time when the rise of the farm-to-table movement changed, forever, the way we eat. Readers will meet legendary chefs like David Chang and Eric Ripert, idiosyncratic writers like David Foster Wallace, and a colorful group of editors and art directors who, under Reichl's leadership, transformed stately *Gourmet* into a cutting-edge publication. Recipes included!

Discussion Questions

1. What made Ruth Reichl's decision to accept the position of editor-in-chief of her favorite magazine a difficult choice: why was she hesitant to take the job? Why did she end up accepting it?
2. How would you describe the inside world of Conde Nast? Talk, for instance, about the perks of Reichl's job— the country club memberships, hairdressers, and much more. Does it all seem outlandish or just down right wonderful, even enviable?
3. How did Reichl manage to juggle the ever-difficult job of being a working mother? What do you make of her comment that "Children... need you around even if they ignore you. In fact, they need you around so they can ignore you"?
4. There is a good deal of humor in Reichl's memoir. Which episodes delighted you most? Ann Patchett's turtle ... or David Foster Wallace's lobster festival? Point to some other incidents you found particularly funny or rich.
5. And the food? Which of the many descriptions made your mouth water?
6. At a book signing, Reichl was confronted by a chef who was fired from his job after her restaurant review talked about his "Mushy sole. Cottony bread." He was unable to find work ever since, he told her. What do you think about the power a single restaurant critic can wield over the lives of people in the food industry? Fair? Unfair?
7. Talk about the ways that Reichl was able to reinvent *Gourmet* magazine, all the revisions she made in terms of hiring and firing staff, as well as stylistic changes like reinventing *Gourmet*'s covers. What did you find most impressive about her vision and her management style?
8. After an incident while ordering lunch in France at the onset of the 2008 recession, Reichl tells us, "The more stars in your itinerary, the less likely you are to find the real life of another country." What does she mean? How has she finally come to see the outsized perks of magazine life?
9. Talk about the end of *Gourmet* and, in Reichl's own words, her "terrible sense of failure." What brought about the magazine's closure?

Courtesy of litlovers.com

