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**Anthony Bourdain on *How I Learned To Cook***



"The whole principal is, when you have something great, don't [mess] it up." Anthony Bourdain, globetrotting chef, author and maverick pontificator, is talking about cooking—but he might be talking about the process of putting together [How I Learned to Cook](#), the new collection of personal essays by great chefs (including Bourdain). Like a good dish, the book starts with impeccable ingredients. In this case, its the memories of some of the most talented and famous chefs of the day, and they're compiled into a single moveable feast. Bourdain gives credit for the result to editor Kimberly Witherspoon, but he had a role as well.

"Just as with the first book (*Don't Try This at Home*) I wrangled a lot of the chefs into contributing. It was fun to reach out to our friends," says Bourdain. "The chefs were incredibly generous and willing to share and tell stories on themselves. And it includes a glimpse of what will be one of the great writing careers in food: the piece by Gabrielle Hamilton."

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His own essay in the book is about re-learning how to cook, this time for TV. "Like so many lessons in the kitchen, it's a painful one," says Bourdain. "Learning to cook is a matter of trial and error, which is something that cookbooks have never managed to convey. If you see how chefs learn, it should be incredibly encouraging to home cooks." And as for not messing up what you start with? "People take the extra step to ruin their food," Bourdain explains with exasperation. An example: "It's extra effort just to *rinse your pasta*."

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Posted By: Joel Sparks  
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