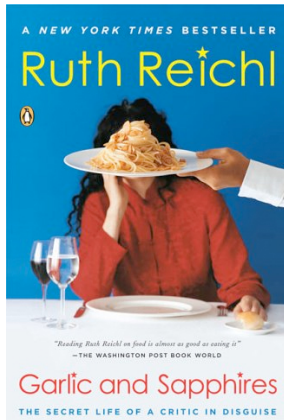


illuminating articles

[Spectacular Books]

Garlic and Sapphires by Ruth Reichl



Ruth Reichl is a world-famous restaurant critic and writer and was the editor of *Gourmet Magazine*. She began as restaurant critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and rose to greater fame as the critic for the *New York Times*.

Needless to say, in the nineties, she grew so popular, that her word was gold. If she gave one star to a restaurant, they were nearly sunk, if she gave four, the restaurant grew to have legendary status in New York.

After she noticed that restaurants were giving her the star treatment whenever she visited them, she realized that she wasn't having the same experience as the other patrons and worried that her readers might visit a place based on her reviews and receive quite the opposite treatment. It was with this realization that she devised a plan to start disguising herself.

From the Publishers Weekly Starred review:

"Reichl creates wildly innovative getups, becoming Brenda, a red-haired aging hippie, to test the food at

Daniel; Chloe, a blonde divorcée, to evaluate Lespinasse; and even her deceased mother, Miriam, to dine at 21. Such elaborate disguises—which include wigs, makeup, thrift store finds and even credit cards in other names—help Reichl maintain anonymity in her work, but they also do more than that. "Every restaurant is a theater," she explains. Each one "offer[s] the opportunity to become someone else, at least for a little while. Restaurants free us from mundane reality." Reichl's ability to experience meals in such a dramatic way brings an infectious passion to her memoir."

While Ms. Reichl was painfully aware that her job could seem "indecent," especially when she's traveling home on the subway and finds a homeless man so hungry he's politely asking for food (she happens to have some boxed up roasted duck she gives him that he happily recognizes and savors), she was so stunningly brilliant at immersing herself in her work so completely, the reader feels that they're there at the restaurant alongside her (and her disguised personalities), tasting every bite and savoring every morsel.

You don't have to be a restaurant connoisseur to enjoy this book. If you have a love for real food, you'll adore it. Oh! Did I tell you there are recipes?

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