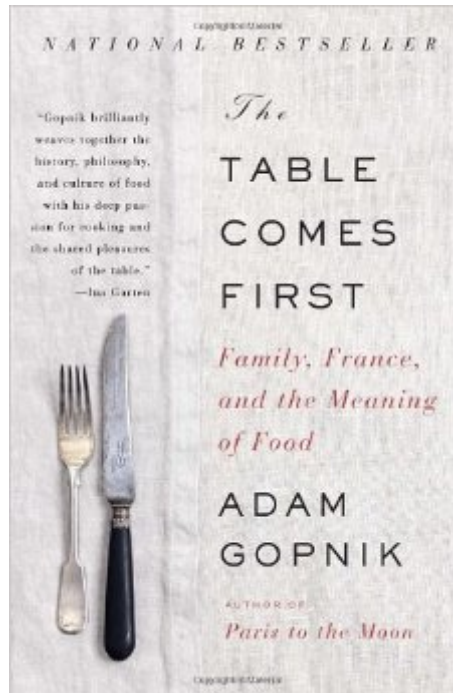


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The Table Comes First: Family, France, And The Meaning Of Food



Synopsis

From the author of *Paris to the Moon*, a beguiling tour of the morals and manners of our present food mania, in search of eating's deeper truths. Never before have we cared so much about food. It preoccupies our popular culture, our fantasies, and even our moralizing. With our top chefs as deities and finest restaurants as places of pilgrimage, we have made food the stuff of secular seeking and transcendence, finding heaven in a mouthful. But have we come any closer to discovering the true meaning of food in our lives? With inimitable charm and learning, Adam Gopnik takes us on a beguiling journey in search of that meaning as he charts America's recent and rapid evolution from commendably aware eaters to manic, compulsive gastronomes.

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Customer Reviews

Adam Gopnik's earlier book, *Paris to the Moon*, delighted me with its insight, charm and wit. So when I heard Gopnik interviewed on NPR about his latest book *THE TABLE COMES FIRST*, it became an instant must read. I am sorry to say this volume does not live up to expectations. *THE TABLE* is meant to be the insightful exploration of the meaning of gathering for a meal at home or in a restaurant, as the jacket blurb promises. It is in reality a report on trends: localism, slow food, quantitative wine reviews and the so-called crisis in French cooking, with some observations about family and France along the way. Info that is timely, not timeless. *PARIS/MOON* recreates the experience of living among the French. Gopnik's combination of close observation and historic review reveals what feels like the truth about French civilization-- a key to understanding the nation

and people. And he does so with elan and many a bon mot. In this work only his demi chapter on the origin of the cookbook recaptures the tone of delightful discovery, dry wit and ironic bewilderment I so much enjoy and admire in his earlier writing. Gopnik devotes a chapter to 'taste,' a topic that has entire books devoted to it. The question of Taste and her sisters Manners and Morals involves anthropology, sociology, history and religion. To squeeze it into just a chapter, the author covers huge swaths of intellectual territory at a brisk clip. His offering is $\hat{\text{A}}$ $\hat{\text{A}}$ - (to use culinary metaphors) half baked, dense and hard to digest. After this didactic, half-convincing introduction of the main topic, the rest of the book feels flimsy.

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