

Colorful Palate: A Flavorful Journey through a Mixed American Experience

Raj Tawney

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Considering himself fortunate to have multicultural roots—Indian, Puerto Rican, and Italian—each with its own special blend of flavors, colors, scents, and passions, Raj Tawney brings a bit from each culture to his engaging memoir *Colorful Palate*.

As a child, Tawney wasn't aware that he didn't fit in. But when he moved to the New York City suburbs, his differences were pointed out to him. His olive skin, curly dark hair, bushy eyebrows, and different name made him an outsider and an easy target for bullies. But instead of trying to conform, he adopted his own radical style in clothing, music, and friends, embracing his identity. Still, he felt lost.

The conversational, energetic narrative points to the sources of Tawney's noncompliance with conventionality: his grandmother and mother, two strong women who refused to make themselves small to fit into traditional boxes. Playing "sous-chef to their culinary wizardry," he absorbed not only the secrets of their cuisine but the stories they told around the table, guaranteeing that hearts were filled as well as stomachs, and that souls were satisfied as well as palates. Balancing out this tribute to his family's heritage, Tawney credits his father and brother with teaching him what it means to be a man—strong, vigorous, and uncompromising.

Infused with passion and brio, the book highlights the pros and cons of being a multiracial nonconformist in a society that values fitting in. Tawney's rearview-mirror look at his formative years leaves him grateful—for strong family role models and small moments shared with his loved ones. And the book includes a family recipe at the end of each chapter in remembrance of the gustatory pleasures it recounts.

Colorful Palate is a memoir about rejecting conformity to lead a colorful, authentic life.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September / October 2023)

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