



## Jay Rayner's Last Supper: One Meal, A Lifetime in the Making

### Jay Rayner

Faber & Faber (Mar 3, 2020)

Softcover \$22.95 (304pp)

978-1-78335-221-0

Look forward to gorging on wit, food history, and strong opinions in *Jay Rayner's Last Supper*, an entertaining, bon mots-studded consideration of the feast that the British journalist threw for a lucky circle of loved ones following some adventures in gastronomy.

With the realization that a condemned prisoner or terminally ill person's last meal is an inherently melancholic and an unappetizing exercise for the guest of honor, and facing his own mortality, Rayner researched an idiosyncratic and celebratory version of the meal, hoping to "capture the essence of one's life through food." Organized by courses, from bread and butter to a fondly remembered dessert and bizarre boozy nightcap, the book touches upon interesting events in Rayner's life, the coming of age of British cuisine, and the global rise of food journalism and entertainment.

Rayner's parents loved dinner parties and gourmet restaurant meals, so fond, fun chapters on oysters and snails are included. However, Rayner is also a fan of more common edibles (expertly sourced and prepared!) that are revealed in his final menu.

Rayner's writing career has afforded him singular opportunities for travel, exciting dining experiences, and encounters with the famous and the notorious. He describes bizarre interviews with an off-kilter Holocaust denier and a "cheerfully bigoted against everybody" Cajun oyster farmer, and artfully skewers certain food celebrities with rapier disdain. His admiration for other colleagues, though, is equally fervent. He poignantly muses about the death of Anthony Bourdain, who was a kindred food philosopher and "a brilliant and important man," and whose "ghost" hangs over this last supper quest.

Side effects of *Jay Rayner's Last Supper* include sighing, snorting, drooling, and frequent stops to jot down a grocery or play list. It's a beguiling gallop through the food memories of a remarkable personality and a carpe diem reminder.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (March / April 2020)

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