FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Cooking

Rogues, Writers & Whores: Dining with the Rich & Infamous
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"I enjoy nothing more," wrote Jean-Baptiste Colbert, France's Minister of Finance under King Louis XIV, "than making love, dining well and drinking the rich red wines of Bordeaux, and I am never more pleased when I can carry out these activities all at the same time."

This is a book about appetites. As Rogov writes, "It is true that without great chefs there would be no great dishes, but one has to bear in mind that such dedication to the preparation of fine food demands to be matched by equal dedication to its consumption and appreciation." Moving chronologically from ancient Rome to the mid-twentieth century, Rogov provides the reader sixty-nine light-hearted portraits of great gourmets (including a few great gluttons) along with recipes associated with each, usually their own creations or dishes named for them.

Along the way, we meet great chefs such as George Escoffier (who essentially created modern French cuisine), royalty such as King Henri IV (a.k.a. the Great Bérnaise, who bankrupted the national treasury and lost several wars but famously declared that it was "the moral obligation of all French men and women to dine well at least three times a day"), writers with hearty appetites (Ernest Hemingway), and mistresses who satisfied king's appetites (Madame de Pompadour, who as the mistress of King Louis XV was said to have ruled France from the prone position). The portraits are brief (one to two pages), sometimes frustratingly so, and are lighthearted and humorous. The recipes range from simple to highly complex with rare and expensive ingredients. The reader who sets out to prepare every recipe presented would do well to have a truffle field in her backyard. But even if some of the recipes are impossible for the home cook, as Rogov points out, "a gourmet knows one can extract as much pleasure from the reading of such a recipe as one could in dining upon the dish." While that may be an overstatement, Rogov does understand the gastronomic pleasures of the written word.

Like some of the figures about whom he writes, Rogov has devoted a good deal of his

life to pursuing the perfect meal as a wine and restaurant critic for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* . He also publishes the annual *Rogov's Guide to Israeli Wines*. Yael Hershberg provides humorous pen and ink wash illustrations for each of the gourmets profiled in the book. The drawings are beautifully rendered and perfectly complement the lighthearted tone of Rogov's writing.

Oscar Wilde once wrote, "I hate people who are not serious about their meals." Those who are not serious about their meals will likely hate this book, as will those who take their meals too seriously. But those who greatly enjoy a tasty dish served with a side of humorous anecdote will find *Rogues, Writers & Whores* to be quite scrumptious.