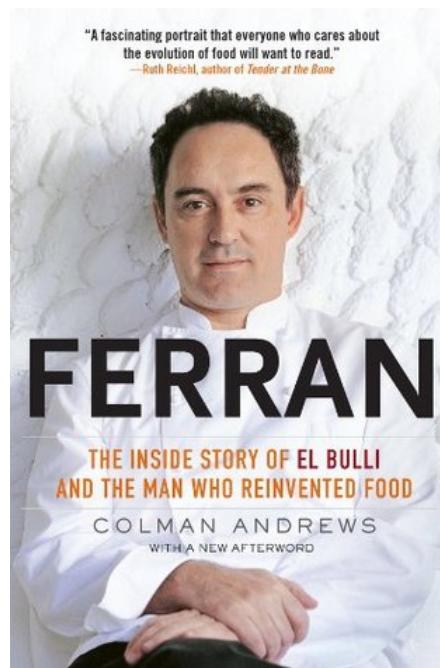




Ferran: The Inside Story of El Bulli and the Man Who Reinvented Food

Colman Andrews

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The first-ever biography of Ferran Adrià, the chef behind Spain's renowned El Bulli restaurant, by one of the world's foremost food authorities.

Ferran Adrià is arguably the greatest culinary revolutionary of our time. Hailed as a genius and a prophet by fellow chefs, worshipped (if often misunderstood) by critics and lay diners alike, Adrià is imitated and paid homage to in professional kitchens, and in more than a few private ones, all over the world.

In his lively close-up portrait of Adrià, award-winning food writer Colman Andrews traces this groundbreaking chef's rise from resort-hotel dishwasher to culinary deity, and the evolution of El Bulli from a German-owned beach bar into the establishment voted annually by an international jury to be "the world's best restaurant." With a new afterword for the paperback edition, *Ferran* brings to life the most exciting food movement of our time and illuminates the ways in which Adrià has forever altered our understanding and appreciation of food and cooking.

Ferran: The Inside Story of El Bulli and the Man Who Reinvented Food Details

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From Reader Review Ferran: The Inside Story of El Bulli and the Man Who Reinvented Food for online ebook

Peggy Lo says

I think the book is very detailed and covers a lot of ground, everything from Ferran's history to El Bulli's history and a great look into the trajectory and future of his work. The work of the Alicia Foundation sounds fascinating. I've never really thought about how his techniques can be used to enhance the nutrition and flavor of food in nursing homes or for those with certain allergies. I wish there are pictures or something that gives the book more life. I know that dishes and techniques are exhaustively captured in other books and in the dvd series but without them here I feel like I didn't get the complete picture I was looking for.

Krystyn says

This book is overrated. There are much more engaging books about restaurants and kitchens, and there is little insight into Ferran (little insight or critical thinking of any kind). The most interesting person in the whole book seemed to be the original owner of elBulli. If you are a huge fan, really want to know about this history of the road leading to the restaurant, or want a list of basically everything ever served in a tasting dinner, then this should be right up your alley.

Wm says

I really like the way this book is structured. Andrews tackles issues of biography, food writing, hype, philosophy, criticism of Ferran, etc. in ways that are thorough but not tedious (unless one is allergic to history and/or food writing) and journalistic in tone (while still somewhat adoring of Ferran). This is not hagiography. But neither is it a take down. It's sympathetic and a bit in awe, but is also trying to peel beneath the hype. Andrews isn't afraid to (and has the skills to) talk up some of the dishes he had at El Bulli, but also isn't afraid to say when he doesn't like something.

And Ferran comes off less as a pompous genius and more as a driven, lucky, generous guy. This may just be a more sophisticated entry in the hype surrounding El Bulli, but if so, it's a very well-written and reported one.

Ty says

I am fascinated by the cuisine of Ferran Adria, so i had high hopes for this book. Not sure what i was hoping for exactly, but i had to believe that someone who has creating such bizarre and elegant dishes would be interesting and interesting to read about. After finishing the book, I can say that i still think that Adria is interesting, but this book is not. The author, Colman Andrews, is a long time veteran of food writing, having founded "Savueur" magazine and been its editor for many years, but with Adria Andrews is a like a blushing school girl. There is only so many times that one can read about the sheer magnificence of Adria before it gets old. I suppose that the real problem is that Adria is a very private person, and even though he did support the writing of this book, he never really did open up to Andrews, so much of the book is based on the

praise of Adria's acolytes and the attacks of his detractors. I can't really recommend this one...perhaps Adria will write his own story one day and that will be more revealing.

Jessee says

While I admire Ferran Adria's food and usually love behind-the-scenes food memoirs and other food-related books, this book managed to make the history of one of the world's most interesting restaurants a slog to finish. The author is obviously enamored with Ferran (and very pleased with himself to have gotten the access that he did), but the resulting book is a boring narrative rather than an engaging story.

Mike says

I'm about 3/4 through this but his story is amazing. Chefs like Thomas Keller, Charlie Trotter and Marco Pierre White have changed the way the culinary world looks at, and how to make food. But he blows by them in a Ferrari past a Prius. He not only analyzes food in a unique way, but life. I've eaten at awesome places and can describe the food, but reading what I have over the years I couldn't have words to describe what he does. Reviewers have problems with this and they ate there. He's considered the best chef on the planet, so he's closing El Bulli for two years to re-invent it.

Christina says

For anyone interested in avant-garde cuisine, I highly recommend this book. I picked it up because I was interested in Ferran Adria specifically, but I learned so much about the history of contemporary cuisine, and even more about Spanish and Catalan cuisine. It's very well written, about people instead of places, and gives great insight into the world of food, restaurants, and critics.

Cassy says

This book gave me much needed perspective on El Bulli and humbled my foodie aspirations.

I first learned of the restaurant a couple of years ago. My husband's boss is an honest-to-goodness gourmand. He heard we were going to Barcelona for our honeymoon and casually mentioned El Bulli. When Leo remembered this jewel of information a few days into the trip, I sent him down to the hotel reception thinking we'd get directions and walk there that night in our flip-flops. The concierge let down Leo gently. "Oh, señor, the restaurant is actually outside the city. I hear it is also quite expensive and difficult to get into." Leo shrugged his shoulders and took me out to eat more paella instead.

Only now do I realize the full extent of the concierge's tact. El Bulli is considered one of the world's best restaurants. It is located on a secluded cove reached by a dangerous road. The cost for one person starts at \$300. Just 0.004% of those interested get a table each year. Chef Ferran Adrià is a celebrity in the world of haute cuisine. And the food itself...

Say you really like fettuccine alfredo. You think to yourself, "When I go to El Bulli, I will order this and it

will be most delicious fettuccine alfredo of my life!” Sure, except Ferran is unlikely to ever serve something that conventional. If it even crossed his mind, he would likely deconstruct the dish, turn part of it into foam, throw in some seaweed, and enjoy your expression as you stare at your plate in dismay or awe.

In all seriousness, El Bulli threw out the à la carte menu in favor of a fixed menu. It is a legendary, gastronomic experience of 30 to 35 small plates. And as Anthony Bourdain said, “You don’t go to El Bulli because you want chicken that night”. The food is, for lack of a better word, experimental. Most of it makes my mouth water: mandarin flower sorbet and parmesan dumplings with tallarines. Some of the dishes mean nothing to me: gominola of shiso. A few sound less than desirable, such as this one dish which was described as “vomitous”: sea anemone, raw rabbit brains, oysters and calamondin in a lukewarm dill broth.

All that being said, I still want to go. Will I ever get the chance? Probably not. This book is the next best thing.

Despite the fact that the author is a fancy food critic and the subject is elite, the book is not snobby. Andrews even points you to youtube to watch related comedy skits. There were many names and terms I didn’t recognize: chefs, cooking techniques, ingredients, restaurants, classic dishes. Even so, I was never discouraged and would say the book is accessible.

The book is well written. Andrews clearly did his research and is a well-connected insider. He uses quotes often, yet appropriately. Most important to me, he includes down-to earth stories and his cheeky sense of humor. I should mention that Andrews is pro-Ferran. But he is honest when he doesn’t like certain dishes. And he devotes a chapter to Ferran’s opponents, as well as intersperses their points of criticism throughout the entire book.

Although his face graces the cover and his name steals the title, the book is not solely a biography of Ferran. And the portions specific to Ferran’s life are mainly professional. You’ll meet his family and wife. Yet, refreshingly, there is no litany of past girlfriends or any dirty secrets. You will, however, get a full history of the restaurant itself, including how the property originally failed as a mini-golf course and the early party-hardy atmosphere. You’ll learn about the various personalities that have worked there. Andrews will take you back (briefly, thank goodness) to mankind’s first attempts to cook food. He explains the cooking techniques Ferran pioneered, the confusion regarding molecular gastronomy, and how food world has evolved. Andrews showcases Ferran’s outreach activities, such as collaborating with scientists at Harvard and developing easily chewed and appealing food for the elderly through his foundation. In sum, it is a *very* well-rounded book.

I knocked off one star, because I often found myself counting the pages until the end. This speaks more to my preference for fiction than the quality of the book.

If this book doesn’t sate your hunger, NPR recommends a more recent book about El Bulli, *The Sorcerer's Apprentices* which focuses on the young chefs that volunteer at the restaurant nowadays. Andrews included a chapter on this subject and I can see how it could warrant its own book. I read a few pages at the bookstore and it looks worthwhile. And if you lament that Andrews’ book doesn’t have any pictures, *A Day at El Bulli* is the book for you. If I had a coffee table, this would be on it. However, if you will only buy one book about El Bulli in your lifetime, I recommend you pick Ferran!

Ruben says

The latest book on world renowned Chef Ferran Adria, simply titled "Ferran," is very good overall but do not expect the average biography here.

The author, Colman Andrews, sets the book's tone from the start by declaring that his goal is not to rehash the same topics, insights, and issues that have been written ad nauseam by other writers. Instead, he aims to cover those things in Ferran's life that deserved more attention. Colman starts with Ferran's early home life and moves on chronologically to his youth, military service, first experiences in the kitchen, and his first contact with what would become El Bulli. The rest of the book moves forward in like manner, each chapter covering the next "chapter" in Ferran's life. Nothing too unusual for a biography.

But this book parts ways from the traditional biography by covering all things connected to Ferran in great detail, but including so very little from Ferran himself. His personal memories and thoughts are scattered throughout the book like seasoning. However, the bulk of the material comes from family, friends, colleagues, reporters, critics, the author's personal observations, other written works, etc. In light of the fact that the book starts with a quote from Ferran himself declaring this book to be the final biography that he will collaborate on, you would expect the book to feel more personal. But it does not. Yet, this does not detract from the book's usefulness as a history of the man himself. And since this was indeed the author's goal--giving substantial time to those things that others have not already covered--the book should be considered a successful work!

I come away from this book thinking of it more as a primer in Chef Ferran Adria's life. You will get a grand overview of his life from his earliest beginnings to the present. You will come away from this book wanting to know more, and wanting to delve deeper into his psyche. If you've never heard of Chef Ferran Adria, this book is where you should start. Otherwise, Ferran's own cookbooks, journals, interviews, videos, documentaries, self-made exhaustive journals of every dish ever served at El Bulli, and even the restaurant's own website, should provide you with enough Ferran-philosophy and El Bulli lore to satisfy your needs.

Emily says

3.5 stars. Parts are super interesting but parts are a bit boring.

Don says

Nicely structured, and a fascinating story of how the conditions were built to provide a space where creativity can happen. Especially for someone who clearly has the impulse like the famous Catalan chef. The author sheds light on some of the degrees and layers of...not isolation, maybe distinction...that led to what El Bulli became. An odd, out-of-the-way restaurant. Owners that wanted to make it something spectacular and unique. In a region of Spain that proudly sees itself as apart (Catalonia). A local guy with a creative spark, endless curiosity, and full license to explore. It doesn't happen very often. And it was a fun read just as elBulliFounadtion launches.

Ceef says

While Colman Andrews' prose was clear and unobjectionable, I must admit that parts of this book dragged for me. On one hand, the descriptions of the specific dishes made at El Bulli, as well as the overviews of

dinner services, the operations of *talier* (the restaurant's famed culinary laboratory), the revolutionary culinary techniques pioneered by the El Bulli staff, and the insights into the financial end of the business were all quite engaging; on the other, certain elements, such as the extensive biographical sections and the florid descriptions of Ferran's genius, were somewhat tiresome. That said, I'm more than willing to acknowledge that I'm not by nature a reader of biographies, so other readers may likely have the exact opposite response.

Susetyo Priyojati says

This authorized biography of Ferran was written within 2 years and preceded by long-time friendship between the author and the chef. It came out in the perfect timing, the disclosure of Ferran's plan to close elBulli and to turn it into a (research, educative, art?) foundation.

Throughout the book, care has been given to give balanced narration between the restaurant's history, the unfolding of the gastronomic world during the same period, and the story of Ferran himself. I haven't read much about Ferran previously, so I can't judge whether the author succeeded in his conscious effort to retell the story of the well-documented, celebrated chef without too much redundancy to similar efforts in the past. But I sense that the flow is quite smooth and the material solid, being quite instructive without any gaping holes. There is also a section dedicated to the critics of Ferran, with proper respect and genuine interest to hear their sides of the story, represented by the voice of no less than Ferran's nemesis, (the recently deceased) Santi Santamaria.

Overall, this demystification of elBulli and Ferran has been an entertaining and informative reading for me.

Mike says

As much a history of El Bulli as it was a biography of Ferran Adria, it's lauded chef, and more enjoyable for being so. This is a great gateway read for foodies who would like to know more about this man and his restaurant without diving into the science and technique of what they are so famous for. It is amazing that El Bulli, before Ferran and early in his tenure, was often without customers for days on end; and even at the end was losing money every season.

Ferran is hardly the only character in the story - the original owners, Dr Shilling and his wife Marketta had a vision that they could build a Michelin 3-star restaurant in a sleepy coastal town. They separated, Marketta lived out her days at El Bulli, and the Dr. continued to be involved as well. He made sure his people were experiencing what was happening in fine dining around Europe and always wanted the best for his restaurant. The director of the dining room, Juli Soler, co-owns El Bulli with Ferran and has his own wild idiosyncracies.

As for Ferran, his experiences cooking for a Spanish Admiral and his family were amusing, and also led to his working at El Bulli. He started there because he thought that working beachside would be great for partying, which it certainly was. He and his fellow chefs ripped it up in their early years. He took great inspiration working one off-season with a sculptor friend, and considers the design world to be the arena that has influenced him the most. In 1996, Joel Robuchon called him "the best cook on the planet," at which time everything truly changed, including the party-atmosphere at El Bulli (good for me, but not for thee...). His commitment to his foundation, to spanish cuisine, to his collaboration with Harvard, etc was very interesting to learn as well.

Jessamyn says

Not bad. The constantly recurring themes of the book -- people who criticize Adria just don't get it, and Adria never invented molecular gastronomy -- are a little boring, but the story itself is pretty great, especially because it includes the whole history of El Bulli. The end of the book is about Adria's next endeavors, which -- more than spherification, foams, etc. -- make him truly sound like a pretentious jackass.
