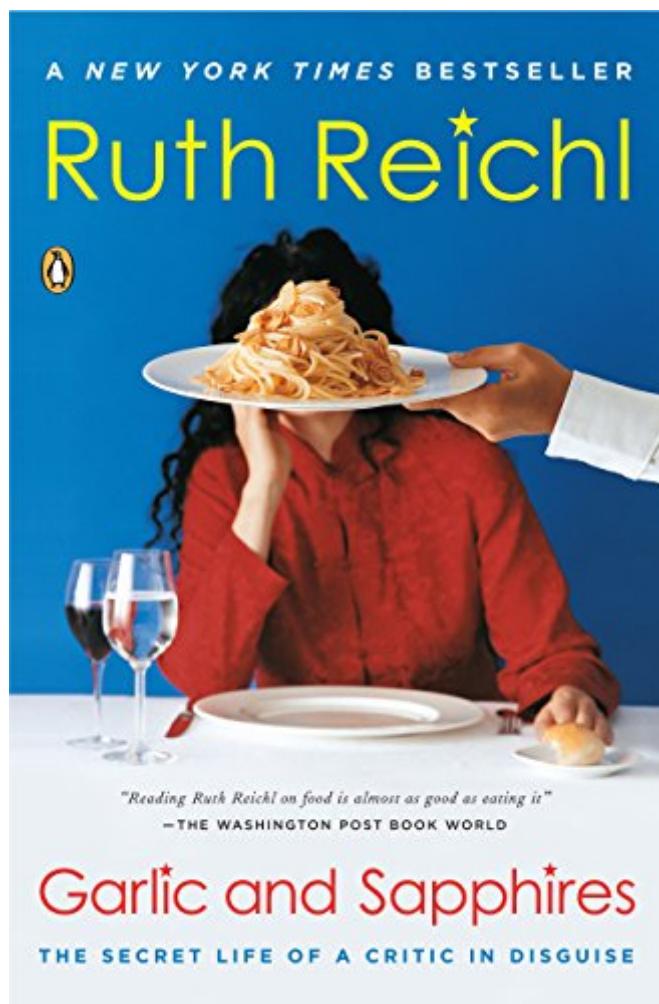


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# Garlic And Sapphires: The Secret Life Of A Critic In Disguise



## **Synopsis**

GARLIC AND SAPPHIRES is Ruth Reichl's riotous account of the many disguises she employs to dine anonymously. There is her stint as Molly Hollis, a frumpy blond with manicured nails and an off-beige Armani suit that Ruth takes on when reviewing Le Cirque. The result: her famous double review of the restaurant: first she ate there as Molly; and then as she was coddled and pampered on her visit there as Ruth, New York Times food critic. What is even more remarkable about Reichl's spy games is that as she takes on these various disguises, she finds herself changed not just superficially, but in character as well. She gives a remarkable account of how one's outer appearance can very much influence one's inner character, expectations, and appetites. As she writes, "Every restaurant is a theater . . . even the modest restaurants offer the opportunity to become someone else, at least for a little while." GARLIC AND SAPPHIRES is a reflection on personal identity and role playing in the decadent, epicurean theaters of the restaurant world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

While I, by far, am not a wine or food expert, I loved her stories. In this book ,she goes in disguise to

critique the restaurants she will be writing about. Many are quite funny ( in all 3 books) and leave you with a smile or laughing out loud even if you are alone while reading.. I found that reading "Growing up at the table" and "Comfort me with Apples (her first 2 books) were necessary to really appreciate "Garlic and Sapphires" She includes many recipes from restaurants and people she learned from. The lists of ingredients are quite long and the instructions are very detailed making them easy to follow. If you are into fancy cooking, it is a great plus.

I've read Garlic and Sapphires twice now, and enjoyed it very much both times. It reads nearly like fiction, and has multiple LOL moments for sure. Reich has an engaging writing style that is at its best in this book; I've read others like "Tender at the Bone" and didn't like them nearly so well, though they do fill in the blanks and I was able to make several connections between those books and G&S in this re-read. I like the recipes I've tried so far, and look forward to trying more - especially the lamb and Brussels sprouts.

A surprisingly entertaining book. Of course, a newspaper writer should be a good writer, period, but it just didn't occur to me until I got into this. A friend recommended the book and I'm glad she did. There is humor and pathos in this memoir. The writing about the restaurants made me feel like I was sitting right at the table with Ruth (or whomever she was disguised as at the time.) I'm glad the book wasn't just a compilation of restaurant reviews- that would get tedious. Reichl has a real talent for descriptive, humorous, introspective writing. She wrote a couple other books and I will have to have a go at those, as well. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys dining out or reading restaurant reviews. We have a great restaurant reviewer at our local paper and I was thinking he must have had some of the same experiences as this author had. It really makes you appreciate the craft.

I'm a pretty die-hard "foodie" and I love to read books about food and travel (see some of my other reviews). This book was recommended to me by a friend, and I have to say I was skeptical at first because of the lack of "adventure" I assumed it would have. (How "adventurous" was a book by the editor at the NY Times likely to be, after all...). And, I was right - if you compare this book to something by Anthony Bourdain or Bill Buford it does lack "adventure". But what it does have (and what I really enjoyed) was wonderfully-written observations on human nature; how we respond to one another based on our perceptions. There were sections that made me laugh out loud because of the ridiculous scenarios Ms. Reichl found herself in at times, and other sections that were

heartwarming and familial. The book is really more of a memoir, and unlike most memoirs, I enjoyed it immensely. Yes, there are wonderful descriptions of food, and of the meals Ms. Reichl was fortunate enough to enjoy during her tenure at the NYT. She reveals a very interesting and new insight into not only the life of a food critic (and the inevitable "food politics" involved) but also the day-to-day workings of the "front of house" in many of New York's most famous restaurants. Bottom line, I don't think you have to be a foodie to enjoy this book. Ms. Reichl has a smooth and engaging style, and a perceptive ability to capture many nuances of human interaction that are missed by most other authors in this subject area. A great book for a long train, plane, or boat ride, or a weekend getaway.

I laughed out loud tons of times during this hilarious look into the undercover world of restaurant critics. Reichl shares the disguises and personas she employed as a critic, to see what the average person experiences when they go to a restaurant. It was outrageous and thrilling to watch her take on rude service and sub-par food (served to her when she is dressed in dowdy clothes) and then go back to the same restaurant as the star critic, getting bigger and better portions of food and getting seated ahead of waiting foreign royalty. I rooted for her different personas and was indignant at the treatment she got as a regular person at some of the snobbier restaurants. I loved the story about how at one restaurant, they recognized her and whisked away her half eaten raspberry tart and replaced it with a raspberry tart with, get this, bigger berries! Can you imagine someone in the back of the restaurant picking out VIP raspberries for the VIP tarts? I loved the food descriptions and the sometimes unglamorous look into the life of a critic. The food isn't everyday fare, but I don't read Ruth Reichl to hear about the types of meals I can afford - I could write about those myself! Her exposure of snobbery, and the care she takes to try and show the restaurants who care for us normal folks like we are all VIP's, was touching and made for satisfying reading. The abridgement on this audiobook did not feel truncated or like I missed out on anything important. She narrates the book herself, and while her husky, measured voice took some getting used to, I loved that she was able to give just the right inflection to each persona and to carefully emphasize her feelings and actions. The audiobook has some recipe cards included and has an interview with the author at the end. One of the rare audiobooks I am keeping in my permanent collection for years of relistening.

This was a fun book to read. The author has a wonderful way of storytelling and I found the book very relatable, not only in the way she reviewed the restaurants, but I felt I was in on her secret. The book is well written, informative and the recipes are a lovely gift, just like chocolates at the end of a

very good meal.

Loved her book "Delicious ". This book, however, didn't cook up any interest. The characters were blah and the story was the same. The recipes were not anything that real families would eat. I'm sure there are readers and cooks that would enjoy this book, but I didn't.

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