

uses them. She cherishes her 1860 edition of Eliza Acton's *Modern Cookery* not because of its financial value but because she can still find tasty recipes inside it. It's that slice of history that Reeves enjoys getting a full plate of.

PREDICTING FUTURE VALUE TRICKY

What authors of our time will be collected and celebrated in a future time? There's no telling. "We don't know who Napoleon's chef was," Reeves says. "It's an ever-changing, fickle ecosystem." Guessing whose books will be valuable later is anyone's game.

Reeves thinks Julia Child will stand the test of time. Kansas State's Roger Adams thinks Mark Bittman, Alton Brown and Anthony Bourdain will continue to resonate. James Beard, too. Becker likes Greg Atkinson and Molly Wizenberg; David Lebowitz and Marilyn Moore. Omnivore's Celia Sack thinks Gabrielle Hamilton, Richard Olney and



Beeton's Book of Household Management (1861).

M.F.K. Fisher are worthy of both praise and collecting.

But, of course, it's neither the acquiring that's important nor the price now or that realized in the future. Richard Engeman pays no attention to how much things may be worth on the open market. "I am drawn to cookbooks that have been used and abused, stained and annotated."

And that is, perhaps, the recipe for any good cookbook collection—a book that is used, one that is loved, one that will be used again and again, one that has a vanilla stain on its pages. We value books that our

mothers used, our grandmothers, our kin long since buried, the foods they ate still waiting to be served, unearthed by the tomes of our kitchens.

Jonathan Shipley

is a regular contributor to *Ampbora*. He lives in Seattle, Washington.

Tasteful Books

by *Gideon Foley*

"CHEF, IT'S AMAZING to meet you. I was able to eat at your restaurant last New Year's and it was probably the best experience of my life."

"No way," Chef Achatz responded, both humbled and pleased at the comment.

"I think what you are doing at NEXT is incredible, and I really hope to be part of it someday." Then, after another 20 seconds of talking, I said, "Oh, Chef, I forgot, would you sign my book?" He wrote, "What's NEXT?" on the title page and then asked for my name.

The trip to Chicago added one more volume to my collection of signed books by the world's greatest chefs. I was able to get *A Life on the Line* signed by co-authors Grant Achatz and his restaurant partner Nick Kokonas that evening.

Chef Achatz was awarded three Michelin stars

for his flagship Chicago restaurant Alinea, which was named the sixth best restaurant in the world in 2011. Worldwide in 2012, only 106 restaurants were awarded three Michelin stars, only 10 of those in the United States.

NEXT, owned by Achatz and Kokonas, completely changes its menu every three months, creating an entirely new theme and concept for the restaurant. Rather than booking reservations, diners buy tickets as they would for an opera performance or sports game. The tickets are sold online and all three months sell out within hours. The goal is to sell three-star cuisine at two-star prices.

Themes range from "Paris 1906" to "Thai Street Food" to "Childhood"—a theme designed to bring nostalgic childhood memories to diners through the exquisite, creative cuisine.

Two friends and I had driven from Toronto for a book launch for the Eleven Madison Park restaurant cookbook. The event was hosted by The Aviary in Chicago (a bar—also owned by Achatz and Kokonas—that serves cocktails put together with the same attention to detail as food in a three-star restaurant). Eleven Madison Park was awarded its third Michelin star a week before the book launch. Co-owners Daniel Humm and Will Guidera travelled from New York City to The Aviary for their first stop on the cookbook tour. With a ticket to the event, a book would be included, signed by Humm and Guidera.

Despite the fact that we would drive in on Sunday morning to be there for 5:00 p.m. and would have to leave the next morning at 4:00 a.m. to be back for school, and the fact that my student loan had not yet come in, I could not pass it up. The opportunity was just too tempting: meet two chefs I have great respect for and get books signed by them in person.

My first trip to Chicago, in December 2011, was for the express purpose of eating at Alinea, Chef Achatz's original restaurant. I was able to score a signed book on that occasion. Since I had brought it with me into the restaurant, the servers were able to deliver it to the chef to get signed in the kitchen.

Unfortunately, I was not actually able to meet Chef Achatz, as he left the kitchen early to work on other projects. The Alinea cookbook is certainly stimulating and is not widely accessible. A majority of the recipes require either an uncommon hydrocolloid—often a complex natural sugar used to control the viscosity of water to create unique textures and sensory experiences for diners—or equipment not found in your standard kitchen, including liquid nitrogen, thermo circulators and rotary evaporators. The Alinea and NEXT books bind me to the great chef and his great recipes.

On a previous trip to New York, I had been looking to go to a restaurant called Per Se. I had wanted to go for about a year, and the trip was finally planned. The restaurant changes its nine-course menu daily and has a prix fixe of \$275. Chef and owner Thomas Keller has another restaurant, called the French Laundry, in California, which was named “the most exciting place to eat in America” by Ruth Reichl when she was the food critic of the *New York Times*.

Per Se is a mirror of the French Laundry in the heart of Manhattan. A couple days before the meal,

as I was eyeing up the territory, I walked into the Williams-Sonoma cookware store in the Time Warner Center, the same building where Per Se is located, and was browsing around. I happened to notice Keller's semi-new cookbook *Under Pressure* on display, and without thinking, as happens when you see a good book, I picked it up and turned to the title page—only to see that it was signed! A friend who was with me started picking up the rest of the books on display to see if they had a signature as well. He lamented that I had found the only one. “How do you get so lucky?”

Travelling to great restaurants has been a rewarding hobby, providing me with some great signed books. My collection is focused on great cookbooks, preferably signed. I was able to drive to Toronto from Stratford one weekend when Chef Gordon Ramsay was to be in town to promote his new book *Gordon Ramsay's World Kitchen*. My uncle took me down to the Indigo store on Bay Street. We waited in line to get a wristband that would allow us to get in on the signing later that night.

This was very exciting for me because I had accumulated a large collection of books by Chef Ramsay. He was one of the greatest inspirations for me to cook. After going to two of his restaurants on a trip to Europe, I realized how good food could be. My uncle and I ended up getting six books signed between the two of us, and I had a very nice interaction and photo with Chef Ramsay. The books he was kind enough to sign included several that I had used as cooking bibles in the past, including *3 Star Chef*, which has three-star Michelin recipes.

Gideon Foley

of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, received third prize in the 2012 National Book Collecting Contest sponsored by the W.A. Deacon Foundation, the Bibliographical Society of Canada, the Alcuin Society and ABEbooks. This is an edited excerpt from the essay he contributed about his collection. The complete essay is available at www.bsc-sbc.ca/foley.pdf.