



Out of Line: A Life of Playing with Fire

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Blood, Bones, & Butter meets *A Devil in the Kitchen* in this funny, fierce, and poignant memoir by world-renowned chef, restaurateur, and *Top Chef* judge Barbara Lynch, recounting her rise from a hard-knocks South Boston childhood to culinary stardom.

Celebrated chef Barbara Lynch credits the defiant spirit of her upbringing in tough, poor “Southie,” a neighborhood ruled by the notorious Whitey Bulger gang, with helping her bluff her way into her first professional cooking jobs; develop a distinct culinary style through instinct and sheer moxie; then dare to found an empire of restaurants ranging from a casual but elegant “clam shack” to Boston’s epitome of modern haute cuisine.

One of seven children born to an overworked single mother, Lynch was raised in a housing project. She earned a daredevil reputation for boosting vehicles (even a city bus), petty theft, drinking and doing drugs, and narrowly escaping arrest—haunted all the while by a painful buried trauma.

Out of Line describes Lynch’s remarkable process of self-invention, including her encounters with colorful characters of the food world, and vividly evokes the magic of creation in the kitchen. It is also a love letter to South Boston and its vanishing culture, governed by Irish Catholic mothers and its own code of honor. Through her story, Lynch explores how the past—both what we strive to escape from and what we remain true to—can strengthen and expand who we are.

Out of Line: A Life of Playing with Fire Details

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From Reader Review Out of Line: A Life of Playing with Fire for online ebook

Mary says

Really enjoyed hearing about her rough childhood in Southie and how she triumphed through pure brains and guts. Fascinating to read about the Boston restaurant scene at the turn of the century. The book does suffer from poor editing but her voice and passion comes through loud and clear.

E says

Good, pithy foodie/chef memoir. Candid & earthy and I want homemade pasta now

Flowergarden24 says

It is always good to read about success stories. She had quite a hard knock scruffy life and managed to rise above it all . I wasn't interested in so many stories of her petty thievery and pranks as a young girl but I understand that those stories set the stage for her tough personality . She hung in there against many obstacles and won so that is inspirational.

Tina says

Ghost-writer, however, Lynch admits it & is understandable given her business & personal back story. Grit defined, that's Lynch's life. She provides such inspiration in her story - not because she has "broken the glass ceiling" in so many ways but because of her perseverance & refusal to diminish her internal need to fulfill her dreams. My son wishes to be a chef & we don't have the means to put him through the schooling. I think he should read this!

Susan says

Loved it so much I am going to go to B&G Oysters in Boston next month! I had no idea she was from Southie.

Sarah says

I loved the first half of this book, and some of the personal aspects of the last half. The last half of the book seem to read like a resume or advertisement, and felt like it wasn't edited well. Also, there's a point where she's talking about an ice cream flavor in Boston called "Curse Reversed," named for the Red Sox World

Series win in 2004. She states that the Red Sox beat the Yankees in that series, but they beat the Cardinals (you can't have two teams from the same league in the World Series). The advertising feel and the editing issues broke my heart after a great start.

Laura says

I really liked the story of Barbara Lynch's early life. Living in Boston I have known her as a chef over the last 20 years. The story of her life and success is impressive. However, the book suffers from a lack of editing in describing her adult personal life more effectively and convincingly. In the second half of the book I felt the writing was disorganized and disjointed.

Roxie says

Great book offering great inspiration to anyone who knows they can succeed, whether or not they conform. Grand Chef Barbara Lynch grew up in South Boston, and let's you know all about it in an f'ing wicked fun way, Whitey Bulger, et al. You're pulling for her from page one... and when she goes to Italy, cooking and eating through a great first visit, you can almost taste the food, and you want it! Then, and there!

It's almost as though she is possessed with the need to cook, to build layers of great tasting food, to build her own monuments to all sorts of excellent eats and drinks in her hometown, while also becoming a world renowned powerhouse. She seems surprised by it all. The book makes it seem like it happened fast, but you know she worked her ass off, barely stopping to breathe for years...and when you are done with the book, you just want to book a flight and head back east for a Lynch-Gruppa food crawl, ending with elegance and a great sigh of pleasure at Menton.

READ THIS BOOK, AND FIND A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT WHAT YOU PUT IN YOUR MOUTH!
AND LET US KNOW WHEN YOU TRY THE FOOD IN PERSON!

BRAVA, CHEF!

Marika says

Author Barbara Lynch takes readers on a wild ride as she recounts her path to becoming a celebrity chef. She holds nothing back from the reader: from growing up in the projects, being raped at a very young age, to her drug use. This isn't your typical celebrity chef memoir. It's so much more as she is so self effacing and as satisfying as her fig sauce must taste like.

I read an advance copy and was not compensated.

Mike says

An earthy, honest and wonderful read from one of the great chefs of Boston, Barbara Lynch. *Out of Line* is a memoir that shows what hard work, perseverance, and "solid steel quenelles" can get a person who is willing to bust ass and learn how to prepare great cuisine. Lynch shares stories from her tough upbringing in the projects of Southie, pulling no punches and hiding behind no curtains. As a former line cook and chef I found this book to be endlessly fascinating and an inspiration. While perhaps not the flashiest prose stylist, Lynch tells a story really well, and her voice is conversational and transports the reader from meal to meal, scene to scene, in a way that made me feel like I was standing behind the line with her.

Sarah says

Quenelles of Steel!

Loved this book from starts to finish. So much more than a chefs story; the time, place and lives behind Barbara Lynch.

Christine Fay says

I really loved reading this book because I have a shared background with Barbara in that we both grew up around the South Boston area around the same time. The writing style is engaging, and inspiring, and a bit off-color -- she is from Southie, after all, so the language is colorful. Here's an example:

"Gobs of spit were also weapons called lungies or deucies (because it took two fingers to lob them). I'd hock up whatever I could, gob it into my hand, and fling it at kids I didn't like or at sitting ducks like altar boys, stuck serving the priest saying Mass, who couldn't fight back" (39). Reading this book also inspired me to WANT to cook more, and to want to try out different, creative recipes. That is in itself a feat since I'm usually the type to do whatever is easiest and quickest. I highly recommend reading this book if you have any interest in cooking, overcoming a difficult childhood, or just want to read an engaging memoir.

Jessica says

Barbara Lynch grew up in the hardscrabble Southie area of Boston in the projects. She was the sixth of seven children, so she never got much attention from her mother and her father died before she was born. She and the gang of kids in her neighborhood got into all kinds of trouble growing up. But when Barbara discovers food and cooking she realizes this is her passion. Completely self-taught Barbara is a true rags to riches story of working her way up from nothing to owning multiple successful restaurants. I really liked the first half of the book that was more about her childhood and how she got into cooking, but the second half seemed like too much information was crammed in. She opened restaurant after restaurant like it was nothing with no details of how she managed to do that. She was doing so many things I don't know how she ever slept. And major events like when she almost died from sepsis were just kind of glossed over. I like her story and she's obviously successful and working hard to give back to her community, but the book wasn't great. I feel like it could have been told better with not as much childhood detail and more details about her adult professional life. Overall, it was OK but not one I would really recommend.

Beth says

There's so much to like about Barbara Lynch as a person, a chef, an entrepreneur, and a general badass. She is amazing. This book, however, is not. Her childhood story--All Souls meets Good Will Hunting meets The Town--is incredible. But in this retelling it is flat and sort of matter-of-fact. Lynch went out of her way in her publicity campaign to praise the ghostwriter on this project, saying that she really captured her voice. But, I've had the very good fortune of hearing Barbara Lynch tell some of these stories in person, and I have to disagree. There is no fire here, no throwdown, and the whole thing would have been better for a slightly more sophisticated editorial structure. Lynch may be from the Projects, but her food is elevated, elegant, and innovative. I think this book could have been more of all of these things.

Crystal King says

I have dined at every one of Barbara Lynch's restaurants over the years and attended classes at Stir. I've followed her career as it rose, excited to have a taste of every new place as they opened. Being someone who has always been interested in food and dining, I have grown to know a number of people in the Boston restaurant industry, but only tangentially ever came within her sphere. But for those of us who love the world of food and dining it is painfully obvious how hard it is for a woman to make their mark, and more importantly, to do so in the big and bold way that she has.

This memoir is a fascinating and funny account of Barbara Lynch's time growing up as a woman in hard-scrabble Southie, which in itself is unusual. Most of the lore, the movies, and the literature about that deep dark heart of Boston are told by men, about men. Some of the stories she tells are heart-wrenching, while others will leave you in laughter, or wonder. She defied the odds and ended up building a food empire that has delighted the palates of thousands. Reading this book deepened my admiration for her drive, her eye for detail and most of all, her *joie de vivre*. In these pages she is blunt, she is honest, and she is daring, but she also shares the side of her that doubts, questioning her place and actions in the world, which in turn makes her seem not like some untouchable celebrity chef, but someone who is relatable and just as human as the rest of us.

And there is a bonus! The recipes at the end...just reading them will make one drool.

OUT OF LINE is a brilliant and moving memoir that every food lover should read.
