



I Hear She's a Real Bitch

Jen Agg

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A sharp and candid memoir from a star in the restaurant world, and an up-and-coming literary voice.

Toronto restaurateur Jen Agg, the woman behind the popular The Black Hoof, Cocktail Bar, Rhum Corner, and Agrikol restaurants, is known for her frank, crystal-sharp and often hilarious observations and ideas on the restaurant industry and the world around her.

I Hear She's a Real Bitch, Jen Agg's first book, is caustic yet intimate, and wryly observant; an unforgettable glimpse into the life of one of the most interesting, smart, trail-blazing voices of this moment.

I Hear She's a Real Bitch Details

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Author : Jen Agg

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From Reader Review I Hear She's a Real Bitch for online ebook

Erin says

Publication 16/05/17

Confession: I had absolutely no clue who Jen Agg was, I have never eaten in any of her Toronto area restaurants, but I thought the title was intriguing enough to give it a try. The restaurant bits were really interesting, some of the personal life tidbits not so much. When one chapter switches from exploring the idea of the importance of getting along with your co-workers to relating how you stole your mom's vibrator at age 12, I cannot help but feel that way in which you have just met someone five minutes ago to look at an apartment and they're talking about their male menopause(true story, it happened). So chapter transitioning was a bit awkward at first.

As a reader, I am growing tired of publishing ploys to make women relatable to other women. Talking about how you made a lot of mistakes but really good things happened along the way makes you relatable. How you stuck your ground and wouldn't be pushed around also makes you relatable. Newsflash- it isn't by going on about how horny you are or how much you and your husband get it on. Take it from a Canadian Girl Guide(we never ever tell a lie) that just makes us jealous!

Thanks to NetGalley and Penguin Random House Canada for an uncorrected digital galley in exchange for an honest review

Khashayar Mohammadi says

An absolutely enlightening book on the progression of Toronto's culinary culture. Its a book written by one of the most influential minds behind Toronto's culinary and bar culture. Its an enticing read for anyone who has ever worked in a restaurant; but its an essential read for Toronto cooks. One of the best books I have ever read on the subject of Cooking and restaurant management.

Karen Green says

I knew Jen Agg briefly in the late '90s when she and Tyler ran Cobalt, and I worked/lived/dated the owner of/was always at Aunties and Uncles, a very good brunch joint down the street. Jen was always warm and witty and Cobalt was fantastic, even if I shudder at the memory that my favourite cocktail was a sweet blue mess called, I believe, the Marge Simpson.

So anyway, I've enjoyed watching Jen slay the Toronto bro-heavy restaurant scene, applauded her unapologetic feminism even if the delivery sometimes makes me uncomfortable, and admired her capacity to literally bring something new to the table when it comes to moving the food scene forward in Toronto. My husband still considers the brain ravioli he ate at The Black Hoof to be one of the best things he's ever eaten.

And these are all the same reasons I enjoyed her book. It wasn't the Kitchen Confidential/gossipy book I was hoping a tiny bit for, but when she was revealing, she wasn't afraid to go balls to the wall, especially when

revealing information about herself. I respect that, even if I didn't really need to know all the sexploits. (Sometimes I'm a prude.)

And I really can't wait to eat at Gray Gardens. And not just because the Kensington Market of her youth is also the Kensington Market of my youth, and it's very possible it was me sitting outside of Courage My Love with my suburban hippie friends, giving other suburban hippie girls the hair wraps she writes about getting in the early 90s. Reading the book made me feel nostalgic for pre- turn-of-the-century Toronto.

I'm just looking at my liquor cabinet--I have gin, but no blue curacao. I might have to dash out to the LCBO ... Marge Simpsons on the back deck tonight, perhaps.

Samantha March says

I don't read a ton of memoirs, but I'm always very interested in women entrepreneurs and their stories. Jen Agg is in the restaurant business, and her story unfolds how she got into the industry, how she became successful, and all the good and bad in between. There was a lot of interesting aspects to the book, but a lot of slower moments for me that made it challenging for me to stay invested. I skipped around a bit but I enjoyed the motivational moments, just not an all around favorite of mine.

I received a review copy

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

I'm not sure why I picked this one up, but certainly the Anthony Bourdain blurb didn't hurt. But I think I learned something important in my ho-hum experience of reading Sweetbitter (my review here) - when it comes to restaurants, I'm just not that into stories about the front of the house. Jen Agg is a restauranteur but not a chef, and after a few chapters I felt like I wasn't learning much about the stuff I was most interested in, that she was hard to take, and when the book came due at the library I realized I hadn't picked it back up anyway. I might as well return it. I love seeing women in all types of leadership but that doesn't mean I have to like them all.

Lauren Simmons says

Okay so...Jen Agg is a person I admire, who makes restaurants I love. She is so fucking strong and has such vision and has only been kind and generous to me.

But.

I felt the first few chapters of this book were hard to read. Maybe I was imposing my prudishness or jealousy that my high school experience wasn't as salacious, but I just really didn't feel like I needed to read about the all the underage drinking and sex and stuff.

The chapters about making restaurants are great. The art in the book is lovely. The glances in to the complex

relationships between BOH and FOH and in to the Toronto restaurant scene are insightful and interesting.

On the whole I felt the editor could have had a stronger hand. That said, the book as it is is decidedly ALL Jen Agg. And knowing Jen I'm guessing she doesn't care what I think, and should be proud that the book definitely captures her.

PS also there is some serious fat phobia in this book which kinda sucks.

Meg Power says

A great book that is a combination of food, booze, feminism, raunchy humor and swearing. Jen Agg's writing is fast, witty and felt like I was sitting inside her head and seeing all of the things she was describing. Highly recommend for anyone who loves the food world but is tired of only hearing the male perspective.

Ashley Carter says

?

Robin says

A while ago I read Generation Chef: Risking It All for a New American Dream, the story of a young chef determined to open a renowned restaurant, and the business and food selection processes were most interesting. Jen Agg's story is from an opposite POV, in that is she was not a chef but a trained bartender, running her own cocktail bar in Toronto. After Agg lost the bar business she opened The Black Hoof, a restaurant featuring charcuterie, the craft of curing meat such as salami, sausages, pates, and more, even though she had no training in the culinary arts. But before she gets to the biz of running a restaurant, she covers her teen years and what led her to opening what would become world famous eateries in Canada.

It took me a bit to get interested in what Jen had to say but turned out this was this a rocking read! I had never heard of Agg before but I was instantly captivated by her blunt and outspoken personality which came through loud and clear (and you get a clear picture of just how much sex she does get!). This is a perfect book for Anthony Bourdain fans.

For more on the restaurant biz, try The Fourth Star: Dispatches from Inside Daniel Boulud's Celebrated New York Restaurant, Restaurant Man, and Heat: An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany, and the novel, Sweetbitter.

Thanks to the publisher and NetGalley for the digital review copy.

Jasmine from How Useful It Is says

TWITTER GIVEAWAY: RT/Follow to win a finished copy. *US ONLY* Giveaway Ends 9/30/17.

8PM CST. My twitter handle is @howusefulitis Thanks! :-)

About: I Hear She's A Real Bitch is a memoir written by Jen Agg. It was recently published on 9/12/17 by Penguin Books, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, paperback, 368 pages. The genres are autobiography, culinary, and non-fiction.

My Experience: I started reading I Hear She's a Real Bitch on 8/21/17 and finished it on 9/15/17. I enjoyed reading this memoir a lot. I take time to read it carefully so that I can understand more. I don't work in the restaurant or bar business but after reading this book, I may dine differently. I might refuse my drink if the server bring my drink over with octopus hands.. haha.. I haven't read too many memoirs, but this one might be the best one I read this year and I am inclined to read more in the future. The title is an attention grabber and the illustrations are definitely an added bonus. This book definitely has experiences worth reading!

In this book, readers will follow the point of view of Jen Agg, an owner of The Black Hoof, Grey Gardens, Rhum Corner, Cocktail Bar, and Agrikol in Canada. The start of this book talks about Charcuterie board, a signature dish serve at The Black Hoof. There is an illustration of what a Charcuterie board looks like. Jen talks about her personal experiences with staffing and training. Then she talks about her childhood, her teenage years was filled with alcohol, cigarettes, and many unreliable men. She worked in different bars & grills from servers to bartenders and then her first steps into being an owner. She discusses about opening up a café and closing it down, challenges of having a partner and the leap taken to be her own boss, and the ups and downs of running a business as a woman with today's social media affecting it all.

The title of this memoir has a swear word and it's no surprise the content of the book will hold a few swear words. This book is very well written, informative, and easy to read. I like Jen's real talk about restaurant profitability and food waste. I like what's called "octopus hands" when serving drinks. It's an eye opener for me to learn about the dynamic between servers and cooks in addition to the abuse because this is the first time I have heard of it. There were no dull moments reading this book. The illustrations on "pussy can take a pounding" is funny. I enjoyed Jen Agg's perspectives on vodka. I like her story about her experiences on having a partnership. It's definitely hard to find a compatible partner to run a business with. That's why I choose to run this blog (a hobby) on my own even though I wish to post a review everyday instead of once or twice a week.

I'm surprised at the author's honesty about herself in this book. She takes accountability in her actions even when it makes her look bad like sleeping with her best friend's boyfriend and a married man. I'm also surprised why the author would feel discomfort seeing eleven years old girls wearing shorts shorts and crop tops if she herself masturbate with her mom's plug-in at twelve and losing her virginity with a random guy at a bar. What Jen does in her teenage years, I should think she's no prude. I'm also surprised she names name of her staff who is a cutter.. isn't that private? She exposed herself as being born with one breast which is a surprising reminder for me. Sometimes I forget such things do happen. It's a little tough reading about her opinions on reviews because my blog is all about reviews. I guess it's a lucky I don't get paid for my reviews.

I give props to Jen Agg for adding in illustrations and pictures to this memoir because it grabs readers attention. There are illustrations of her restaurant ideas, mix drinks ingredients, a glimpse of a menu, a bar setup, and of herself in the nude with very exposed private part. There are other pretty illustrations as well as dishes that her restaurant offers. On the other hand, aside from humor, I also enjoy her discussions about her marriages and of business failures and success. I like to know the mistakes made and lessons learned. I'm also surprised that she uses Craigslist! Somehow I think only people in USA uses it. I recommend reading the glossary at the end of the book before starting the memoir. There is something to take away from reading

about someone's personal experience and I highly recommend everyone to read this book!

Pro: serving tips, restaurant owner insider info, personal experience, pictures and illustrations, humor, teenage smoking, drinking, and sex, business fail and business success,

Con: none

I rate it 5 stars!

***Disclaimer: Many thanks to Penguin Publishing Group for sponsoring the giveaway. I appreciate the opportunity to read and review. Please be assured that my opinions are honest.

xoxo,

Jasmine at www.howusefulitis.wordpress.com for a detailed review

Meredith says

A brave memoir written with honesty by restauranteur Jen Agg. After finishing this book, I have a lot of respect for her, as well as her vision in creating spaces for people to gather and enjoy food together, and acknowledging the contrasts of her personality and experiences. There were a few ah ha moments in regards to women in business and I may have taken in the bro stereotypes paragraph a bit too much as a fellow/potential bro encroached on my airplane seat space/personal bubble with his bare foot ???. If anything, it's a great example of a memoir exploring that we can hold opinions but we all continue to learn and will have contradictions within ourselves.

Catherine says

I so hate this book. I would have thrown it across the room and then tossed it into the nearest garbage can early on, but it was a gift from a very kind friend and I felt obligated to finish it. Reading this barely edited book length rant/autobiography felt like being pinned in a bar by a loud, drunk person with a hand clamped on your arm, leaning into your face breathing alcohol fumes as they bellow their personal life at you. Agg spares the reader nothing, including graphic descriptions of her masturbation and early sex life, a nude self portrait with lady parts spread, and endless rants about people who have disappointed her. I'd forgive most of that if Agg had actually experienced the sexism she claims to war against (apparently by tweeting), but she's actually a highly privileged person whose restaurant starts were funded by others and who seems to prefer to put white men in the power positions in her restaurants. (And whose first restaurant apparently paid no taxes at all -- she takes no responsibility and blames this entirely on her first husband -- stiffing the Canadian taxpayers some \$300,000). She's a poseur, in short. And an egotistical, selfish person, too. Ack, do not read this piece of crap posing as an edgy book.

Sandra Snook says

I haven't read this book but am responding to Jen Agg's stint as a judge for the Food52 Piglet cookbook contest. She was a round two judge and reviewed 2 books. The rules state the judge should cook at least

three recipes from each book. Jen is a known rule breaker, says she stated up front she had no intention to cook any recipes due to extenuating life circumstances and went on to flippantly judge the books based on a quick read - because as a restaurant professional she feels she can judge recipes just by reading them.

Well, flipping the table, I am an avid reader and have reviewed Jen's style and type through her judging, her Twitter feed, the end notes of her book and her followers. I can easily judge a book/memoir without reading it - no problem. This one is not worth reading. Jen may have more to write in a memoir after she grows up a bit, but her "rule breaking" persona is just brutish and used as a defensive tool to avoid personal responsibility. I think the take home message to the restaurant industry is male dominated and misogynistic- welcome to the reality of most professions.

I wouldn't spend money on this book. Check it out from the library and thumb through it but it isn't a keeper.

Stephanie P says

I appreciate that the author is an important part of the restaurant and bar industry. And her approach to leadership and business is impressive, especially re: breaking down gender stereotypes and encouraging wage equality. Totally amazing.

As a book however, I'm left wanting. Truthfully I've never skimmed a book so fast, actually fully skipping over chapters (ie. the sections about her childhood memories and adult sex life felt like filler - fast forward please.) The most interesting stuff is around the launch of her businesses and getting insight into her restaurant/bar vision.

I live in Toronto, love this city, and savour good food. Learning more about the culinary institutions in town is interesting. But I'd be hard pressed to recommend this read. One and a half stars.

Krystal says

I am happy I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway, as it is something I wouldn't pick up to read, unless I knew who she was or was familiar with her bars and restaurants.

That being said, I actually enjoyed the book, it's very well written and offers quite a bit of insiders info in the hospitality business. The good, the bad and the ugly. From opening up to having to shut down and go bankrupt, to finding the man of your dreams and finally making it. The stupid "bro" mentality of hazing the new comers, the bullying of front end staff by the kitchen staff, the ego's, getting a good review to getting a bad review.

It was one of the more interesting memoirs i've read so far this year, it read more like a novel and wasn't all over the place. It was interesting to me because I got what she was saying, i've been in customer service my whole working life and you want an organized team and fairness. Jen Agg is the kind of "girl boss" i'd want to work for. To her this isn't just a career it's her dream and vision, her passion and she wants her employees to feel the passion and be respected no matter what level they are on.

This is a great book for managers and owners to read in any area of customer service.

