



Eat Me: The Food and Philosophy of Kenny Shopsin

Kenny Shopsin , Carolyn Carrero

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"Pancakes are a luxury, like smoking marijuana or having sex. That's why I came up with the names Ho Cakes and Slutty Cakes. These are extra decadent, but in a way, every pancake is a Ho Cake." Thus speaks Kenny Shopsin, legendary (and legendarily eccentric, ill-tempered, and lovable) chef and owner of the Greenwich Village restaurant (and institution), Shopsin's, which has been in existence since 1971.

Kenny has finally put together his 900-plus-item menu and his unique philosophy—imagine Elizabeth David crossed with Richard Pryor—to create *Eat Me*, the most profound and profane cookbook you'll ever read. His rants—on everything from how the customer is not always right to the art of griddling; from how to run a small, ethical, and humane business to how we all should learn to cook in a *Goodnight Moon* world where everything you need is already in your own home and head—will leave you stunned or laughing or hungry. Or all of the above.

With more than 120 recipes including such perfect comfort foods as High School Hot Turkey Sandwiches, Cuban Bean Polenta Melt, and Cornmeal-Fried Green Tomatoes with Comeback Sauce, plus the best soups, egg dishes, and hamburgers you've ever eaten, *Eat Me* is *White Trash Cooking* for the twenty-first century, as unforgettable and mind-boggling as its author.

Eat Me: The Food and Philosophy of Kenny Shopsin Details

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Stefanie says

This book is not for everyone. First, it's a lot of things rolled into one: a little bit of a memoir, a little bit of philosophy, a lot about psychology (under the surface), a lot about food, and a bunch of recipes. Second, the author is blunt, profane, and even crude sometimes, but very honest. I find who Kenny Shopsin is, what he does, and why he does it absolutely fascinating (and yes, I've seen the documentary on him and his restaurant, I Like Killing Flies, and I recommend that too). Oh, and I'm delighted that he has no trouble with sharing his signature recipes. I look forward to trying some, and I'd love to go to his food booth in NYC if I ever get the chance--I just hope he doesn't throw me out.

karen says

i have been meaning to add this link forever - an adventure!!

<http://www.goodreads.com/story/show/2...>

this is probably my favorite cookbook of all time. i have read it cover to cover, and when i am feeling culinarily uninspired, i will pick it up and flip through it and let the personality of kenny shopsin wash all over me. i bought this cookbook, and the movie about kenny, *i like killing flies* for my dad, and i know he loves it as well, because my dad is a wise man.

this is more than a cookbook. it is a way of life. it is a philosophy of food and how to make food last and how to make food interesting, and what part of the health code is...optional, and how not to freak out over food preparation.

but make no mistake - he isn't here to hold your hand and tell you it's gonna be all right.

kenny shopsin is a new york institution. he is a badass motherfucker in the kitchen, and while he will treat you like family, you are going to have to pass some basic tests first.family gets earned. basic rules - no more than four people per party. seriously. not even if you sit at different tables. he will indeed throw you out. no substitutions. just eat what is on the menu - it's not your restaurant, dude. you need to be willing to talk to him and the servers and other customers - he is big on repeat customers. but he will throw you out if you transgress. forever. and he will remember you, so don't even try it.

not too long ago, melinda gave me a check for a burrito that normally came with cheese, only with no cheese. the customer said she was lactose intolerant. but that same customer got a side order of pancakes, and pancake batter is all milk. her need to make her burrito special was not about wanting to or not being able to drink milk. it was about her need for control. i didn't just tell her i wouldn't do it. i gave minda back the check and told her to get rid of the whole table.

some people tell me they're deathly allergic to something and that i have to make sure it's not in their food. i kick them out, too. i don't want to be responsible for anyone's life-or-death situation. i tell them they should go eat at a hospital. often after i do that, they'll back down and tell me, well, they're not THAT allergic. and then i REALLY want them to leave because now i know they're assholes

so, yeah, he is an asshole, and a little bit of a control freak himself, but honestly - with a menu that has 76 different flavors of pancakes, 45 different milkshake flavors, and over 100 different soups, and i don't feel like counting sandwiches, burgers, breakfast plates, enchiladas, etc etc etc - i mean - surely everyone can find something on the menu to suit them. this is a huge menu. no need for substitutions.

all of this has terrified me so much, i have never actually eaten at the restaurant. a large part of this is the hours. he is not open on sundays or mondays, which are my two days off, and there is no way i could eat there and then go to work afterward - the food is just too too rich, and most days they are only open like 4 hours. and they keep changing locations. so i know this will be my one huge regret in life.

i want to go here like most people want to go to paris. i have been to paris. and it's fine. but honestly, the food here looks better. macaroni and cheese pancakes? a "jewboy" sandwich? cheeseburger salad?? mojo cactus and parmesan cheese soup? kenny shopsin cooks like a fucking stoner, and i want to live in his menu. lavender soda!! artichoke and okra parmigiana!! goat cheese pesto rice!! i need it all!!! pop tart pancakes!!

i love everything about him. i love how disdainful he is of foodies and foodie websites. i love how if he hears about an unfamiliar dish, he will try to recreate it with no research, no fussing over authenticity: *think of my mexican food as culinary fiction. if any of the dishes here resemble an authentic mexican dish, it is a total coincidence.*

i love this man. i love him.

menu: (get ready to be amazed)

<http://www.shopsins.com/wp-content/up...>

(although it looks as though it is much smaller than last time i looked at it - and much smaller than the one in the book)

however - in going to get the link, i just discovered something amazing. they are now open on sundays. this is going to be an AIFAF. maybe several. maybe i will go nowhere else for the rest of my life. this has changed my life, and i am saying this with no sense of humor or hyperbole. this is literally the best thing that has ever happened to me. and on my birthday, too. this makes up for everything that has ever gone wrong in my life.

i love all of it - the stories of his family, the tales of his customers, and who he has kicked out, and why, his musings on food and its place in people's lives. even just reading the recipes makes me smile. he is so passionate and hilarious and irreverent and abrasive. such a nice change of pace from chefs who take themselves too seriously.

i do not have enough good things to say about this book. the recipes are great, and frequently call for ingredients to be added "in large handfuls", but this book is more wonderful to just read about him, and his early years as a restaurant owner with his whole (actual) family running things, and watching his children grow up in the business.

on making stuffing:

after you have found the sausage (twss), the next big hurdle comes when you cook it. as you brown the sausage, you are going to discover that it is probably 70 percent fat. it is LOADED. the fat just pours out of it when it cooks, but you have to leave the fat in the pan. you can't drain it no matter how tempted you are to do so. and here is the clincher: just as you start to feel a really strong impulse to drain some of the fat, not only do you have to leave the fat there, but you have to add a stick of butter to the pan. you HAVE to do it. the fat is what makes the stuffing taste good. when people order something with stuffing, no matter that the stuffing is supposed to be an accoutrement, what they really want to do is eat stuffing. so whenever i give stuffing, i give a lot of it. it's like bacon: no matter how much i put on a plate, the one thing i can count on is that it will all get eaten.

this man is my cooking soulmate. please read this book. it is bound to make you happy.

and the pictures...

and if you aren't sold yet - here is an article calvin trillin wrote:

<http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002...>

Amy says

totally hilarious and exhilarating

Seric Seric says

Earlier this week I read Kenny Shopsin's cooking/philosophy book. Shopsin's is a very unique dining establishment in NYC which I make certain to eat at every time I visit NY. He has a very quirky personality, and it's sometimes said that the Seinfeld Soup Nazi episode is modeled after him.

This book had a massive impact on my home cooking philosophy. In addition to pointing out how he embraces the characteristics of poorly cooked eggs for certain dishes in his egg chapter, his soup chapter was particularly life changing. I've always followed the "big batch" soup method, where I make my soups in very large batches and tune as needed. This has the effect of making all of the flavors mingle together. Kenny's philosophy is that this is not always ideal, and haven eaten many of his soups, I never realized the contrast but now agree. He keeps an assortment of broths on hand for his soups, but makes each bowl to order. Each time an order for a bowl comes in, he will prepare the additions as needed, usually by sauteing. This gives more distinct separation of the flavors.

To put this into practice this week, I used a mushroom/asparagus/onion dish that I created to serve as a side with some steak this week. This gave me three different soups in practice:

Soup A: Chunky Mushroom and Asparagus Soup (I just heat the broth and filling, and combine, season to taste. The veggies stay Al dente without turning into mush.)

Soup B: Creamy Mushroom and Asparagus Soup (Same as Soup A, I just stir in some Creme Fresh)

Soup C: Mushroom and Asparagus Bisque (Same as Soup B, just Vitamixed)

I like adding crushed cashews to all three soups at serving.

I don't think I'll go back to huge batches of soups that I get bored with. While I always have a fresh batch of broth from the previous couple of weeks scraps, I can now change which soups I make out of the broth each day.

Kathy says

What a great book! No breathless reverence for consomme, aspic or super-expensive totally organic produce grown in soil that has only been touched by virgins baloney.

Great ideas about cooking and using your own ideas about food to create the food you want to eat. He addresses the difficulty of cooking like a restaurant when you don't have industrial appliances.

I would love to go to his restaurant. His rules for the most part make a lot of sense. I'd like to think that my husband and I would connect with this man, but more likely we'd be thrown out.

Michael Batz says

There are funny cookbooks with crappy joke recipes, and serious cookbooks that read like instruction manuals for farm equipment, and then there is this book, which manages to be full of very serious recipes but which is written with a unique and hilarious voice.

It's full of recipes that you simply will NEVER find anywhere else. Kenny Shopsin is an experimental maniac who relies not on throwing fancy-ass ingredients into things but simply putting things together in ways you'd never think. My favorite example: pancakes with centers of pumpkin and peanut butter, which taste not unlike a pumpkin pie covered in Reece's peanut butter cups. Amazing. He's not above experimenting with the hard-to-find, but usually it's stuff you can dig up without ordering it from an online specialty shop (e.g. pomegranate molasses).

The recipes are as he makes them in his oddball professional kitchen for his NYC haunt (which is fantastic, by the way), so some can't really be done right in the home kitchen. He gives a lot of tricks to make things work, and he's honest about what you can and can't do the same as him, but it can be frustrating in a "why bother?" kind of way.

Jim says

Read Karen's comments for a thorough description of this cookbook. It starts with this character buying a small grocery store in Greenwich village where he starts making one or two dishes to becoming a diner with over 700 items most of his own invention. The recipes order follow this progression. It's strangely fascinating.....

I also saw the documentary "I like killing flies" about Shopsin's.

Susan Mazur Stommen says

If the Gaia book was me gardening, this book is me cooking, minus all the expletives. Ok, with all the expletives. I had heard rumours of Shopsin's existence for awhile now, but without any clear idea of what we were talking about.

The place ran for awhile like the restaurant I always wanted to open, where you could order anything you want. But he says, that put too much onus on the customer. His menu ran at one time to 900 items, and it seems that if you can't pick quickly then he is quite willing to throw you out.

This cookbook is a rare melding of memoir and functional recipes. He 'deconstructs' categories of foods like soups and pancakes, and reassembles them according to his and his customer's wishes.

If I ever go, I have settled upon the mac n cheese pancakes, just so I don't get tossed on my rear.

Evan Cordes says

NINETEEN THUMBS UP WITH STARS ON THEM.

Oriana says

I have tried to go to Shopsin's at least five times, and each time it's mysteriously closed (though people are inside eating), there's no tables, the whole freaking restaurant has moved across town, etc. Shopsin's has such a crazy mythology built up around it, you can't help but want to see it for yourself. But maybe I can just get this book instead and save myself the trek.

Summer says

Fantastic book. Shopsin's restaurant is a hidden NY gem and Kenny himself is the reason for it. I think I learned as much about following one's passion, running a business, and loving your family as I did about cooking. While his personality may seem abrasive to some, I totally respect his uncompromising vision of what he wants out of life and (by extension) business. His recipes are simple but contain some great tips for

making the perfect eggs, pancakes, and soup. His innovations have inspired me.

Hugh says

This is awesome you should read it.

e says

no bullshit,
no frills,
existential,
throw you out the door,
good eatin'.

with a cover designed to awake your most primal instincts, the pages between are also very much of that same idea.

a way of eating, of living-
a man who isn't saying this is the way, but it is his way.

not a lot of vegetarian stuff, but that is okay.

It is strange , I am a vegetarian, but at the same time I believe you should eat what makes you feel good to eat it- so while eating meat doesn't make me feel good, I'm not gonna sit around eating sprouts all day-maybe some great chock-full-of-cholestrual decadent french toast or a milkshake or some really perfect fries can make you happy-
food porn to the max-
and that seems to be what Kenny Shopsin is getting at-
eat or get out.

but still some great recipes as well as a story.

I wish I lived in new york so I could visit Shopsin's and eat some of this man's food-
and of course, because I wrote that-
he is probably at his griddle getting a slight, strange chill from seemingly nowhere.

Jackie Snow says

Fuck, this was good. Got the book a few weeks before he died, started it a few days after I heard the news. I am grateful I got to eat there over the years. Not only do I feel like I have a better grip on how to make eggs, but the book gives you an inside peek in someone's mind that probably doesn't think like you do. There were even a few casually sexist and racist things but I couldn't get mad about it. He was a character that meant well and made delicious food while he was at it.

Laurie says

Calvin Trillin's article in the New Yorker (also published in *Feeding a Yen* and as the foreword to *Eat Me*) introduced me to Shopsin's. I had the great good luck to read this article while I was eating dinner at a restaurant in New York (one of only two visits in the last ten years), and I went straight to Shopsin's for breakfast the next morning, keeping a low profile so I wouldn't out myself as a scorned "review trotter." (This was my lottery win, I've come to think, because when I ate there it was early 2002. The original location closed and Kenny's wife Eve died later that year.)

I was just expecting this book to be wacky/quirky, but it's really delightful and has a lot of interesting thoughts about food. Kenny and co-writer produced a well-written, funny, and unique cookbook. His distinctive voice comes through in the essays and lengthy headnotes, just as it does in his menu and his food. I laughed aloud several times, and we have already tried a couple of the recipes. Kenny's fondness for avocados is endearing to me. Matthew, Iris, and I are all enjoying this book. (Iris is enamored of the Shopsin's menu that is reproduced in the middle of the book, as well as the pancake photos.)

Kenny Shopsin only cares about whether something tastes good. He's not interested in healthy, seasonal, local, homemade--those things are OK, but it has to TASTE GOOD.

"I do not believe in making things from scratch just to say I did." He uses a lot of commercial products, some of which might surprise you, but he also makes more things fresh than just about any other restaurant. His writing is by turns strikingly erudite and startlingly (and hilariously) dirty. Despite his reputation as a grouch, in this book he comes across as a real sweetheart (his five children, who feature prominently in this book, appear to adore him). *Eat Me* is a charmer.
