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Downsized from her boutique firm, Erin panics as she watches her career ambitions plunge into free fall. Why else would the savvy twenty-eight-year-old take a job as a waitress? A favorable word from a family friend gets Erin in the door at Roulette, Madison Avenue's newest exclusive haunt and home to a celebrity chef with a talent for cutting-edge cuisine and spotting the weakest link.

Life behind the apron is even worse than she imagined—“from mangling orders to overimbibing at a wine seminar, Erin finds herself in hot water with the egomaniacal chef *and* the owner’s outrageous wife. And then there’s the dismissive, surly clientele, all but Daniel Fratelli, a flirtatious TV news producer. Is Daniel really as down-to-earth as he seems? Or will he eventually succumb to one of the many glamorous uptown girls in his own social circle?

Determined to prove that she won’t crack under pressure, Erin begins to master the art of waitressing—“becoming part shrink, part slave, and part foie gras hustler. But her continuing series of disastrous missteps quickly sends her right back to the bottom of the food chain. Forced to prove her commitment by organizing the storage area and alphabetizing produce after hours, Erin wonders if she’ll ever make it back to the real world. But with a little help from her quirky best friend, she comes up with an idea that might take her life in a whole new direction—and that’s just the first course!.

Turning Tables Details

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Melissa says

Maybe you've read this one before...

Could have been called Devil Eats Prada or Waitress Diaries or Waitress in the Fast Lane or Twin Entrees of Manhattan.

Story is annoyingly familiar. Young gal about town is sidetracked from a fabulous career in Gotham, takes job of lesser esteem for sake of paying bills. Unbeknownst to her, she has just sold her soul to devil in disguise. Gal scrambles for her dignity as she attempts in vain to please people around her. Finds temptation on side, has not-so-discreet affair. Comforting appearance by wizened authority figure. Grows a pair, leaves job for something more worthwhile, hears through grapevine devil gets comeuppance, lives happily ever after as a wiser, stronger person.

Just another version of "take this job and shove it."

Marc says

I'm of two minds when it comes to Turning Tables. As a book about restaurants, it's very good. As a chick-lit book, it's all right.

I used to work at a place that had a restaurant as a part of it. I had to deal with my co-workers and people over there many times and go in the kitchen so I know how it is. While I never worked in the restaurant, I knew some of the things that took place there. That's all captured perfectly. If you want to know what's it like to work in a restaurant, read this book. However, that's not why I bought this book.

I bought Turning Tables because I wanted some good chick-lit. While the premise of chick-lit books are relatively the same, this one isn't as tight as some of the others I've read. It focuses far too much on the restaurant part. Because of that, there's a huge cast, which sometimes makes it confusing at times. But there are two major problems I have other than that.

There's a love interest, but it takes far too long for him to show up. When he does show up, he's sparingly in the book. While it's probably more accurate than more chick-lit books, he still should have been in the book more.

My second problem is that Erin's a very weak person. She's a push over the entire book except for the last few pages. I like chick-lit books because of their coming of age story but I wish her character growth was more gradual or subtle. It felt very jarring at the end.

Turning Tables was all right, but I really wish the portion of restaurant to life ratio was flipped.

Elizabeth says

Set in New York, the heroine of the book loses her marketing job and is forced to become a waitress (server) in an upscale restaurant. She falls in love with a customer while finding herself.

The most interesting aspect of the book is learning about the skills and attitude required to work in an upscale restaurant. One aspect I did not like much was a conflict that arose because the heroine dates a famous TV producer and her boss's wife disapproves because she believes the heroine does not belong to the proper social class. I'd believe that more if the novel were set in London, rather than New York.

The rating above is on my "Chick-Lit" scale (which ranges from one to three stars)

Lisa says

Between 2.5 and 3 stars, so I'll round up on this one.

Who hasn't worked in the food service industry? I mean, even if you did it for a week and quit or something, which means you get how draining it is so much so that you couldn't do it. I did it for years, and the Macdowells have it spot-on, at least for some restaurants. Cut-throat to the point where you think: Hello, isn't it just food?; ridiculous hours for who knows how much money. Every shift is an adventure, and they've captured that here. I enjoyed Erin's transformation and Cato's mentoring. Cato definitely made the book. The Macdowells caught the balance of workers, too: dedicated lifers and waiting-for-my-break temps (or so they think). Rocket the dog...gotta like someone dedicated to her pet! Honestly, I think the book could have survived without Phil or Daniel, but that's MHO. Quick afternoon read.

Sue says

I just watched a talk show that covered the topic of waiters and how difficult their jobs are. The pay disparity was the focus of the piece and I had this book waiting to be read which I thought might be timely.

Well written and enjoyable and a real eye opener. First of all I am shocked that people have the kind of money that lets them blow \$500 on a meal. Second of all I am startled that in a restaurant charging those prices that waiters actually make okay money because of tips. Unfortunately I live in an area of the country where waiters might consider \$50 a big tip night.

I enjoyed reading about the behind the scenes stuff that takes place before, during and after business hours.

Gail says

It's a familiar story: Erin Edwards is "downsized" from her marketing firm and without a job for months. A friend of the family puts in a good word for her at Roulette, a very upscale Manhattan eatery. Brazening through a concocted resume, she shows up to part of the wait-staff. Part slavery, part humiliation, part intuitive sales counselor, she is both adopted and reviled by the various chefs, waiters, bar tenders, and regular customers. The tips are exceptionally good and she continues to learn while screwing up, while screwing one of the cooks, and falling in love with a customer. This book is full of wry comments, engaging

and endearing characters, and one feisty old dog. Erin finds her own way and does find what she wants and loves.

It may be a familiar story but it's well-told, funny, wry, and hopeful. I recommend it as well-written, fun, and a good read. I hope the authors write more!

Britt says

Turning Tables is one of those books that I've had on my bookshelf for literally 5 years. It's one that I randomly found at the thrift store, saw it was about working in a restaurant, bought it and never picked it up again until a few days ago. I'm glad that I actually gave this book a chance because it was quite enjoyable. I've been working in the restaurant industry as a server for 8 years now and I can tell you that this book is spot on with its accuracy of what it's like working at one. It's tedious, exhausting and overwhelming. You have to deal with psychotic managers, angry chefs and irritable and nasty customers on a regular basis, yet keep a smile and a positive attitude on constantly.

In this novel, we meet employees of a high end restaurant, Roulette, in Manhattan. We follow our main character, Erin, through her journey of learning the ropes of serving, but also trying to get her life back together after losing her job at a big firm and the possibility of falling in love.

Though the dialogue was a little dry, I enjoyed just being in the environment of the high-end restaurant world. We were introduced to a variety of different characters, being employees, managers, family members and customers. My favorite character was definitely Cato, who worked and trained Erin at Cato. He absolutely made this book for me with his charm and humor. The head chef of Roulette, Carl Corbett, was without a doubt my least favorite character, but he was written to be that way. He has little redeeming qualities towards the end of the novel, but overall, he's just a nasty guy with a horrible, egotistical personality.

How the relationships were played out in the novel didn't work with me at all. I didn't feel any connection towards Daniel, and even less so with Phil. I didn't mind them as characters, though Phil was kind of a dick, but I didn't like them as love interests. That part of the story line was a dud for me, which is okay.

I really enjoyed the accuracy and the atmosphere surrounding the novel. Erin was a decent main character to follow, and enjoyable side characters as well. It was a very fast paced book with constantly different scenarios going on. If you're looking for a nice romance instead, I wouldn't recommend this. However, I would definitely recommend this book for someone who has worked or is working in the service industry. Or honestly, just someone who enjoys reading about someone who is trying to build their life back up again.

Sarah says

During my ill-fated but lucrative time at Gratzi (during which I wore exactly the uniform depicted on the cover, by the by), I had many of the experiences depicted in this book, including strangely difficult and complicated sidework, a preposterous chef and yet more preposterous manager, and a weird symbiotic relationship with a gay uberwaiter who was constantly baffled by my ineptitude but nonetheless extremely gossipy and supportive. However, I didn't ever have sex with a hot prep cook in the basement, much less

compel an extremely wealthy and cute regular with a dog to leave his girlfriend for me. Because of this obvious inaccuracy, I'd give the book (and perhaps the universe) two stars; however, it gets an extra one for obviously basing Cato, the uberwaiter, on Kaine from Season Three of Project Runway.

Christina says

An amusing and entertaining novel, however the relationships fell a little flat on me. I found there was no connection between Erin and Phil, Erin and Daniel... there was no basis, no believability, just another subplot or two to spice up the story. The best friend was more of a filler than anything else - just a character brought in to get the ball rolling again, and then forgotten for another 200 pages. Not so best-friendly after all.

That aside, I loved the restaurant characters. They were fleshed out, lively people. They are what kept me coming back for more (as well as the few adorable little scenes between Erin and Daniel - few and far between as they were).

Over all, I'd recommend if you just need something light and funny to read over the weekend. I finished it in a day so it clearly wasn't too bad! I really did enjoy it.

Mathis Bailey says

It was okay. The plot felt flat. I kept waiting for something to happen. But the story just went around in circles. I wanted to give up within the first 100 pages, but I decided to finish it since it was the only foodie book lying around. The food descriptions were nice though. The main character was borderline annoying. I didn't like how she let everyone run over her. So, I guess one can say this is a self-discovery read.

The story is about a 28 yr old woman who gets laid off from her corporate job and ends up waitressing at this posh NYC restaurant serving cocktails and gourmet entrees. Meanwhile, she meets these unscrupulous characters who tries to bring her down.

I'll say if you're a foodie and adores chit lit...give it a go. Don't expect a lot from the premise though. The romance was blah. The writing is fun and light, which I liked.

If you like novels like Sweetbitter or Food Whore...you will enjoy this culinary read. 2.5 stars

Kay says

I don't know what made me keep reading this book to the end. Never having been a waitress, I had no experience that would allow me to compare my working life with Erin's. But if waitressing is anything like waitressing at the Roulette, I'm glad I never worked in a restaurant. Except for a very few, the staff were unfriendly, mean-spirited, unhelpful, just plain miserable -- even more so than some of the ungrateful, surly clientele. Maybe I continued to read in the hope that Erin would wise up and tell the egomaniacal chef and the restaurant owner to take a long walk off a short pier. Unfortunately, it took 313 pages for her to wise up and by then, there were only 11 more pages to read.

Martha Wewer says

Okay so I read 2 books about waiting tables back to back. This one really struck close to home because I have been an over-educated waiter and bartender. I also have worked for people who think they can treat you badly, talk to you like you are stupid and still expect you to work hard for THEIR business. It's amazing. Anyway, this book was very smart, very funny and very true to form as to what the restaurant business is like. Yes, you get addicted to the money and no, there is nothing glamorous about staying up all night cleaning the walk-in. Tip your servers well, people, because you do not want to come back in the next life as a waiter/server/busboy/bartender. It's hard, hard work.

Jacqueline says

I saw a review that one of my friends on Goodreads wrote about this book and it caught my interest as something I might enjoy reading. As soon as I started reading it, it sounded vaguely familiar to me, and it turns out I read it before, about 5+ years ago. I didn't remember much of the storyline, but character names seemed familiar, especially Erin's dog Rocket, and gradually I pieced it together as more than just a coincidence. I ended up reading the whole book again, as I didn't remember much of it, and it was a pretty good read. Just something fun, funny and lighthearted. A feel good romantic comedy in book form. I'd recommend it if you like chick lit.

Becky Benishek says

What an enjoyable read this was! Perfect balance of whimsy, characterization, and setting. The fact that this book is based on more than a touch of actual waitstaff experiences by the MacDowell sisters gives it that final touch of delightful realism.

Marissa Hughes says

A fun quick read for anyone who has worked in the service industry. Specially those who have worked for overzealous Italian restaurateurs. I have worked for a male version of Gina's character and her portrayal was pretty spot on. Having spent the last 6 years of my life waiting tables in small upscale restaurants the characters are easy to relate to.

If you are looking for a quick read with insight to the life of a food server this book did a pretty good job of capturing it.
