

“Wit, wisdom, and verve—these are only three of Irena Chalmer’s most wonderful traits. So many of us in the food world have benefited from her intelligence and enthusiasm, whether through a collaboration or simply a stimulating conversation. Now she is sharing her talents with a new generation of young people. Long live Irena Chalmers!

—DARRA GOLDSTEIN,
EDITOR IN CHIEF, *GASTRONOMICA*

•

“I know of no one who knows as much about food and the industry as [Chalmers] does. Certainly no one writes with as much candor and humor.”

—RICHARD GRAUSMAN, FOUNDER & PRESIDENT,
THE CAREERS THROUGH CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM (C-CAP)

•

“Irena Chalmers should be right up there with Julia and Jim in spreading the word about good food in America. As the First Lady of Food books for three decades, Chalmers presence on the page or in a lecture hall charges the atmosphere with vitality, wit and wisdom.”

—BETTY FUSSELL, FOOD HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR OF
THE STORY OF CORN, MY KITCHEN WARS AND RAISING STEAKS

•

“Irena Chalmers knows her stuff. Over the years she has reinvented herself as an award-winning cookbook author, restaurant consultant, cooking school teacher, speechwriter and CIA instructor. Who could be a better guide to finding a job in the food business?”

—DIANE JACOB, AUTHOR OF *WILL WRITE FOR FOOD: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO WRITING COOKBOOKS, RESTAURANT REVIEWS, ARTICLES, MEMOIR, FICTION, AND MORE*

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“Irena Chalmers is a prolific publisher, author, teacher and food consultant—a very versatile and witty enlightener”

—BEVERLY STEPHEN
EXECUTIVE EDITOR *FOOD ARTS*

•

“Irena Chalmers brings insights and information to the enormous world of food enthusiasts like no other voice in the arena. Her writing is as interesting and refined as a carefully crafted meal.”

—AUTHOR OF *START UP MARKETING, JUST SAY YES,*
BRANDING COMMENTATOR FOR NATIONAL NEWS AND
COLUMNIST FOR NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

“Irena and I had the good common fortune to work with the greatest restaurateur of the 20th century, Joe Baum. We both spent years trying to anticipate his response to our proposals. Irena was one of the

few personalities able to cool his fevered brow and make him happy. This is a gift she brings to most encounters. After all, she was once a nurse. Her sunny disposition and good will, both in her writing and her presence, make you want to spend time with her. You'll feel better afterwards."

—MILTON GLASER, DESIGNER (OF I LOVE NY LOGO)

•

"Irena's column is a perennial favorite of *Chef Magazine* readers. There's a reason why it's the very last page in the magazine—to ensure they read the rest."

—ABBIE JARMAN, EDITOR, *CHEF MAGAZINE*

•

"Irena is one of my favorite people in life. She is warm, witty and . . . a brilliant cook. She thinks with a first-rate mind and writes with an angel on her pen."

—CHEF DAVID JAMES ROBINSON
EXECUTIVE CHEF/OWNER
BEZALEL GABLES FINE CATERING & EVENTS

•

"For the past 25 years, with both wit and wisdom, Irena Chalmers has been instructing us on the culinary world's virtues, which she is always quick to trumpet, and its vices, which she skewers with delicious accuracy. Her keynote addresses to major food-related conferences have pinpointed trends that have significantly shaped an entire industry, noting both its promise and potential and its possible pitfalls. Her many books have enlightened and entertained thousands of devoted culinary practitioners."

—PHILLIP S. COOKE AND DANIEL D. MAYE
MANAGING PARTNERS (RETIRED), FSA GROUP & PALS

•

"Irena Chalmers is a masterful cook, a dazzling intellect, a beloved teacher, a sparkling writer and more, much more. She brings everything she has to the table of life and dispenses it all bountifully and generously. Her food, her knowledge, her know-how, her insights. They're there for all of us to have and enjoy. So, pull up a chair and have a seat at Irena's table. You'll have wonderful time. You will be nourished. You will be filled. It's a promise."

—ELAINE YANNUZZI
FORMER PRESIDENT, EXPRESSION UNLTD.

•

"The distinguished and absolutely delectable Irena Chalmers always has her finger on what is important in our lives. She knows, for instance, what the world needs now are jobs, including those in the culinary world. *Food Jobs* makes a valuable contribution at the right time."

—PETER D. FRANKLIN, FOOD COLUMNIST,
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE.

“I think every incoming student should be exposed to at least one class with Ms. Chalmers, It will be a truly enlightening experience that no one should be deprived of.”

—RANDY WALTERS
CULINARY STUDENT, CULINARY OF AMERICA

• PRAISE FOR •

The Food Professional's Guide
Compiled by Irena Chalmers, Foreword by Julia Child

“Here in one place are all the names that we used to have to find by hunting through a dozen different directories. You no longer have to spend hours on your own tracing down a fact, a service or a person; the editors of this directory have done the work for you. I can't imagine how we have all lived without it.”

—JULIA CHILD

“The thought of even attempting to compile such a volume is mind-boggling.”

—LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS

“Those with a fervid interest in food will take real delight in this book, and serious cooks will find it invaluable.”

—JOHN MARIANI

“This kind of giant, comprehensive national directory of people, products and services in the food and wine industries which many have long wished for has finally been published.”

—RESTAURANT DIGEST.

• PRAISE FOR •

The Great American Food Almanac

“*The Great Food Almanac* is a feast to read—helpful, healthy data in an easy format.”

—ROBERT MONDAVI, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY

“With this book, Irena Chalmers provides ravening food-fact foragers with something richly meaty and delectably odd to chew on every day of the year.”

—MICHAEL & ARIANE BATTERBERRY
FOUNDING EDITORS, *FOOD ARTS MAGAZINE*

•

“Irena Chalmers has the quickest mind in the food world. Facts and fantasies crowd the ever-lively pages, carefully annotated. What really sets *The Great Food Almanac* apart is its diversity and humor. The PC Thought Police run for cover when Irena hits town. And those who feel the fun has been removed from our food along with the fat and frosting have a welcome opportunity to binge on smiles and chuckles.”

—WILLIAM RICE
FOOD AND WINE COLUMNIST, *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*

•

“I haven’t had so much fun with a book since the long-lost days of *The Whole Earth Catalog*. Thanks from all of us out here who are hopelessly compulsive browsers, relentless fact and figure collectors, amateur muckrakers, gossip hounds and of course, food lovers. You’ve left a treasure chest on our doorsteps.”

—NACH WAXMAN
FOUNDER AND OWNER, KITCHEN ARTS AND LETTERS, NEW YORK CITY

•

“Nobody does it better than Irena Chalmers in this new almanac of fascinating and juicy tidbits seasoned with her famous irrepressible humor.”

—MAGGIE WALDRON
EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR, KETCHUM FOOD CENTER

•

“For me, receiving a new book from Irena Chalmers is always thrill. *The Great Food Almanac* bursts with wit, charm and Irena’s delightful information. What a way to learn!”

—SHEILA LUKINS
CO-AUTHOR OF *THE SILVER PALATE* COOKBOOKS

food JOBS

Irena Chalmers

150 GREAT JOBS

FOR CULINARY STUDENTS,

CAREER CHANGERS AND FOOD LOVERS



BEAUFORT BOOKS
NEW YORK

FIRST EDITION

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For butchers and bakers

And tillers of acres

And food-trivia players

And carrot purveyors

And wielders of woks.

For food fashion leaders

And recipe readers

And fitness-freak jocks.

And salesmen

Who breakfast on lox,

For taste counterfeiters

And writers of letters

And restaurateurs

And entrepreneurs

And connoisseurs.

For greeters

And seaters

Of meeters for brunch

And ladies who lunch.

For winners

And diners

And buyers making deals by the bunch.

For eaters of noodles

And bakers of strudels.

For post-midnight snackers

And packers

And craters

And vanishing head waiters

And food innovators who act on a hunch.

For sommeliers with tastevin flying

So clearly implying

They'd like a gratuity

Akin to an annuity

And then a drop more.

For cake decorators

And cookbook creators

And people who munch.

In short, this is neat

For all who eat . . .

Most of all, this book is dedicated to my darling, hard-working daughter, Hilary; incomparable son, Philip; and charming daughter-in-law, Emiko. To Freddie, who encouraged me to buy all those copper pans and joyfully shared the first cooking efforts.

And for Elaine, who was at my side every step of the way.

• **Other Books by Irena Chalmers** •

American Bistro
American Cooking
Award Winning Recipes
Baby Almanac
Beginner's Book of Beautiful Food
Bride's Cookbook
Christmas Almanac
Confident Cook
Edible Christmas
Favorite Family Recipes
Food Professional's Guide
Good Old Food
The Great American Food Almanac
The Great Food Almanac
Working Family Cookbook

and many single-subject cookbooks

**Some dream of things that are and ask, Why?
Others dream of things that never were and ask, Why not?**
—Robert F. Kennedy

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Caviar Producer

Wild Game Farmer

Cowboy

Bee Keeper

Honey Producer

Mushroom Grower

Chef Instructor

Culinary School Teacher

Culinary Tour Guide

Culinary Librarian

acknowledgments

THEY SAY IT is lonely being a writer. What rubbish! When I look at my network of cherished friends, realize I am part of a lovely, celebratory, constantly hungry crowd of food lovers. This makes me rich beyond my wildest dreams.

There is no possible way to thank the entire merry band of experts and colleagues who so willingly agreed to help compile this book. Almost every author thanks their literary agent and editor, and I want to join that chorus, too. Jane Dystel is the New York agent I share with many other fortunate writers. Jane encouraged and supported *Food Jobs* with constant kindness and generosity of spirit. Ultimately it was Eric Kampmann, Margot Atwell and Erin Smith who immediately understood the spirit of the book and became the best publishers I have ever known. Pauline Neuwirth, Beth Metrick and the others at Neuwirth and Associates were also instrumental in putting this book together.

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I am particularly proud to share the words of Daniel Maye, the visionary association manager who was single-handedly responsible for the vast expansion of the International Association of Culinary

Professionals (IACP); beloved restaurateur Danny Meyer; Dr. Kathy Merget, dean of liberal arts and management studies at the CIA; Dr. Denise Bauer, associate dean for curriculum and instruction for liberal arts at the CIA; and Anne McBride, who received her PhD in food studies at NYU and wrote about her experiences for this book. Anne also helped me enormously by conducting several interviews with food celebrities.

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I am fortunate to count among my dear friends cookbook editor Elizabeth Crossman, Betty Fussler, Darra Goldstein, Anne Willan, Irene Sax, and Elizabeth Schneider—the revered grand dame of vegetables and author of *Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables: A Commonsense Guide* and *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini: The Essential Reference*. They are among our finest food writers.

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I have made every effort to gratefully acknowledge each person who provided information and guidance. I am particularly fortunate to know so many students and members of the faculty at the Culinary Institute of America. You bring to my life gifts beyond compare.

The original book contract called for this work to be completed in one year, but in the end, it took considerably longer—and actually encompasses a lifetime of toil in many, many food jobs.

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foreword

WHEN I LOST my job several years ago, I received an important piece of advice from my friend Paula Wolfert. I told her I was thinking about reopening my cooking school. She was appalled. “Are you nuts?” she asked incredulously. “When you started your cooking school there was no competition. Now there are plenty of other people who can teach as well—probably much better than you. Don’t be an ant in an anthill. Do something different.”

Following her good advice, I used a telescope instead of a microscope to see what other opportunities beckoned beyond the horizon. I became a cookbook publisher. Milton Glaser, the renowned graphic designer, was the art director for the books that I named the Great American Cooking Schools series.

Among the titles I published were the first books written by several cooking-school teachers who later achieved dazzling success. I assigned both the subject and the title for each book, and to my astonishment all the authors agreed to get to work right away. Rose Levy Beranbaum wrote a little book called *Romantic and Classic Cakes*, which evolved into the groundbreaking *The Cake Bible*, and she has continued to write numerous other award-winning and classic cookbooks. Nathalie Dupree wrote *Cooking of the South* and became the belle of southern cooking long before the arrival of Paula Dean. Barbara Kafka, the widely acknowledged all-around genius, compiled *American Food and California Wine*. Among her many other publications are the award-winning *Microwave Gourmet* and *Roasting: A Simple Art, Party Food, Soup: A Way of Life*, and, most recently, with Christopher Style, *Vegetable Love: A Book for Cooks*.

I asked Richard Sax to write *Old-Fashioned Desserts*, and he eventually created *Classic Home Desserts*, the definitive work on this subject. Gary Goldberg, who wrote *Successful Parties*, is now the director of the Manhattan-based New School Culinary Arts Program. The late Peter Kump wrote *Quiche and Pâté* for my publishing company. At the time he owned a small cooking school that, under the wise guidance of its current owner, Rick Smilow, has grown into the hugely successful Institute of Culinary Education in New York City.

These cookbooks won many awards for both text and art direction, and in the process I lost almost every penny I had. In exchange I got a life; I think that’s a pretty good trade off.

Before my exhilarating but ultimately ill-fated publishing adventure, I worked with David Grimes, the visionary risk taker and founder of Potpourri Press. We were both living in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he owned a large gourmet store in a shopping mall and I had a more modest cookware and specialty food and wine shop from which I conducted cooking classes. We got together to publish dozens of small cookbooks that, in the beginning, were all related to cooking utensils.

We like to think we were pioneers of single-subject cookbooks that were distributed (in multiples of a dozen, all nonreturnable) to the gift and gourmet market. The first in a collection of many was *Fondue*, a little booklet that, embarrassingly in hindsight, cost one dollar retail—fifty cents wholesale. It sold a million copies...

I actually began my circuitous culinary journey at Lexington Market in Baltimore. It was the home of the DelMarVa (Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia) Chicken Festival. The festival’s promoters hired a woman, sight unseen, to demonstrate the prize-winning fried chicken recipe. When she arrived there was no mistaking the fact she was absolutely gorgeous. The organizers were shocked. “Oh dear, this won’t do at all,” they declared. “What we need is somebody ordinary.” That’s how I got the job.

Before Baltimore, I had been a nurse in England and Scotland. I arrived in New York City without knowing a single person. I was appointed to teach neuroanatomy and neurophysiology to nurses at

Columbia-Presbyterian Neurological Institute.

Until recently, I lived in midtown Manhattan. I planned to stay there forever. I love big cities, but my life changed suddenly when I again lost my job, this time at the World Trade Center's famous restaurant, Windows on the World, where I had worked as a so-called consultant for the restaurant chairman, Joe Baum. (Craig Claiborne described Joe as "the restaurateur of our century." Almost everyone agreed with that opinion.) I functioned as the general scribbler in residence, writing Joe's speeches, helping to compose menus and press releases, working on the Web site, and producing brochures. I was a small part of the "brains trust team" that compiled proposals for the restaurant's many new ventures.

At the same time I was employed by the International Food Information Council, a Washington, D.C.—based nonprofit foundation whose mission is to communicate science-based information on food safety, nutrition, and biotechnology to health and nutrition educators, government officials, and the media. My assignment there was to talk and write about agricultural biotechnology.

I was also teaching a class in professional food writing one afternoon a week at the Culinary Institute of America. After September 11, 2001, I decided to move closer to the school. I bought a small cottage in Kingston, New York, and took some driving lessons, as I hadn't driven a car for more than twenty years. Now I'm teaching, writing, and speaking at food conferences more than ever before. I've even planted a rose garden.

I have briefly recounted my own experiences to show how my seemingly unrelated paths have turned out to be surprisingly interrelated and have converged to form this book. I have actually tackled many of the food jobs described in these pages. I've found ways to turn my greatest passion into a career (many careers, in fact). My fondest hope is that you, too, will find ways of using the things you *love* to do to guide you to the work that Joseph Campbell so eloquently called your *bliss*.

introduction

I GET AN enormous amount of satisfaction and pleasure from teaching at the Culinary Institute of America. At the first meeting of my professional-food-writing class, I ask the students to tell me something about themselves that will surprise me. I know they are all attending the school because they love to cook and are passionate about food. I also know not all of them will choose to become professional chefs upon graduation. So what else do they *love* to do?

Recently, a rather grumpy-looking girl folded her arms and glared at me. In response to what she clearly thought was a dumb question, she answered, “I *love* to go shopping.” Everyone laughed, but I thought this was a really useful piece of information.

I told her about a former colleague at Windows on the World who is a tabletop consultant. She scours manufacturers’ showrooms for the latest designs of china, glassware, and distinctive serving plates for several upscale restaurants. My student now does the same thing. She works part-time as a tabletop counselor and is also a prop stylist for a food photographer. She too goes shopping everyday. When a chef wants a tagine, mandoline, or any other specialized piece of equipment, she knows exactly what it is and can lay her hands on it immediately. She found her *bliss*—her perfect food job.

Another student arrived early to class carrying the *Wall Street Journal*. After graduation, he joined an investment banking firm that paid his way to become a financial analyst specializing in food companies. He combined his culinary knowledge with his interest in finance and embarked on a career for which he was uniquely qualified.

“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.”

—LEWIS CARROLL



A student in the culinary program responded to my question by saying, “I want to be a rock star.” I couldn’t help him become a great musician, but instead I suggested he find a job as a personal chef for his favorite rock group. He did. When he cooks something good for them to eat, they sometimes let him play with them. He found himself a really cool job; he had the courage to offer his food knowledge and the leader of the band was happy to give him a seat on the bus.

A Korean culinary student whose English-speaking ability did not quite match his exemplary cooking skills found work as a private chef at the Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C. The diplomats were delighted to have “home-cooked” food prepared by someone who spoke their language.

These are examples of using your knowledge, experience, and passion to find your perfect food job. None of these students, or many others I have met, knew these jobs existed. And if they had, they wouldn’t know where to begin to apply for such positions. Even experienced food professionals are largely unaware of the dazzling range of career paths that will enable them to find work that is interesting, challenging, and fulfilling.

You may not know that there’s an ice-cream company that employs a full-time taster. You may not know how to become a tea or coffee taster or an account executive promoting beef, pork, peaches, pears, or other commodities. You may be unaware that the United States Postal Service employed a chef to provide meals for the cycling team that it sponsored. *American Idol* engages a personal chef to feed the secluded finalists. An experienced cook may earn eighty thousand dollars a year—tax-free—working on a luxury yacht cruising the Greek islands. Chefs work at NASA developing food for

astronauts. A food lover with no formal training may find success as a restaurant critic if he possesses a vibrant palate and can write well.

There is always plenty of work to be found in restaurants, but food lovers could explore other opportunities and think about becoming a private chef for a movie star, a sports hero, or a television anchor. Have you thought about a career as a literary agent, cheese-shop owner, food-travel writer, bartender, artisanal bread baker, wedding-cake designer, food photographer, recipe tester, food-trend researcher, radio interviewer, publicist, bed-and-breakfast owner, cooking-school teacher, media trainer, or any one of literally hundreds of other ways to earn a living in the food world?

Whether you are interested in science or supermarkets, in engineering, accounting, human relations, or flower arranging for fancy parties, in cookbook reviewing or judging cooking contests, there is a job in the food field for you. Or you can dream up something that has never before been done and make it happen.

• MATTERS OF FACT •

According to a recent study by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the culinary industry represents one of the fastest-growing occupational categories in the nation. There are more than nine hundred thousand restaurant locations in the United States, and the industry provides jobs for more than 12.2 million employees.

- **Projected annual sales are increasing at a rate of nearly 5 percent a year and have a total economic impact of over \$1.2 trillion.**
- **The restaurant industry fills a critical role as a job creator in the nation's economy; American consumers spend close to 50 percent of their food dollars in restaurants.**
- **The white-tablecloth, upscale restaurant segment of the vast hospitality industry accounts for a mere three-tenths of 1 percent of the total number of jobs.**
- **By 2014, the restaurant industry will need an additional 1.5 million workers to meet labor demands.**
- **The food industry spends \$33 billion a year on advertising and promotion.**
- **In a recent survey, only 31 percent of the respondents thought that being able to prepare a "gourmet" meal signified a cultivated person, whereas 45 percent said that a cultivated person would know the good restaurants in the region.**

• MATTERS OF FACT •

SEVERAL YEARS AGO there was an ad with the slogan, "You don't have to be Jewish to love Levy's rye bread." You don't have to be Jewish to work in a deli, either. Immigrants from Latin America and Pakistan are slicing lox and making chopped liver. Hard-working men and women from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and many other nations provide the glue that holds together many restaurants and food-service operations. The pizza maker may have relatives who came from Italy, but it is just as likely he will have arrived from Tibet or Albania. Greeks are no longer the only ones who operate diners. Chefs from all over the world are learning to make sushi, which has become the new pizza. Only in Chinese restaurants can we expect to find Chinese workers.

YOUR CAREER IN FOOD

Sir Francis Crick, who with Dr. James Watson unraveled the DNA code, once declared that if you are not prepared to take a risk you should never get married, you shouldn't have children, and you most certainly should never risk changing jobs.

You, dear reader, are taking a huge risk. You are thinking about starting a new career. Simply reading these words is a measure of your bravery, your sense of adventure, and your willingness to take charge of your life.

Whether we know it or not, we are all taking risks all the time. Even if we are classified as full-time employees, we are really freelancers. The axe hangs over our head by a slender thread. The only security we have is our ability to transform our knowledge and experience into stepping stones to the next opportunity.

Rather than thinking about permanence and security, we should all be thinking about—and hoping for—change. Change is the only constant in the continuum of our lives.

If you stop pedaling, you'll fall off your bike. If you keep going, no matter how slowly, you will eventually arrive at the place you want to be. If you stand still, there is an illusion you are coasting, but in fact you are falling back. Keep reading and keep networking. You never know when the next opportunity will come your way, and you must always be ready to welcome it—fearlessly.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Like it or not, we have to keep making decisions. Should I wear this or that? Should I buy this or that car? Take this or that apartment? Go to this movie or that one? Go out or stay at home? Should the meat be well-done, medium, or rare? Blue cheese or Thousand Island dressing? Smooth or chunky? Small, medium, or large? The list of questions—and answers—goes on and on. Now is the time to ask the right questions—lots of them. At the O. J. Simpson trial, Johnny Cochran didn't ask the jury, is this man guilty? Instead, he asked if there was hanky-panky in the Los Angeles Police Department. It is a matter of interpretation whether this was the right question. What we do know is that if you ask the right questions, you may alter the course of your personal future.

“There are known knowns, there are things we know we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say there are things we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. Things we don't know we don't know.”

—DONALD RUMSFELD

THINK AHEAD

Deciding to change your career, embark on a new venture, or just change jobs is a major undertaking. It means thinking ahead and anticipating where you want to be in the short term. Don't worry so much about the long-term future, because you will probably change your mind and change jobs several times. Most people do. Just remember, you are in charge. You are willing to exchange your time for someone's money, but you are not a prisoner. You can leave a job if you are miserable. Being unhappy is a WOMBAT—a waste of money, brains, and time.

PROCRASTINATION IS THE THIEF OF TIME

When graduation day arrives, many students confess that they haven't had time to think about what they want to do next. They must have been thinking about something more important. Now they are

a panic because they have to pay the rent and deal with student loans, car payments, credit card debt, and plenty of other things, too, so it is understandably tempting to accept the first job that is offered. Too many people are miserable because they think they don't have a choice. Of course they do. They have plenty of choices. But first there is some homework to do.

FIRST STEPS

You'd think it would be easy to decide what you want to do. It is relatively easy if you just want a "job" job, like being a dishwasher or deciding you want to spend your entire life making sandwiches.

Thinking about a career is really hard work. The trouble is there are too many choices. Imagine you've decided to write a cookbook with the title *Chicken Dishes of the World*. You'll drown because the subject is way too big. It would be far easier to settle for *Chicken Dishes of Detroit*. I'm kidding, but you know what I mean. Try and narrow your focus and be realistic. Don't fantasize about being a consultant to Thomas Keller. If you can afford to live on air and tap water, consider instead taking a job in his restaurant as an unpaid intern, or apply for an entry-level position in one of his restaurants. This will give you the opportunity to see whether this is a place where you really want to work. It will be terrific if it pans out, but if it doesn't, you have gained invaluable knowledge. You will free your mind to explore other opportunities.

EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES AND ALL THE POSSIBILITIES WITHIN THE POSSIBILITIES

If you are absolutely stumped, spread out every section of the Sunday newspaper and select only the one you can't wait to read: business, style, dining, science, weddings, the arts, real estate, book reviews, national news, etc. Now you have given yourself a few clues about what you genuinely care about and provided yourself with the beginning of a road map.

WRITE YOUR OWN OBITUARY

Whatever it is you want to do, I suggest you begin by writing your own obituary and then try to live accordingly so you can be sure of what others will say about you when the last trumpet sounds.

This is what an elderly churchgoing lady decided to do. She knew her end was near, and she was eagerly anticipating it. She had led a good life and believed everyone would say nice things about her at her funeral, which she had planned with great care.

She went to the preacher of her church and said, "This is the dress I want to wear in my casket. I want these hymns to be sung." Handing him a sheet of paper, she said, "These are the words I want you to say. And I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

"A fork?" asked the puzzled vicar. "Why do you want a fork?"

"Well," said the old lady, "all my life, I've been going to church suppers and when they are clearing the table after the main course, they always say, 'Keep the fork,' and I've discovered it's because there's always something sweet coming next."

Writing your own obituary could be a useful exercise. It will make you think hard about how you want others to think of you. For example:

You were a tireless champion in the effort to rid the world of foie gras, caged chickens, endangered fish, and greasy fries. You were president of the League of Abstinence, and your charm and graciousness persuaded Congress to pass legislation to create a nation

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