

STEH vs. BOURDAIN

Don't shoot the messenger, Toronto

When chefs get together, do they talk about food? Maybe not, but when Michael Steh of Toronto's reds bistro & wine bar had Anthony Bourdain on the phone recently, the talk was all culinary. Here, an excerpt of the pair's conversation on Bourdain's new book, *Medium Raw*, why chefs do what they do and what the rest of Canada has to say about Toronto's cuisine. Read the full interview at nationalpost.com/theappetizer.

Q *What's the meaning behind the title of your book, *Medium Raw: A Bloody Valentine to the World of Food and the People Who Cook*?*

A It's a non-sequitur. You can't be both. [Medium raw] doesn't exist. It's a book about mixed emotions. It's a book about arguing with myself. It's a book coming to terms with the fact that I'm not a line cook anymore. People keep reading *Kitchen Confidential* and I'm not writing about the world anymore from the point of view of a guy standing in a kitchen. I thought it was a good and catchy title but descriptive in its own way.

Q *Why do we find some sort of satisfaction catering to everyone else and no one catering to us?*

A The answer is simple: It's because we love it. We can't help it. It's the life for us. It's like joining a rock 'n' roll band, a circus, there's just no other way. There's obviously a deep love and satisfaction and comfort level in this crazy subculture otherwise people wouldn't do it. Most people are not suited for the restaurant business. They think they are and they should find out before school rather than later when they have sunk a lot of time, money and capital learning a trade that they're not

going to be good at and more importantly, not going to be happy in.

Unfortunately, there's a lot of predatory schools out there who have risen up to take advantage of this new celebrity chef phenomena and glamorization of cooks. I think in a perfect world, professional cooking schools should spend the first week convincing you not to come to weed out the poor people who are going to have their hearts broken.

Q *Have you ever dined in Toronto?*

A I have. I've eaten at Susur's, as well as some dim sum in Toronto.

Those two were my most memorable meals.

Q *You look at Vancouver and Montreal as Canadian food*

destination cities. Toronto is not really recognized outside one or two of our famous chefs.

A You guys have a bad rep, I tell you. This comes from your fellow Canadians and not from me. I don't know enough about Canada. But I'll tell you, they talk some serious s--t about you guys in Vancouver and Montreal.

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