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# BOOKS Food writer shares delicious surprises

"Comfort Me With Apples," by Ruth Reichi (Random House, \$24.95). By Victoria Diaz

Reading this memoir by the editor in chief of Gourmet magazine is a little like having dinner at a trailblazing restaurant. Some of the fare may delight, some may prove a mite disagreeable, but practically none of it will be less than intriguing to experience.

will be less than intriguing to experience.

Ruth Reichl, who has been the restaurant critic for both The New York Times and The Los Angelos Times, started her restaurant career at a tiny bistre in Ann Arbor, and went on to become a professional chef at a West Coast dining spot called The Swallow. (She wrote about carly times in a debut memoir, "Tender at the Bone.") "Comfort Mo With Apples" opens in the San Francisco Bay area in 1978, as she begins to try her hand at restaurant reviewing, with an eye toward leaving the kitchen behind.

Along the way, she meets up

behind.

Along the way, she meets up with the likes of chef Wolfgang Puck (readers can witness that she with the likes of chef Wolfgang of his new restaurant in Tinsettown), popular food writer M.F.K. Fisher, and Alice Waters of the highly lauded California dining spot, Chez Panisse.

■ 'Comfort Me With Apples' is most definitely not a cookbook, though. In fact, sometimes it is not even about food, but more about Ruth Reich!'s own Joys and disappointments in love and life.

She travels to rural China, aweetly scented Spain, romantic Paris, "the sexy stew of Bangkok," and other fun spotsenting all the while, of course, and more than you can imagine sometimes. (Actually, you may wonder, while reading this book, why Reichl doesn't tip the scales at around 500 pounds. One meal she describes goes on for six hours, another starts at lunch and continues through dinner events that may

and continues through dinner events that may leave some readers shaking their heads and mumbling about world hunger.)

Reichl obviously delights in food, glorious food – in fact, it's a little startling sometimes just how worshipfully she (and her co-workers) regard it. At the drop of a hat, they can wax poetic about such things as an asparagus tip, or grow rapturous at the sight of raw calves brains offered at a butcher shop. It's part of the secret, I suppose, of being an effective food writer, but, to an ordinary diner, the prose can seem a little gassy and over-rich at times. (Foic gras is moltten velvet.)

A forkful of serambled eggs is

Appetizing travels

We also get to know some lesser-known lights in Reichl's lifebre husband, artist Douglas Hollis; her slightly dotty mether; a few collengues; her housemates at a Berkeley commune; people she encounters on her assignments; Michael Singer, who eventually plays a large role in her life; and many others.

pumpkin, and Wolfgang Puck's oyster feuillete with bourre blanc. She also adds to the fun by peppering the book with sev-eral recipes.

#### Love and life

Love and life

"Comfort Me With Apples" is most definitely not a cookbook, though. In fact, sometimes it is not oven about feel/sis own joys and disappointments in love and life. We learn of her painful separation from her husband of 11 years, an adoption gone awry, her complex relationships with her parents, even a couple of heated, romantic trysts. (She has a real knack for capturing on paper the characters who play a role in her life — even if they're not all particularly likable.) Her description of her break-up with her husband is a highly articulate and sensitive account of how two people can grow apart, though they still love each other. And the brief story of how she loses an (almost) adopted child is powerfully written and genuinely heart-wenching.

ly heart-wrenching.
This is a book with a deliciously satisfying ending, though. Its
closing pages may make many
readers believe in the old adage
that life is full of great surprises
and that some of us do, indeed,
get our just desserts.

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia resident and writes about books, the ater and movies for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

#### COMMUNITY THEATER

## Guildings present musical

Take a trip back to the 1970s to discover what happens to fairy-tale heroine Cinderella in That 70's Cindy (or., If Your Gonna Wear Glass Slippers You've Gotta Have Pretty Feetl, performing exclusively at The Players Gulid of Dearborn Theatre, 21730 Madison, Dearborn, Michigan through Sunday, July 29.

Show times

Show times

Performances 7:30 p.m. Thursday-Sunday at The Players
Guild of Dearborn, 21730 Madison, southwest of the corner of
Monroe and Outer Drive. Tickets
St, call (313) 661-TKTS.

Written by Guild member and
Guildlings youth theatre founder
Lisa Andres of Livonia, That 70's
Cindy is a twiet on her own original Cinderella script, which
Andres wrote and debuted at the
Players Guild six years ago.

"Mix The Brady Bunch, Austin
Powers and Laugh-In and you
get the idea of this year's showthe Cinderella stery with the
wacky fun of 70's flavor,"
explains Andres, who is also
directing the production. Kim
Donovan of Farmington Hills
and Corrine Fine of Canton are
assistant directing and co-producing.

Appealing to everyone

Appealing to everyone

Appealing to everyone
Consistent with her previous
musical productions, including
Jack, Sleeping Beauty, Aladdin,
Pocahontos and last year's
award-winning Little Red, That
70's Cindy is written to appeal to
both kids and adults. Andres
blends timely, slapstick humor
from long-standing adult narrators Don Andres and doe Donovan - who in this year's production channel the personities of
Laugh-In stars Dick Martin and
Dan Roan, respectively - and the
talents of 38 local youth ranging
in age from 3 to 18.

As with all Andres' scripts,
this show bears only passing
resemblance to the familiar children's story. In fact, in order for
the Prince (Paul Luome of Farmington Hills to find his lost lave,
Cindy (Allis Barsamian of Novi),
he has to smell the feet of every-



On stage: Allie Barsamian stars as Cinderella, and Paul Luoma as her Prince, in 'That 1970s Cindy.

As a special treat to our young

one in town! In a town this size, that's no small "feet"! Also featured are a variety of princesses vying for the prince's love, dozen or so of Gindy's helpful mice, and her Fairy Godfather.

Treat

As a prociel treat to our young.