

## Fresh Off the Boat: A Memoir

By Eddie Huang

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**NOW AN ORIGINAL SERIES ON ABC** • “Just may be the best new comedy of [the year] . . . based on restaurateur Eddie Huang’s memoir of the same name . . . [a] classic fresh-out-of-water comedy.”—*People*

“Bawdy and frequently hilarious . . . a surprisingly sophisticated memoir about race and assimilation in America . . . as much James Baldwin and Jay-Z as Amy Tan . . . rowdy [and] vital . . . It’s a book about fitting in by not fitting in at all.”—Dwight Garner, *The New York Times*

**NATIONAL BESTSELLER • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY KIRKUS REVIEWS**

Assimilating ain’t easy. Eddie Huang was raised by a wild family of FOB (“fresh off the boat”) immigrants—his father a cocksure restaurateur with a dark past back in Taiwan, his mother a fierce protector and constant threat. Young Eddie tried his hand at everything mainstream America threw his way, from white Jesus to macaroni and cheese, but finally found his home as leader of a rainbow coalition of lost boys up to no good: skate punks, dealers, hip-hop junkies, and sneaker freaks. This is the story of a Chinese-American kid in a could-be-anywhere cul-de-sac blazing his way through America’s deviant subcultures, trying to find himself, ten thousand miles from his legacy and anchored only by his conflicted love for his family and his passion for food. Funny, moving, and stylistically inventive, *Fresh Off the Boat* is more than a radical reimagining of the immigrant memoir—it’s the exhilarating story of every American outsider who finds his destiny in the margins.

### Praise for *Fresh Off the Boat*

“Brash and funny . . . outrageous, courageous, moving, ironic and true.”—*New York Times Book Review*

“Mercilessly funny and provocative, *Fresh Off the Boat* is also a serious piece of work. Eddie Huang is hunting nothing less than Big Game here. He does everything with style.”—**Anthony Bourdain**

“Uproariously funny . . . emotionally honest.”—*Chicago Tribune*

“Huang is a fearless raconteur. [His] writing is at once hilarious and provocative; his incisive wit pulls through like a perfect plate of dan dan noodles.”—**Interview**

“Although writing a memoir is an audacious act for a thirty-year-old, it is not nearly as audacious as some of the things Huang did and survived even earlier. . . . Whatever he ends up doing, you can be sure it won’t look or sound like anything that’s come before. A single, kinetic passage from *Fresh Off the Boat* . . . is all you need to get that straight.”—**Bookforum**

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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## **Editorial Review**

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## **Q&A with Eddie Huang**

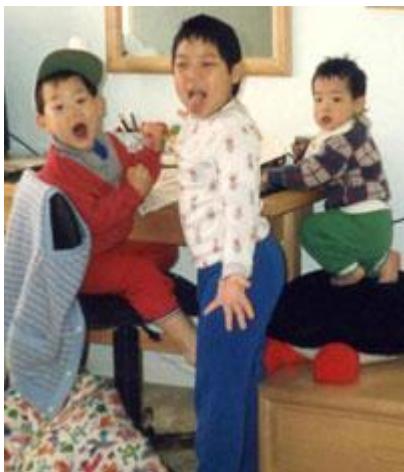


**Q. You're a chef, but your restaurant doesn't show up in this book until pretty late. If you're not writing about your restaurant--the fabulous Baohaus in New York--then what are you writing about?**

A. Food is at the core of the book, but I examine it beyond the plate, almost as a symbol. There's only one recipe in this book and there are no measurements. I want people to understand the power that food has as a gateway drug into culture and history, but, first and foremost, my book tells a story about growing up Taiwanese-Chinese in America. It's a story about unpacking your identity, purging yourself of the things your environment has imposed upon your consciousness, and trying to set yourself free. I refused the American Experience I was sold, remixed it for myself, chopped it up, and sold it back.

**Q. One of the powerful aspects of the book is the language you use, which feels completely original. Where does your voice come from?**

A. Language is constantly changing and the biggest disservice you can do to yourself and your reader is to write how you think you're "supposed to" write. My parents didn't really speak English at home, so I had to develop my English voice independently and mostly through pop culture--I grew up speaking Chinese, listening to hip hop, and watching cable television. Learning to trust my own voice was probably the most important thing I ever did. When I was in college, Richard Ford visited during a speaking series and criticized Ha Jin, who had just won the National Book Award, for writing in English because it wasn't his native tongue, implying that Ha Jin should stick to Chinese. I was just a half-assed student at the time, but I stood up and argued with Ford from my seat till they made me sit down. My mother speaks broken English but even with her comic disregard for subject-verb agreement, she throws mad knowledge darts. You should never worry about what others think about the language you use, as long as it's truly your own.



### **Q. What do you want readers to take away from Fresh Off the Boat?**

A. The simple surface reading of this book is to be yourself by any means possible. That's the basic theme, but I want people to see how implementing a simple concept like that takes a struggle between you and your country, you and your city, you and your reference group, you and your family, you and your race, you and the sub cultures you subscribe to, and on and on. It's about the constant battle between that little voice inside you and the people you love, the legacy you carry, the cultures that make you curious, the country that tells you who you're supposed to be. It's about the complexity of being an individual--about finding love in family, in friends, in food, in music and culture, and a million other surprising places, and figuring out how to bring all that together inside of you. It's about learning to be fearless, but it's also about the cost of those lessons and the literal and psychic violence you encounter when you try to break free.

There are tons of books about the struggle to be an individual, but with each one we reach more and more people who were never spoken to. I was always a weirdo growing up, but I believed that there were weirdos like me, and my writing this book is like Professor X putting on cerebro to find the other mutants.

#### **From Booklist**

Born in the U.S. to Taiwanese immigrant parents, Huang refuses to be a “lapdog under a bamboo ceiling,” and his colloquial, furious memoir is as open about his struggling, screaming, sometimes abusive parents as it is about the prejudice he encounters growing up in Orlando and then in New York, where to this day “someone tells me to go back to China at least three times a year.” He hates that everything he does is a statement about his people and where they are from, even as he refuses to be reformed, assimilated, apologetic. Always refusing to fit in, he wants to hurt people like they hurt him, and he succeeds. Now he runs a big New York City gourmet restaurant and a food store, and, throughout the book, food is front and center, including his mother’s recipe for the best beef noodle soup. Readers will leave hungry, and many immigrants will recognize the refusal to go with the model minority myth. --Hazel Rochman

#### **From Bookforum**

Let it be said right now that although writing a memoir is an audacious act for a thirty-year-old, it is not nearly as audacious as some of the things Huang did and survived even earlier. —Melanie Rehak

### **Users Review**

#### **From reader reviews:**

**Jaime Howell:**

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