



Life, on the Line: A Chef's Story of Chasing Greatness, Facing Death, and Redefining the Way We Eat

By Grant Achatz, Nick Kokonas

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"One of America's great chefs" (*Vogue*), Grant Achatz, shares how his drive to cook immaculate food fueled his miraculous triumph over tongue cancer.

By 2007 chef Grant Achatz had been named one of the best new chefs in America by Food & Wine, he had received the James Beard Foundation Rising Star Chef of the Year Award, and he and Nick Kokonas had opened the conceptually radical restaurant Alinea, which was named Best Restaurant in America by Gourmet magazine. Then, positioned firmly in the world's culinary spotlight, Achatz was diagnosed with stage IV squamous cell carcinoma-tongue cancer.

The prognosis grim, Grant undertook an alternative treatment of aggressive chemotherapy and radiation that ravaged his body and left him without a sense of taste. Tapping into his profound discipline and passion, he trained his chefs to mimic his palate and learned how to cook with his other senses. As Kokonas was able to attest, the food was never better. Five months later, Grant was declared cancer-free and went on to achieve some of the highest honors in the culinary world. *Life, on the Line* is not only a chef's memoir, it is also a book about survival, about nurturing creativity, and about profound friendship.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this curious memoir, chef Achatz and his business partner, Kokonas tell of their Chicago restaurant, Alinea, as well as his cancer diagnosis and recovery. Achatz grew up in Michigan in and around restaurants, the only child of a troubled marriage who spent an otherwise contented adolescence around kitchens. He eventually attended the Culinary Institute of America and studied with Charlie Trotter and Thomas Keller with whom he began developing both his palate and culinary vision. He returned to Chicago, where he met Kokonas, who became his business partner in 2005, when they opened Alinea. As Alinea evolves from drawing board to reality, the narrative alternates between the two men's voices. They discuss finding the right team of chefs and dealing with Achatz's diagnosis with stage IV tongue cancer. The various narratives--childhood, professional development, Alinea, Kokonas, illness--have individual strengths, but the whole feels oddly disjointed and in places, such as the section on the restaurant's genesis and development, turn into more of a business how-to. Nevertheless, the authors duly convey their passion as well as a solid business philosophy. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

This must-read for the culinary crowd is the literary equivalent of caviar and Krug. Foodies will marvel at Achatz's thought process on his molecular creations, while Kokonas provides a detailed glimpse of the artistic vision and creation of modern fine dining. The book takes readers into the passionate environment of a revolutionary kitchen, and through the eyes of the authors we are introduced to the future of gastronomy. Achatz's battle had its time in the weeds?his troubles with food writers, family relationships, and stage IV tongue cancer?but with perseverance and fortitude, he became one of the most controversial and respected chefs, ultimately opening what some critics call the best restaurant in North America, Chicago's Alinea. Kokonas was first introduced to the prodigy at Trio, where Achatz started his executive-chef career. After dining on hundreds of dexterous courses, Kokonas decided to stop gambling on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and create a restaurant with the then 29-year-old, and what began as a business venture became an indispensable friendship. --Brian Lesson

Review

"[*Life, on the Line*] may be the best, most inspiring chef memoir ever written." — *American Way*

"[*Life, on the Line*] is full of energy and without pretense." — *Chicago Tribune*

"The next great food memoir." — *Details*

"This must-read for the culinary crowd is the literary equivalent of caviar and Krug. Foodies will marvel at Achatz's thought process on his molecular creations, while Kokonas provides a detailed glimpse of the artistic vision and creation of modern fine dining." — *Booklist*

"Writing with the panache of professionals, Achatz, chef and owner of Chicago's Alinea, and his business partner, Kokonas, relate the story of Achatz's life and work in a memoir that lives up to its expansive subtitle. ...Achatz and Kokonas share an engaging, well-written, and informative description of what it's like to work in commercial kitchens along with the stirring story of Achatz's fight for his life." — *Library Journal*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charles Settles:

As people who live in the modest era should be upgrade about what going on or information even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era that is certainly always change and advance. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you is you don't know what type you should start with. This Life, on the Line: A Chef's Story of Chasing Greatness, Facing Death, and Redefining the Way We Eat is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and need in this era.

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Patrick Leon:

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