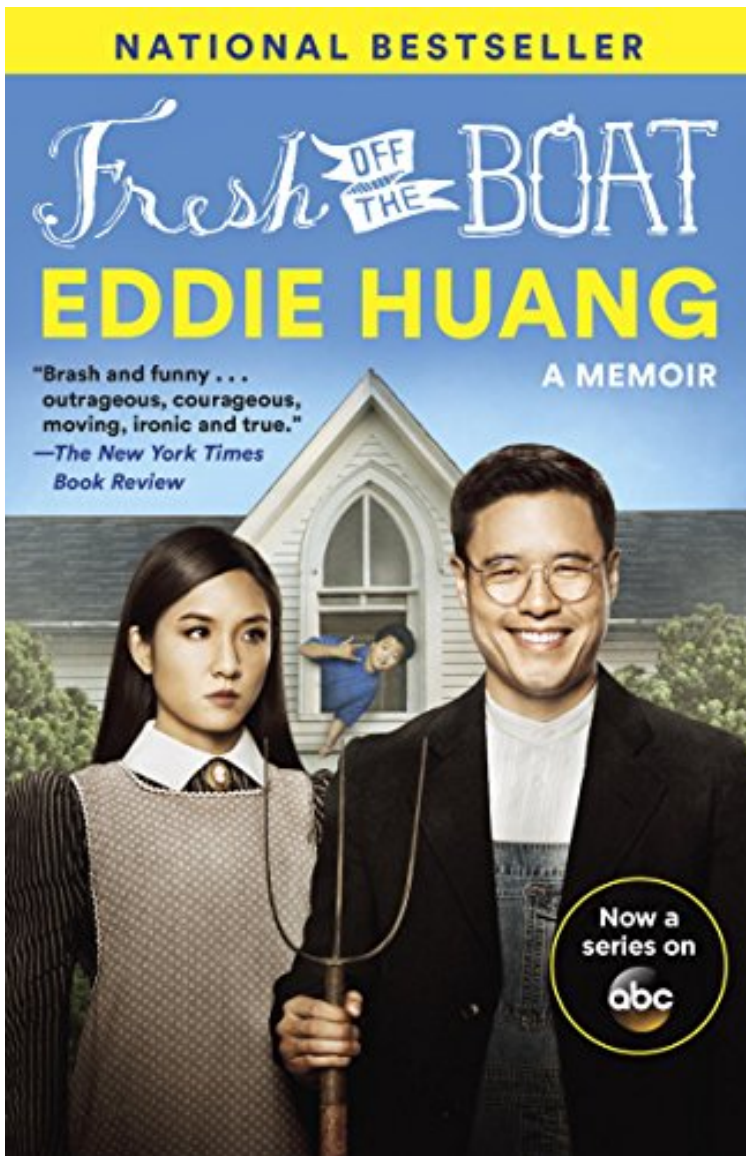


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Fresh Off the Boat: A Memoir



Par Eddie Huang
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNOW 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 . . . Its 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 aint 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 Americas 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 memoirs 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* 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 wont look or sound like anything thats come before. A single, kinetic passage from *Fresh Off the Boat* . . . is all you need to get that straight. *Bookforum* From the Hardcover edition. *Extrait* 1. Meet the Parents The soup dumplings are off today! Grandpa said. Should we tell the waiter? We should send these back. No, no, no, no, no, dont lose face over soup dumplings. Just eat them. My mom always wanted to send food back. Everything on the side, some things hot, some things cold, no MSG, less oil, more chilis, oh, and some vinegar please. Black vinegar with green chilis if you have it, if not, red vinegar with ginger, and if you dont have that, then just white vinegar by itself and a can of Coke, not diet because diet causes cancer. Microwaves cause cancer, too, so she buys a Foreman grill and wears a SARS mask because oil fumes can ruin lungs, says the woman who smokes Capri cigarettes and drives an SUV wearing a visor. Thats my mom. I couldnt eat with my mom; she drove me crazy. But she never bothered my grandfather. He was always above the trees. Like 3 Stacks said, Whats cooler than cool? Ice cold. That was Grandpa: a six-foot-tall, long faced, droopy-eyed Chinaman who subsisted on a cocktail of KFC, boiled peanuts, and cigarettes. Thinking back on it, my grandfather created the ultimate recipe for pancreatic cancer. At the time we had that lunch, hed been battling it for a while, but we tried not to talk about it. That day, we just ate soup dumplings. Its the meat, did they not put enough ginger? Mei you xiang wei dao. Eh, theres ginger, its just heavy-handed. Who cares, just eat them! The rest of the food is on the way. Xiang wei is the character a good dish has when its robust, flavorful, and balanced but still maintains a certain light quality. That flavor comes, lingers on your tongue, stays long enough to make you crave it, but just when you think you have it figured out, its gone. Timing is everything. Soup dumplings, sitcoms, one-night stands good ones leave you wanting more. The perfect soup dumpling has nineteen folds. Taipeis Din Tai Fung restaurant figured this out in the mid-eighties. While Americans had Pyrex visions, Taiwan was focused on soup dumplings. My grandparents on my fathers side lived right on Yong Kang Jie, where Din Tai Fung was founded. To this day, it is the single most famous restaurant in Taipei, the crown jewel of the pound-for-pound greatest eating island in the world. Din Tai Fung started off as an oil retailer, but business took a dive in the early eighties and they did what any Taiwanese-Chinese person does when they need to get buckets. You break out the family recipe and go hammer. Din Tai Fung was like the Genco Olive Oil of Taipei. Undefeated. The dough is where Din Tai Fung stays the hood champ. Its just strong enough to hold the soup once the gelatin melts, but if you pick it up by the knob and look closely at the skin, its almost translucent. They create a light, airy texture for the skin that no one else has been able to duplicate. I remember going back to Din Tai Fung when I was twenty-seven and saying to myself, Theyre off! Its just not as satisfying as I remember it to be! But two hours later, walking around Taipei, all I could think about was their fucking soup dumplings. Across the street from Din Tai Fung was another restaurant that served soup dumplings and made a business of catching the spillover when people didnt want to wait an hour for a table. They were really close to the real deal. Like the first year Reebok had AI and you thought that maybe, just maybe, the Questions with the honeycomb would outsell Jordans. A false alarm. Grandpa Huang put on for Yong Kang Jie and never cheated on the original. On the other hand, Grandpa Chiao, my mothers father, had money on his mind and really didnt have time for things like soup dumplings. He was the type of guy who would go across the street without thinking twice. He would be fully aware Din Tai Fung was better, but he was a businessman. He had things to do and never lost sight of them. Everything was calculated with my grandfather. On his desk, there was always this gold-plated abacus. Whenever something needed to be calculated, the other employees would

use calculators, but Grandpa beat them to the punch every time. With his fingers on the abacus, he looked as slick as a three-card monte hustler. I loved hearing the sound: tat, tat, tat, rap, tat, tat, tat. After tapping the beads, hed always reset them all with one downward stroke, whap, and out came the answer. Hed much rather save an hour, eat some perfectly fine soup dumplings, and go on his way. Mom had other plans. She was my grandpas youngest and loudest child. Mom claims she was his favorite, and I cant say I dont believe her. Grandpa loved her because she was entertaining and full of energy. As a kid, she took the Taiwanese national academic exam and got into all the best schools in Taipei. After she came to America as a seventeen-year-old, she managed to graduate as the salutatorian of her high school, even though she barely spoke English. On top of that, shes still the best cook in the family. My cousins love talking about things they dont know about and everyone claims their parents are the best, but even the aunts admit my mom goes hard in the paint. That day, my uncle Joe from my dads side was with us at Yi Ping Xiao Guan. I think he actually discovered the spot, because it was in Maryland, where he lived. Earlier that day, Grandpa had asked me where I wanted to go for my sixth birthday. He figured Id say Chuck E. Cheese or McDonalds, but Momma didnt raise no fool. Chuck E. Cheese was for mouth breathers and kids with Velcro shoes. I want to go where they have the best soup dumplings! Wheres that? Even Uncle Joe knows! Yi Ping Xiao Guan. I really liked Uncle Joe. He built three of the major bridges in D.C. and wore these big, thick black-rimmed glasses. I was into glasses, especially goggles, because Kareem wore them and he had the ill sky hook. After we ate, I was kinda pissed with the shitty soup dumplings. It was my birthday! Yi Ping Xiao Guan, you cant come harder than this for the kid? Chuck E. Cheese can serve shitty food cause you get to smash moles and play Skee-Ball after lunch. But all you have are soup dumplings! How could you fuck this up? Yi Ping Xiao Guan was like Adam Morrison: your job is to slap Kobes ass when the Lakers call time out. If you cant do that, shoot yourself. As I sat there, pissed off, I saw a waiter pouring off-brand soy sauce into the Wanjashan Soy Sauce bottles. Corner cutting, bootleg, off-brand-soy-pouring Chinamen! Mom! Mom! Eddie, stop it, Im talking to Grandpa. Talk to Uncle Joe! If someone was talking to Grandpa, you couldnt interrupt, but apples dont fall far from the tree. My mom was the youngest and never followed rules in the family. She enforced them on everyone else, but she never followed them herself. MOO MMM! Listen! Huang Xiao Wen! That was the signal. Black people use the government name when shit hits the fan, and my family would bust out the Chinese. It hurt my ears to hear the Chinese name. Not only did it seem louder and extra crunchy, but it usually meant you were about to get smacked the fuck up. Luckily, Uncle Joe was a nice guy who actually thought it was possible that a child might have something important to say. Uncle Joe, I know why the soup dumplings are bad. Really? Tell me! Look over there: the waiter is putting the cheap soy sauce in the bottles. They must be using it in the dumplings, too. Genius! Genius! Aya, Rei Hua, Rei Hua, zhu ge Xiao Wen tai cong ming le! Rei Hua was my mothers Chinese name, so Uncle Joe got her attention when he used it. Eddie figured it out. Theyre using that cheap heavy soy sauce now. Look over there, hes putting it in all the bottles! Oh my God! Too smart, too smart, I told you, this one is so smart! Whatever, Mom, you never listen! Shhh, shhh, shhh, dont ruin it for yourself. You did a good thing, just eat your food now. I think my mom is manic, but Chinese people dont believe in psychologists. We just drink more tea when things go bad. Sometimes I agree; I think were all overdiagnosed. Maybe thats just how we are, and people should leave us alone. My mom was entertaining! If you met my family, youd prescribe Xanax for all of them, but then what? Wed be boring. At any moment, I was around my younger brother, Emery, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, or my parents. We ate together, went shopping together, and worked together. Sometimes five of them, sometimes twelve of them; on weekends, it was anyones guess. Wed pick an aunts house and youd see a line of Cadillacs, Lincolns, and Toyotas form down the street. Our family counted all the aunts and uncles from both sides as one team, so even if you were the oldest in your family, you might be second or third in the larger bracket. Got it? Good. So, #1 Aunt lived in Pittsburgh, where that side of the family had a furniture store. She would come down every once in a while with her kids and they were always friendly. We loved that side of the family because we saw them only three or four times a year. #2 Aunt was my mothers oldest sister and she made the best ti-pang: red cooked pork shoulder. Her husband, Gong Gong, was a really funny guy. He didnt speak English, so hed always test my Chinese, check my biceps, shoulders, triceps, and then ask to arm wrestle. Gong Gong was a funny dude, bent over all his nephews, examining them like they were entries in a dog show. #3 Uncle was my cousin Shupeis dad. I never spoke to him cause there were always fifty or sixty people in the house when he came, since it was a big event. He lived in Pittsburgh, had four kids, and they all traveled together in packs. It was awesome when they visited. Shupeis and his cousin Schubert, cool dudes who played ice hockey and poker. They were also huge, the first six-

foot-three Chinamen I'd ever seen. As a nine-year-old, I'd tell myself I had a chance at going NBA if I grew as tall as they did. Also, Shupeis wife was white, which gave me hope that I didn't have to date someone from Chinese school. #4 Aunt was my mom's sister. She was crazy and, without any notice, she would say things like "Look how fat you are!" or "You are really stupid, do you know that?" As a kid, I stayed as far away as possible from her and her brother, Uncle Tai, because they were like Boogie Man and Bride of Boogie Man. As I got older though, #4 Aunt became a lot nicer and my brothers and I finally understood: it wasn't her. My mom was the one telling #4 Aunt about how me and my brothers were acting up. As a favor to my mom, she took on the role of enforcer. She was the first person in our family to figure out how to make cheesecake. For some reason, she had more interest in American food than the rest of us did. Ironically, she also made the best American Chinese food: fried rice. Then came #5 Aunt, also called Aunt Beth; she was my cousin Allen's mom. Then came my cousin Phil's mom, who never took an American name. Next was my Uncle Tai and lastly was my mom, who everyone called Xiao A-Yi Little Aunt. Phil, Allen, and their moms were my closest family. Aunt Beth put out a good dinner when the family got together at her house on the weekends. It was balanced. Always two vegetables depending on what was in season; it could be Xiao You Cai or sautéed kong-xin cai (Chinese watercress, literally hollow heart vegetable), which is my favorite vegetable. She liked making tomato and eggs, plus some sort of shredded pork stir-fry with either cured tofu or beans, and chicken soup. Aunt Beth was a great host; she served a balanced meal, and let me watch sports before the older people took over the TV to sing karaoke. I thought my cousin Allen was the coolest dude. He was three years older than me so he knew about everything just before I did. When we went to the mall, he showed me purple Girbaud jeans. He was the first to get a CD player and we always listened to Onyx's Bacdafucup together. If his mom had to pick him up from detention at school, I went to go get him, too. Sometimes he'd treat me like a burden, but I looked up to him. I was learning. My other cousin Phillip was my best friend. He was only a year older than me, but he really took on the role of older cousin. He was the kindest person in the family and smart, too. He knew something about everything, but wasn't afraid of doing dumb shit, either. Our favorite thing to do was to watch WWF together on Saturday mornings at Aunt Beth's house, get hyped, and try out moves in the pool, where they'd body-slam me, causing me to immediately puke the tomato and eggs I'd just eaten into the water. We fought a lot, made fun of each other constantly, but it was a good time. It was always chaos in the living room when our whole family came over, so Allen, Phillip, and I would retreat downstairs after dinner and play Tecmo Super Bowl or Mike Tyson's Punchout. We'd stay in the basement for hours and every once in a while, they'd send me up to get drinks and snacks. I'd go into the dining room, which was only separated from the living room by one step. A false divider. Although everyone else had gone to the living room for karaoke, one person always remained on the dining room level: Grandma. She'd sit there in her wheelchair and make birds out of Play-Doh. I'd come up to get drinks and see her alone, so I'd hang out with her for a minute. All of us would keep her company at one point or another in the night.

Revue de presse
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
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 . . . Its a book about fitting in by not fitting in at all.
Dwight Garner, The New York Times
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.
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