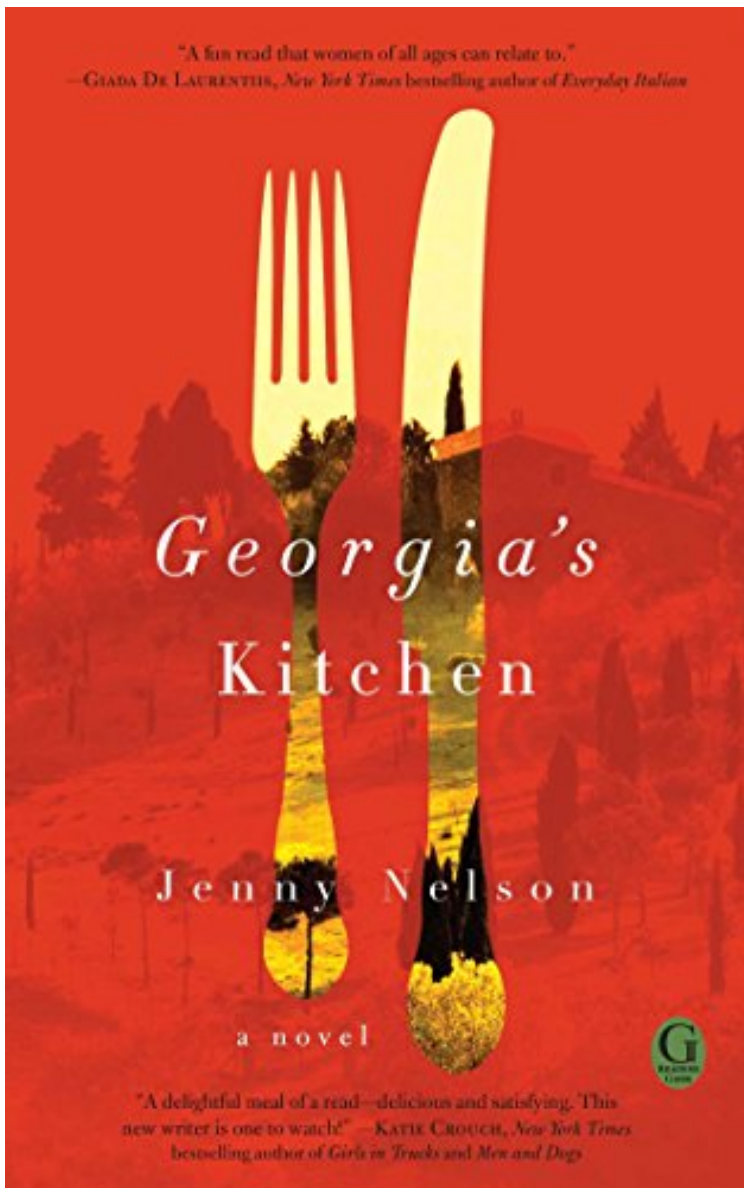


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Georgia's Kitchen (English Edition)



Par Jenny Nelson
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Par Jenny Nelson : **Georgia's Kitchen (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Georgia's Kitchen (English Edition):

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAt thirty-three, talented chef Georgia Gray has everything a woman could wantthe top job at one of Manhattans best restaurants; a posse of smart and savvy gal pals who never let her down; and a platinum-set, cushion-cut diamond engagement ring courtesy of Glenn, the handsome entertainment lawyer who Georgias overbearing mother cant wait for her to marry. The table is set for the ambitious bride-to-be until a scathing restaurant review destroys her reputation. To add salt to her wounds, Glenn suddenly calls off the wedding. Brokenhearted, Georgia escapes to the Italian countryside, where she sharpens her skills at a trattoria run by a world-class chef who seems to have it alla devoted lover, a magnificent villa, and most

important, a kitchen of her own. Georgia quells her longings with Italys delectable offerings: fine wine, luscious cheeses, cerulean blue skies, and irresistible Giannian expert in the vineyard and the bedroom. So when Gianni tempts Georgia to stay in Italy with an offer no sane top chef could refuse, why cant she say yes? An appetite for something larger than love weighs heavy on Georgias heartthe desire to run her very own restaurant. But with a ruined career in New York and no business partner in sight, she must stir up more than just the courage to chase after her dreams if she is to find her way home.ExtraitGeorgia turned onto a tree-lined street of brick town houses and brownstones, stopping when she reached a gunmetal-gray low-rise that shared none of its neighbors quiet charm. Strips of smoky glass sliced through the facade, and a row of porthole windows ran under the roofline: the restaurant. An architectural travesty or triumph, depending on which side of the design camp you fell, but it got people talking, which was, after all, the point. MARCO was discreetly stamped in a cement block over the door, though as far as Georgia knew, no one had ever noticed this so-called sign. If you had to ask, you didnt deserve to eat there.Heaving open the vaultlike door, she walked through the steel-blue dining room, past the polished nickel tables and chairs and the white, ultrasuede banquettes, her heels clicking across the terrazzo floor. The floral designer freshened a mammoth arrangement on the lacquered bar, replacing spent stems with Casablanca lilies, irises, and peoniesall white, a Marco dictum.The daily staff meal and meeting began promptly at three, and Bernard, the restaurants laser-tongued general manager, had zero patience for latecomers. Six four-tops shoved together created a makeshift communal table, and seating was first come, first served. As waiters, cooks, and busboys rushed in, Georgia took her seat, instinctively turning her engagement ringa cushion-cut diamond on a platinum bandto the underside of her hand, subway-style. Unpolished nails and nicked-up hands, unfortunate but unavoidable occupational hazards of chefs everywhere, were hardly the ideal backdrop for such a splendid ring. But Glenn wanted her to wear it, and not on a chain around her neck as shed prefer. He wanted it on her left ring finger as on every other bride-to-be.He was still sleeping when shed left their apartment early that morning to head to the fish market with Ricky, her sous-chef. She kissed Glenn good-bye, first on his forehead, then on his lips, hoping hed wake up and kiss her back, which he did for a second before rolling over and mumbling something she couldnt understand. Their conflicting work schedules had never allowed for a ton of snuggling time, but lately sleepy kisses and barely intelligible See you later were as good as it got.Hey, Chef, long time no see. Ricky slid into the seat next to her, tossing his yellow hair out of his eyes. Wearing baggy shorts down to his knees and tube socks pulled so high they could have been tights, he looked more clown-school grad than classically trained chef. He wrinkled his nose and sniffed the air. Did you forget to shower after our fishing trip? Or is it me who smells like a salty dog?Definitely you, Rick, said Georgia. Ive Purrelled my fingers to shreds.She and Ricky had met years earlier while working for a tyrannical boss whose idea of a good time was throwing knives at a corkboard decorated with Polaroid pictures of his staff. Since then, theyd cooked side by side in cramped kitchens all over Manhattan, and when Georgia was promoted to head chef at Marco, shed insisted on hiring Ricky as her second-in-command. Not only was he a culinary savant who could tick off twenty-nine different kinds of basil and the best uses for each, but he was one of the few people who told her exactly what he thought. About everything.Bernard strode to the table, trademark red clipboard tucked under his arm, wire-rim specs perched on his nose. Good afternoon, everyone. Its Friday and we have a big night. He tapped his pencil on the clipboard. Socialites, B-list actors, even a low-ranking politician.No one was better at building buzz than Marco, former chef and current proprietor of his eponymous restaurant, and the faux foodies couldnt eat it up fast enough. Though his menu was uninspired and his decor was as slick as his demeanor, his restaurant was booked months in advance, and even the five-and-dimes, the least desirable time slots, were reserved weeks out.And, Bernard continued, rumor has it Mercedes Sante from the Daily may be dropping in. You know what that means. If anyone spots the old bag, punch it into the computer ASAP. We fucked up the Herald, lets not fuck this one up too.Rumors of wig-wearing reviewers flooded the restaurant, but unless an actual source was named, everyone rightly assumed they came from Marco, who had somehow graduated elementary school without learning the story of the boy who cried wolf.Three busboys brought out the staffs family meal: a bowl of soupy spinach, a platter of spaghetti doused in a watery red sauce, and a plate of mini-meatballs directly from Costcos frozen-food section. As usual, this family meal would never be served to an actual member of Marcos family, not even his wicked stepmother.Georgia listened as Bernard rattled off her daily specials for the servers, then allowed them small tastes of the samples the prep team had prepared. There was a beautiful branzino theyd picked up at Hunts Point; a house-made taglierini with peas and ramps from the Greenmarket, slivers of bresaola, and shaved pecorino; polenta with wild-mushroom ragout; risotto with

baby artichoke, asparagus and mint; sauted periwinkles; and herb-stuffed leg of lamb. Having inherited the regular menu directly from Marco, who balked at even the tiniest change, Georgias opportunity to cook the way she wanted was showcased in the nightly specials. There was no way shed leave their fate in the hands of the waiters until they were completely schooled on the preparation details. Nor would she ever serve anything less than first-rate. Do you guys have any questions? she asked after they popped their first tastes. Is there butter in this branzino al sala? asked a ruddy-cheeked guy who was the latest addition to the team, his mouth full of fish. First, sala is a room. Its saleas in salt. But only tell people that if they specifically ask, otherwise theyll assume its too salty. And tell them the salt, which dries into a hard crust thats cracked open at the end, preserves the fishs natural flavors and juices as it cooks so its moist and tender. And no butter, just olive oil, fresh thyme, chervil, and lemon. Push this one, guys. Were selling it at thirty-three bucks a pop, Bernard said without looking up from his clipboard. Really? Georgia said. A little high for my taste, but almost worth it. So, its rich and flavorful? the new guy continued hopefully. She shook her head. Subtle and delicate. Tell them we only serve this when the branzino is really top-notch. Say that and itll fly. Georgia had waited tables while getting her degree at the Culinary Institute of America and knew exactly what to say to make a dish sell out. She also knew how to guarantee itd be on the next days lunch menu in a slightly different, and likely chopped, form. Uh, okay, he said, popping another bite into his mouth. She ran through the rest of the specials, going over their selling points until the waiters knew them cold. When conversation turned to the new Zac Posendesignated wait uniforms, she rocked back her chair and stared up at the glossy blue ceiling, wondering how much longer she could stand working at Marco, or rather for Marco. Granted, there was the generous paycheck. And the exposure. Without it, shed never be able to open her own place.

Having seared her skin in some of the citys top kitchens, she was ready, really ready, to run her own restaurant. But planning a marriage and planning a business was way too much planning, even for an berplanner like Georgia. Though she hated to admit it, her engagement was sapping her energy. It didnt help that Glenn was so busy defending his clients at the entertainment law firm where he worked that he barely had time for anyone else. When theyd first met, he spoke of becoming a public interest lawyer, but law school, his parents, and the promise of a fat paycheck killed his idealism fairly quickly, or at least put it on hold. Now the plan was to cash out at forty-five and work for an NGO, but until then, work/client schmoozing/partying took precedence over just about everything. Last week hed had Georgia reserve at Marco for his biggest client, hip-hop star Diamond Tee. Apparently a huge Tee fan, Marco made sure the Cristal was flowing all night long. When it came to celebs, A-, B-, or even C-list, Marco was the best kiss-ass in the business. Yes, Georgia, even you. Georgias chair fell forward with a thud. Bernard, whod removed his tiny specs, stared at her. What was that, Bernard? I said Marco doesnt give us free gym memberships for nothing. He wants everyone to look goodeven those of you in the kitchen. And were putting together a team for the Corporate 5K, if anyones interested. Are you saying Im fat? Georgia sucked in her stomach the way shed been trained to do by her whippet-thin mother back when she was a pudgy six-year-old. Fat? No. But remember: working out is as good for the mind Bernard touched his glasses to his forehead as it is for the middle. Thats it, everyone. Have a good night. He nodded to Georgia, straightened his tie, and marched out to the floor, a picture of competence. Even the way he walked, as if an invisible cord were holding his carriage perfectly erect, was efficient. Now Marcos making us work out too? As a team? Whats nextgroup therapy? A sweat lodge? Or maybe just a drum circle? Ricky didnt bother concealing his contempt. Several months back, his parents had flown in from California for a visit. Aging hippies, theyd arrived at Marco smelling of patchouli and home-spun yarn and were ignored, made to spell their last name Smitha half-dozen times, and at last shunted off to a doily-size table in Siberia, all thanks to Marco, whod checked them out from the tops of their multicolor caps down to their ergonomic shoes. While Georgia had her own reasons for disliking her boss, Ricky would never forget the slight to his mom and dad. While he went outside to smoke, Georgia headed to the locker room, eager to get the night started. The minuscule room was empty. A couple of lockers lined one wall, and a flimsy mirror hung behind the door. During her first week on the job Marco had ripped down the mirror, emptied a bindle of coke on it, and chopped it up with his maxed-out credit card while Georgia stood by, pretending it was no big deal that her brand-new boss was doing lines in front of her. He offered her one, and she smiled politely and mumbled something about needing to get back to the kitchen. Of course shed known the restaurant industry could get crazy, but it wasnt until Marco that shed seen it in full-blown action. When she told Glenn the story, he barely raised an eyebrow. In the restaurant? was all he had to say. Before anyone could barge in, Georgia slipped out of her street clothes and into her work uniform. Wearing shapeless khakis, white chef coat, and black clogs, she probably wouldnt

turn any heads. But at thirty-three, she was tall and trim, any pudginess long gone thanks to her thrice-weekly runs at the Reservoir. Her eyes were green and catlike, her skin fair and clear, the type that pinkened from the slightest exertion, and her nose, long and thin, would have cast an aristocratic air were it not for the slight bump on the bridge, a remnant from a childhood roller-skating accident. As a college boyfriend once remarked, she looked as if shed stepped out of the pages of a Victorian novel, a proper English lady, sun parasol and all. Except the hair. Unruly curls on a good day, a downright frizz fest in the summer and in a hot kitchen. Which is why at that very moment she was assiduously twisting her dark-chocolate-colored mass into submission. Two bobby pins dangled from her lips, and her eyes were narrowed with concentration. Georgia. I was looking for you. Georgia stared up into the slickly handsome face of Marco, boss, restaurateur, onetime chef, one-night stand. He had the jutting cheekbones, pillow lips, and permatanned skin of a daytime-soap star. Oh, hey, Marco. The bobby pins dropped to the floor with a barely audible ping. Hows it going? Planning the wedding? If there was one thing Georgia couldnt stand, it was talking to guys she had slept with particularly her boss about her upcoming nuptials. Yup. Going smoothly. Very smoothly. She bent down to pick up the pins. Thats great, Georgia. He held her gaze for a second too long. So, Bernard told you about Mercedes Sante. He sure did. Exciting. She tried to force her hair behind her ears and felt it instantly spring back. Im sure everyone will do great. I wanted to talk to you about that. He looked down, put his hands behind his back, and cleared his throat like a high school football coach psyching up the team for the homecoming game. Georgia noticed his hair was thinning. A good review from the Daily, as you know, can bring in unprecedented business. He smirked. Not like we really need it, but you never know. She obliged him with a tight smile. But it can also make or break a chef. Especially an attractive Food Network worthy chef like yourself. You know what Im saying? Georgia tried to remember why she had slept with him in the first place. Was it the devastating news that Glenn had cheated on her? The lobotomizing trio of bone-dry Sapphire martinis downed in response to said news? The fateful decision to play Crazy on the jukebox right before last call? Sure thing, Marco. Dont worry. Itll be great. I better run. She stepped around him carefully, so as not to brush even one button on his custom-made Borrelli shirt. By nine oclock, Georgia felt as if her clogs had been Krazy Glued to the floor. They must have done 150 covers, almost all of them seafood. As shed predicted, the branzino special was a hit and was eighty-sixed an hour and a half after open. Despite the crush, the kitchen was holding its own, and most of the dishes were coming up on time. Shed replated more than usual, but at least everything had been at the window when shed needed it. Did we get a write-up in the Junior League Digest or something? Whats with all the salmon, sauce-on-the-side requests? she asked Ricky. Close. Tell magazine. The Shit Girl issue. You mean It Girl? It, shit, whats the dif? If youre blond, were born on Park Avenue, and are married to an investment banker, chances are youre at Marco tonight. Hence the disproportionately large number of arugula salads. Got it. Speaking of Park Avenue princesses, are you coming to see Lo tonight? Lo was one of Georgias two best friends and, at the moment, a folksy singer-songwriter. This followed stints as a film production assistant, a junior copywriter, and an apprentice herbalist; there was no telling how much longer her Joni Mitchell phase would last. The house phone rang before Ricky could answer. Chef! Glenn! yelled a dishwasher from across the kitchen. Take over, Rick. She picked up the extension as he began expediting, calling out orders to the line cooks. Hey, sweetie. How are you? I miss you. Me too. What are you doing? I had to meet Diamond Tee up at Piece in Harlem. He wouldnt take no for an answer. Please tell me youre not bailing on Los show. Last-minute cancellations had become part of Glenns MO lately. Im not bailing. Ill be there. Good. I feel like I havent seen you in forever. You mean that wasnt you who kissed me good-bye this morning? No, it must have been your other fiance. Her again. If I dont make it to the restaurant, Ill definitely make it to the show. The Rumpus? The Rumpus. Okay, George. Ill see you there. Promise. Great. And give my regards to Mr. T. Oh, wait, thats the guy who kicked Rockys ass, right? Funny, Glenn said before she hung up. Ricky looked over. Your dude coming tonight? He is, Georgia said. He promised. Awesome. Ricky held up his hand for a high five. Georgia swatted it away. Im not sure having my fianc agree to meet me at a dive bar on the Lower East Side is worth a high five. I guess a high five is a little excessive. He dropped his hand. Low five? She laughed. Sometimes Ricky and she got along so well it seemed a shame they couldnt just get it over with and fall in love. But hed never made her belly ping or her neck tingle or distracted her so much she couldnt think of anything other than how sexy his forearm was. Glenn did. Bernard burst through the swinging door and into the kitchen. Table fifteen. Shes here. Georgia and Ricky looked at each other blankly. None other than Mercedes Sante herself. Shes disguised as a fat carpetbagger, Bernard said. On second thought, I dont think shes disguised at all. Check out her orderyou better make that guinea hen sing like a canary. He turned to the

rest of the staff. People of the kitchen, the vippiest of VIPs is in our midst. Lets make everything perfect. And if anyone has some spare ecstasy to slip into her, er, hen, that wouldnt hurt either. Ricky pulled up the order. Holy shit, Chef. In addition to the hen, she wants the grouperwhens the last time we served that? The venison, ditto, the special risotto, ravioli, the lamb, that rabbit no one but Marco likes, Oysters Marco, the beet salad, and the three special apps. He looked at Georgia. Were screwed. Aside from the specials, she ordered the worst things on the entire menu. Its Marcos funeral, not ours, Georgia said, knowing full well that if the famed food critic wasnt happy, it was Georgias future that would swoosh straight down the toilet. But a great Mercedes Sante review would catapult her into the top echelon of New York City chefs, Food Networkready, as Marco put it. Even more important, it would enable her to open her own restaurant. With a glowing review, financing would be a cinch; shed have investors lining up outside her apartment, fat checkbooks in tow. Taking a few deep breaths, she mumbled a quick prayer to Ganesh. Two and a half, she begged the Hindu god and remover of obstacles, just two and a half forks. Please. She set to work. Word of Mercedess arrival spread as fast as the latest starlet-in-rehab rumor, and the kitchen sprang into high-alert reviewer mode. This was slightly different from high-alert celebrity mode, in that the food mattered more than the booze, and at nights end not even a smidgen of the check would be comped. The goal was for Mercedes to eat like a queen, and to assume every other no-name diner did too. Georgia walked from station to station, staring over the shoulders of the line cooks, scrutinizing the dishes they prepared, sampling sauces, poking meats, stirring pots, sticking her nose everywhere, her spoon everywhere. Her manner was steady and calm despite the oppressive heat and cacophony of clanking pans, clashing blades, grinding machinery, and doors heaving open and closed. Only her hair betrayed her frazzled nerves, poking out like bunches of past-its-prime frise. The two parallel lines etched between her eyebrows, the elevens as Glens mom referred to them, deepened with concentration. Her skin flushed pink, then rose, finally settling somewhere around unripe strawberry. She dipped her spoon into the special risotto. Not bad. A tad more butter to finish. The cook nodded. Yes, Chef. Georgia looked around. Wheres my grill guy? No one answered. Leaving the station during service was not tolerated. During a review was unthinkable. She turned to the line cooks. All hands on deck. Got it? Tell him if he doesnt get his fucking ass back now, hes fired. I mean it. The kitchen stopped for a split second. Georgia was known as one of the coolest chefs around. She rarely cursed (mostly because she wasnt very good at it), wasnt above plucking a chicken, and made everyone from the new guy washing dishes right on up to Ricky feel appreciated. Sure, she was a bit of a control freak, but compared to the pot-slamming, dish-dumping antics of some of her peers, this was easily overlooked. In return, she demanded full accountability from her kitchen. Sure thing, Chef, said the cook. Georgia grabbed a board of basil chiffonade from the garde-manger, who was in charge of cold apps, and slipped it into the garbage. Try again. And make it pretty. Please. He pulled out another bunch of basil, rolled the leaves into a fat joint, then gracefully sliced the roll into thin ribbons. Lovely, Georgia said. Shed worked in too many kitchens where the head chef berated his cooks into creating what he wanted without offering a word of thanks or the tiniest smidge of a compliment. Never, no matter who was sitting in the dining room, would she become That Chef. After wiping up the last drop of misplaced sauce, she green-lighted the appetizers. The servers came to pick up, and a doe-eyed girl who looked like Bambi and talked like a trucker gave her a thumbs-up. Shes drinking like a mother-fucking fish, she whispered. Thats gotta be a good sign. Georgia nodded. Drinking was good. It meant Mercedes was thoroughly enjoying herself, and if she wasnt, whatever she didnt like might be a little hazy when it came time to put pen to paper. When the app plates came back to the kitchen with nary a scrap in sight, Georgia allowed the smallest of smiles to escape her lips. The cooks had prepared three versions of each entre, and she chose the best-looking for Mercedess table, waiting until the last minute to sauce and garnish. She eyeballed the entres one final time before their tableside debut, drizzling extra green-peppercorn sauce on the venison and rearranging the sprigs of spiny rosemary on the lamb. An old boss had dubbed her Chef Georgia OKeeffe, and she still considered presentation one of the most important elements of restaurant food. The waiters whisked away the entres, so beautifully plated it seemed almost a shame to eat them, and she watched them go, then took a step back and stretched her hands to the tin ceiling. Nice job, Chef. Ricky patted her back. You done good. You too, Rick. Whatever happens She left her thoughts unsaid. Whatever happened would set the course for the rest of her life. It was that simple. 2010 Jenny Nelson Revue de presse "A delightful meal of a read--delicious and satisfying. This new writer is one to watch!" --Katie Crouch, New York Times bestselling author of *Girls in Trucks and Men and Dogs* All the right ingredients--a heart-warming heroine, a romp through Tuscany--make for a delicious book that leaves you hungry for more." Julie Buxbaum, author of *The Opposite of Love* and *After You* A fun read

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