



Fasting and Feasting

The Life of Visionary Food Writer Patience Gray

Adam Federman

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“*Honey from a Weed* . . . is a brilliant work, ahead of its time in so many ways.

To now read the story of this fine book’s author and her remarkable life is a great joy.”

—**JEREMY LEE**, chef owner, **Quo Vadis** restaurant

“Like M. F. K. Fisher, Patience Gray was one of the earliest writers to realize that you could write as well about cooking as you could about art and music [A] remarkable woman.”

—**WILLIAM BOYD**, author

“[There are] food people whom you tend to ‘believe’ rather than simply admire.

In this . . . noble lineage is Patience Gray, a wandering Bruce Chatwin of food.”

—**JIM HARRISON**, author

100 years after her birth, it’s time to meet the most important food writer you’ve never read.

Patience Gray was a pioneer in food and life, foraging, cooking seasonally, and sourcing locally long before these ideas entered the cultural mainstream. Her cookbook *Honey from a Weed* was “remarkably ahead of its time,” according to chef Jeremy Lee, and has been named one of the best cookbooks of all time by the likes of April Bloomfield, Mollie Katzen, Bee Wilson, Ed Behr, and *Saveur*—just to name a few.

For more than thirty years, Gray lived without electricity, modern plumbing, or a telephone in a remote area of Puglia in southern Italy. She grew much of her own food, and gathered and ate wild plants alongside her neighbors. The simple and isolated life she chose for herself might help explain her relative obscurity when compared to the other great food writers of her time, such as M. F. K. Fisher, Elizabeth David, and Julia Child.

Yet her influence—particularly among chefs and other food writers—has had a profound and lasting effect on the way we view and celebrate good food and regional cuisines.

In *Fasting and Feasting*, biographer Adam Federman tells the remarkable—and until now untold—life story of Patience Gray: from her privileged and intellectual upbringing in England; to her trials as a single working mother during the Second World War; to her travels and culinary adventures in later years. A fascinating, unique, and high-spirited woman, Patience Gray was a part of her times but also very much ahead of them.



Adam Federman is a reporting fellow with the Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute covering energy and the environment. He has been a Russia Fulbright fellow, a Middlebury fellow in environmental journalism, the recipient of a Polk grant for investigative reporting, and has written for a number of publications including the *Nation*, the *Guardian*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Gastronomica*. He lives in Vermont.

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