

FOUR DECADES OF DINING NIGHTMARES IN THE COMPANY OF INFLUENTIAL AND ACERBIC RESTAURANT CRITIC DAVID BURTON

*“In my experience, as much as people might affect to publicly disapprove of negative criticism, in fact they secretly thrive on it. This is why I have chosen to present this limited selection of my pearls – or should I say my absolute scorchers – along with small nuggety bits from all those equivocating reviews . . . I believe the supposed power of the critic to make or break a restaurant, always exaggerated in the past, is ever more so today, when our much-changed media landscape results in dozens of customers having already had their say on the internet before any review appears in print. In the final analysis, it’s word of mouth and the opinion of trusted friends that deal the fatal blow to a mediocre restaurant; the critics merely lower the coffin into the grave.” – David Burton, *Tart & Bitter**



Over his long career as a restaurant critic, David Burton has written approximately 2000 restaurant reviews for *The Dominion Post* and its predecessor *The Evening Post*, as well as *Cuisine* magazine. Of these, the vast majority have been either positive or at least mixed. However, working on the principle that as much as people might affect to publicly disapprove of negative criticism, in fact they secretly thrive on it, *Tart & Bitter* is a selection of what he calls his ‘absolute scorchers’. These reviews span four decades from the 1980s, and along with small nuggety bits from many of his equivocating columns, build a highly entertaining picture of the most ground-breaking era of New Zealand’s restaurant history.

Acerbic and hilarious, these reviews feature a roll call of enraged chefs and owners, a stream of defamation threats in the era before the law changed, and an insightful glimpse into the worst moments of Wellington’s restaurant culture. Anyone interested in New Zealand food will delight in this wicked and compelling book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born into the hospitality industry as the son of a caterer and coffee-house owner, DAVID BURTON graduated with an MA in Sociology from the University of Canterbury before working as a chef in Nelson, London, and at the long-gone Midland Hotel in Wellington. He has been writing about food for *Cuisine*, *The Evening Post* and *The Dominion Post* for over forty years.

He is the author of eight books on cookery and food history, one of which, *David Burton’s New Zealand Food & Cookery*, has spanned four editions since 1982, when it won the A. W. Reed Memorial Book Award. Twenty-seven other writing accolades have followed, including 10 Qantas Media awards and five World Gourmand Cookbook awards for *French Colonial Cookery* (Faber & Faber) and its French translation, *La Cuisine Coloniale* (Hachette Livre). His cult classic, *The Raj At Table: A Culinary History of the British in India* (Faber & Faber) has been translated into Spanish and appeared in both British and Indian editions. David has been a degree lecturer at Le Cordon Bleu New Zealand since its inception in 2012.

DAVID BURTON IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW / EXTRACTS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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