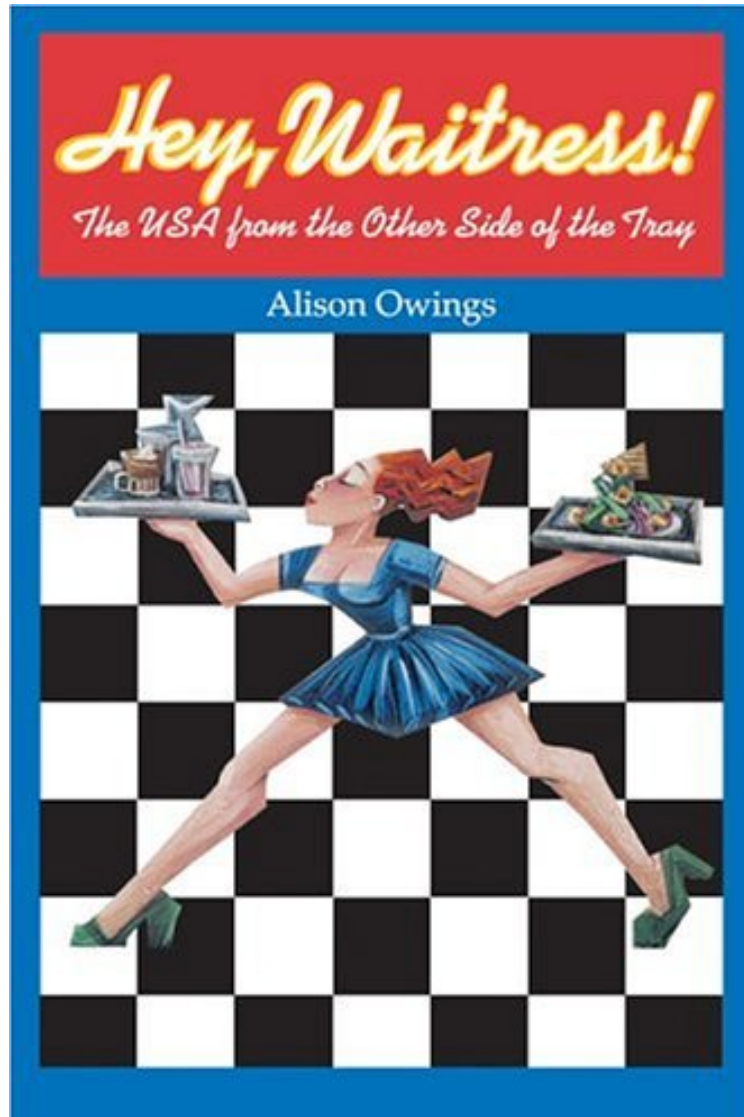


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Hey, Waitress!: The USA from the Other Side of the Tray

Alison Owings

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Alison Owings : Hey, Waitress!: The USA from the Other Side of the Tray before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hey, Waitress!: The USA from the Other Side of the Tray:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Read this and understand. By Dorothy Rosa My life changed in a small, dramatic way one time years ago when I had lunch with a new friend. After our meal, I noticed that her tip was nearly double mine: for her \$1.29 BLT and 25-cent Coke (this was a LONG time ago), she'd left something like one-dollar tip. Marveling, I asked her about that ... and she told me about the years she spent working as a waitress in a similar sort of eatery. I never tipped badly again. "Hey, Waitress" is a glorious, wonderful book of social history told

through the lives of several women who chose, or were plunged into, the work of serving food to others. I couldn't put it down.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good read if you like the food/service genreBy GoStanfordI was introduced to waitress stories by the book *Waiting* (Debra Ginsberg) and subsequently by Nickel and Dimed (Barbara Ehrenreich). I highly recommend those two books for people interested in this genre, as they each describe one author's experience. *Hey, Waitress!* contains several interesting anecdotes, but I made the mistake of trying to read it in one go. I think a selection of the stories, or breaking it up into multiple reads, would be better. I bought a remaindered copy and suggest you share your copy with a friend - there is some good material here. The best part is that these are all true stories, and many of them come from lifelong waitresses. I give it 3 stars as I consider it well-written but not something easily digestible in one read, not something I could not put down.⁰ of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Hey Diners*By gelinaGood read, reminds me of the TV series 'Alice', these are some long ago, lifetime waitresses. Who have waited on and been abused by diners for years! Read this and maybe you will see yourself and how you act look when going out to eat. Sometimes just handing someone a menu seems to change their personality to 'villain on attack' and they are certain you handed them a weapon (with words to beat you with)! and it goes on no matter what part of the country you are in.

Most of us have sat across the tray from a waitress, but how many of us know what really is going on from her side? *Hey, Waitress!* aims to tell us. Containing lively, personal portraits of waitresses from many different walks of life, this book is the first of its kind to show the intimate, illuminating, and often shocking behind-the-scenes stories of waitresses' daily shifts and daily lives. Alison Owings traveled the countrydash;from border to border and coast to coastdash;to hear firsthand what waitresses think about their lives, their work, and their world. Part journalism and part oral history, *Hey, Waitress!* introduces an eclectic cast of characters: a ninety-five-year-old Baltimore woman who may have been the oldest living waitress, a Staten Island firebrand laboring at a Pizza Hut, a well-to-do runaway housewife, a Native American proud of her financial independence, a college student loving her diner more than her studies, a Cajun grandmother of twenty-two, and many others. The book also offers vivid slices of American history. The stories describe the famous sit-in at the Woolworth's counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, which helped spark the civil rights movement; early struggles for waitress unions; and battles against sexually discriminatory hiring in restaurants. A superb and accessible means of breaking down stereotypes, this book reveals American waitresses in all their complexity and individuality, and will surely change the way we order, tip, and, most of all, behave in restaurants.

From Publishers WeeklyAs Owings (*Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich*) knew when she decided to explore the large, understudied world of the American waitress, many women have worked as waitresses at some point in their lives because it requires little training. Marrying social history and oral history, the author deftly explores her themes, primarily classism and the social stigma conveyed by waitressing (tips, she argues, give customers too much power and some restaurants the legal right today to pay as little as two dollars an hour), the confidence-building that comes with handling a demanding and often rude public, the sexism of bosses and kitchen staff, and the pride the women take in presenting an attractive meal and making their customers feel good. Owings allows a wide range of women to speak for themselves, among them a supremely confident mother-and-daughter duo; a former Connecticut housewife whose job gives her independence from an abusive marriage; a Ph.D. who feels more at ease as a waitress than as a graduate student; and a former Seattle union leader who has made great strides in improving the working conditions of waitresses. Owings presents her findings with compassion and wit and a sense of feminist indignation that doesn't detract from her journalistic balance. These qualities make for a lively read in this trailblazing contribution to the study of women and work. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library JournalThis is the second oral history by Owings, whose first book, *Frauen*, collected the reminiscences of average German women about Hitler's Germany. The subject here is not so fraught, but the observations of 35 waitresses, as selected and edited by Owings, are absorbing to read. Part of the interest is in her choice of locales: an Ursuline convent, the Woolworth's counter where civil rights sit-ins took place, one of the Harvey restaurants that "civilized the West," the first New York haute cuisine restaurant to hire a woman, and Everglades National Park, among others. Judicious editing also makes the book compelling: each waitress is full of insights about her life and her life's work and does not seem mired in the job. This is neither a labor study like Greta Foff Paules's *Dishing It Out* nor a first-person exposé; of what Barbara Ehrenreich calls one of America's "least attractive jobs" (Nickel and Dimed). At its heart is young Owings's compassionate realization, while on a summer job at Howard Johnson's, that "some girls do not go to college"; she is not referring only to the scarcity of the literature when she observes that "waitresses stand alone even when they sit down." Recommended for labor history, women's studies, sociology, career counseling, and general interest collections. Janice Dunham, John Jay Coll. Lib., CUNY Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From BooklistOwings spent the summer before college working as a waitress, a brief and, she concedes, not very attentive stint working at one of the most common jobs for women. But over the years, she realized that waitresses, as servers and listeners, are the nation's unacknowledged witnesses. In this fascinating book, Owings briefly recounts the history of the profession as recorded in sociological studies and, more extensively, as cultural icons in books and movies. But

the bulk of her book recounts interviews with present and former waitresses across the nation. One waitress recalls having to refuse service to black customers in 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina; another remembers her career as a Harvey Girl along the Santa Fe railway. Waitresses in other chapters lament the low status attached to their jobs, the idiosyncrasies of bosses and customers, and their lives after their shifts. Owings' conversational style, humor, and empathy make this an absorbing look at the American landscape through the eyes of an often overlooked group of workers. Vanessa BushCopyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved