

# Food Whore: A Novel of Dining and Deceit

by Jessica Tom

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## About the Book

*Food whore (n.) A person who will do anything for food.*

When Tia Monroe moves to New York City, she plans to put herself on the culinary map in no time. But after a coveted internship goes up in smoke, Tia's suddenly just another young food lover in the big city.

But when Michael Saltz, a legendary *New York Times* restaurant critic, lets Tia in on a career-ending secret --- that he's lost his sense of taste --- everything changes. Now he wants Tia to serve as his palate, ghostwriting his reviews. In return he promises her lavish meals, a bottomless cache of designer clothing and the opportunity of a lifetime. Out of prospects and determined to make it, Tia agrees.

Within weeks, Tia's world transforms into one of luxury: four-star dinners, sexy celebrity chefs and an unlimited expense account at Bergdorf Goodman. Tia loves every minute of it until she sees her words in print and Michael Saltz taking all the credit. As her secret identity begins to crumble and the veneer of extravagance wears thin, Tia is forced to confront what it means to truly succeed --- and how far she's willing to go to get there.

## Discussion Guide

1. Like countless others, Tia came to NYC to make something of herself. Was she right to agree to her arrangement with Michael Saltz?
2. Food is a major and dynamic presence in the book. What are some passages in which food is delicious? Revolting? Sexy? Nostalgic? How does the author use food to convey action and character?
3. FOOD WHORE is about the NYC restaurant scene. How does this compare to where you live?

4. Team Elliott, Pascal, or someone else?
5. Tia rationalizes her behavior towards Elliott to herself. Do you believe her? Why or why not?
6. Tia's fashion sense changes over the course of the book. What do her outfits say about her character?
7. Do you think Tia learned her lesson and "got what she deserved"? Do you think these benchmarks are necessary in a coming-of-age novel? In literature?
8. Emerald says, "Everyone thinks that you're the one who keeps the secret, but really it's the secret that keeps you." What does she mean by this?
9. In your life, when have you wanted something so badly that you later did something you regretted?
10. At one point, writing is Tia's refuge and what makes her feel confident. Later, writing is her undoing. What is the author trying to say about ambition and self-preservation?
11. What do you think will become of Tia in the future?

## Author Bio

Jessica Tom is a writer and food blogger living in Brooklyn. She has worked on initiatives with restaurants, hospitality startups, food trucks and citywide culinary programs. She graduated from Yale University with a concentration in fiction writing and wrote the restaurant review for the *Yale Daily News Magazine*. *FOOD WHORE* is her first novel.

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