

# Around the World, once again, with Tony

Laurie Woolever, long-time assistant of globe-trotting chef, writer and maker of excellent television on travel, culture and food, is out with a long-planned travel guide of Anthony Bourdain's insights into what he loved most



Bourdain from his Japan and Hanoi episodes of Parts Unknown. PICS COURTESY/CNN

LAURIE WOOLEVER  
PIC/STEVE LEGATO



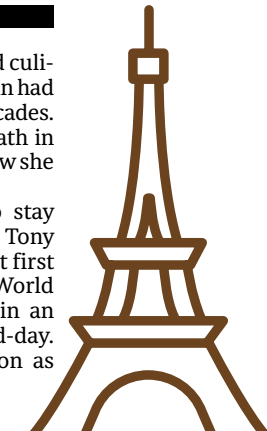
In 2016, Bourdain and Woolever worked as co-writers on the cookbook, Appetites. She speaks of Bourdain's offbeat ideas when it came to photographing the dishes in the book, many of which were taken from specific memories of his travels. This image was shot for the book by photographer Bobby Fisher. PIC COURTESY/ BOBBY FISHER

## SUCHETA CHAKRABORTY

IN the introduction to World Travel: An Irreverent Guide (Bloomsbury), Laurie Woolever recollects a meeting with Anthony Bourdain in his Manhattan apartment on a spring afternoon in 2018. "Tony chain-smoked and free-associated for over an hour," she writes, during a conversation which was meant to be the first of several brainstorming sessions the two were meant

to have on the places and culinary history that Bourdain had experienced over two decades. But, with his sudden death in June 2018, Woolever knew she had a lonely road ahead. "I tried very hard to stay true to the vision that Tony and I laid out during that first and only meeting about World Travel," says Woolever in an email interview with mid-day. "I used that conversation as

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a blueprint." Having first met him in 2002 and then worked with him on various projects over the years, Woolever had a good sense of his style of work. She explains how there were instances when she decided to drop a restaurant if it had shuttered, or included something, if she sensed that he had forgotten to mention it in that meeting. But how different is this final result from the book they had initially imagined? "I think the fundamental heart of the book remains the same."

She gave herself a few months to move slowly, until she had a chance to absorb the loss. The book was meant to include original essays by Bourdain. Writings by friends, colleagues and family now take their place.

The chapter on Paris, for instance, includes a piece by Bourdain's brother Christopher, where he writes wistfully about the siblings' first trip to France, their stay at the lavish Hôtel Le Royal Monceau and how they fell in love with jambon beurre (thin slices of fresh ham) that came with French butter on a crusty baguette, and the waffles sold out of street carts. The section on Chicago has musician and producer Steve Albini write about the hot dog and barbecue joints, the meat markets and vegan restaurants he would take Bourdain to if he were still around.

"There is a lot of Tony's voice in the book, taken from his writing for television and other remarks, that I think will be a happy comfort for those people who miss him and who loved reading and hearing what he had to say," says Woolever. Again in the Paris chapter, for instance, Bourdain's words, in bold type, nudge readers to set aside the familiar stereotypes about Paris and the French, and guides with characteristic frankness, and with a delicious expounding of the life of leisure that the city demands: "Most of us are lucky to see Paris once in a lifetime. Make the most of it by doing as little as possible. Walk a little, get lost a bit, eat, catch a breakfast buzz, have a nap, try and have sex if you can, just not with a mime. Eat again. Lounge around drinking coffee. Maybe read a book. Drink some wine, walk around a bit more, eat, repeat. See? It's easy."

His love for the French capital was also important in that it gave Woolever a point of entry into the book. It was the first section she wrote for World

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Anthony Bourdain in World Travel

Travel. "This city held a special appeal to Tony," she says. "It was a place that awakened his earliest desire to be a chef, traveller, explorer and adventurer. Because I had the challenge of writing the text without Tony's input, I knew that Paris was a good place to start, to try and build my confidence for the process..." she explains.

In 2016, Woolever wrote a cookbook, Appetites, with Bourdain. She speaks of his offbeat ideas when it came to photographing the dishes in the book, many of which were taken from specific memories of his travels, and how they worked in his home kitchen to ensure that they were writing recipes that were the best expressions of the dishes.

Given the life of high adventure Bourdain led, we can't help but ask Woolever about some of the places they travelled to together during his shows, which sowed the seeds for this book. "I joined Tony and his crew in central Vietnam in 2014, and rode on the back of his scooter through the chaotic streets of the imperial city of Hue. We attended a Japanese-style bullfight at an arena in Okinawa, and we were pleased to see, while eating yakisoba, that the sport is far less violent than in the western world. We took a shinkansen [bullet train] across Japan, from Kazazawa to Tokyo, and were met at the door of the train by a driver, who skilfully led us through the chaos of Tokyo station and into a luxury car which took us to the formidable Park Hyatt Tokyo, with a breathtaking view of the city and a truly outstanding Japanese breakfast. We took another train, this one quite a bit slower, from Colombo, Sri Lanka to Jaffna, in the north, snacking on samosas and other short eats along the way, and later taking our car onto a tiny ferry, to cross an inlet and spend a day at the beach... Many of the above-mentioned locations are included in World Travel," she says.

sucheta.c@mid-day.com