



lou perri

FROM THE STUNNED MULLET

# PALATE PLEASURES

## DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

Being informed makes life easier. If you are aware of the facts, you are far more likely to reach the right conclusion. There are many decisions we make in life, where it would be considered imprudent not to have researched all the available options – buying a house or a car for instance on a grand scale – all the way down to a mobile phone plan, dinner at a restaurant, or a weekend away.

If you are prepared to put in a bit of groundwork – make a couple of calls, jump online or ask a friend or two, there's a good chance you will find that your knowledge on any given subject increases exponentially ... or perhaps there's a slim chance that you will just end up even more confused and unsure than where you started, but it seems that sometimes in life the more we think we know the more we realise we don't know ... (but that's another story!)

Ultimately though – they say knowledge is power, and in our cutthroat consumer society, it doesn't hurt to have a little power.

But first we have to identify what it is we really want in the first place. This is often, surprisingly, the most difficult part of the process. It involves disentangling all the various influences affecting our decision making processes – namely deciphering what we actually want from what we think we want. This is much harder than it sounds – you have to switch off all those subliminal voices ... media and advertising, the requirements of family and friends as opposed to our own requirements, envies, jealousies and petty competitiveness.

If we base our decisions solely on any of the above reasonings, it is plain to see why, further down the track post-purchase and decision, we could likely be dissatisfied with the choices we made.

It ultimately wasn't us who was making them, it was the various influences at play amongst our hectic and stressful lives ...

I am not sure how it's possible not to be influenced by external forces in life, but I do know that if you do your homework,

carefully consider options while weighing up pros and cons, and try to listen to your instincts (that little voice at the back of your mind), it's much more likely you'll make a choice that you will be satisfied with.

Oh, and don't leave decision making until the last moment either – the last thing you need is limited options in a pressurised situation. Take trying to decide where to eat dinner on a Saturday night for an example ... leave it until 6pm on Saturday to make the call and you may find yourself in a bit of a pickle ...

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There's a real danger here that you will just find yourself somewhere you don't want to be. Somewhere way out of your budget for example, somewhere with weird sounding food you've never heard of, somewhere where the service is terrible.

terrible. This is a situation where it would have helped if you had done your homework ... if you would have spent 5 minutes online, you would have figured out how much the meal was going to cost you, what other customers thought, how the restaurant compares to others in the area.

If you visit a restaurant's website, you would see the menu clear as day in front of you, and you could make the decision that it looked weird or too expensive in the privacy of your own home rather than when you were already seated at a table in the said restaurant at 8pm with no time left to leg it to anywhere else ...

I am not saying that it's not okay to be spontaneous – indeed it is. As we all know, some of the best times we have in life are the moments that we didn't plan. No expectations, no disappointment and all that. But the key here is – no expectations!

If you do decide to rock up on a Saturday night at the last moment, be prepared to be open-minded – you might end up somewhere different to what you expected, you might pay more than what you expected but the choice is yours – you've either gotta go with the flow, or up and leg it before it's too late!