

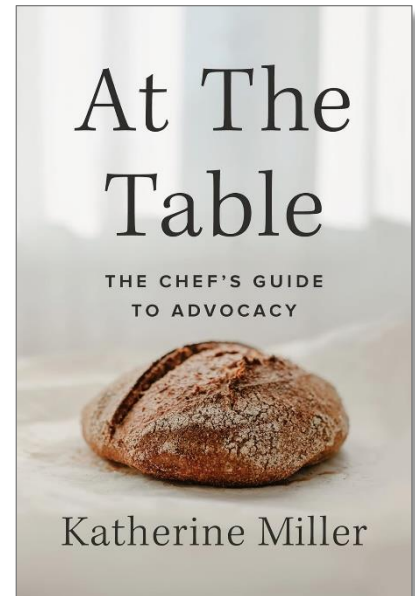
A recipe for advocacy

Book review by

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Review of *At The Table: The Chef's Guide to Advocacy*, by Katherine Miller. (2023). Published by Island Press. Available as paperback and e-book; 242 pages. Publisher's website: <https://islandpress.org/books/table>



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Before turning her attention to food and becoming a vice president of the James Beard Foundation, Katherine Miller advised left-leaning political campaigns and foundations on strategy and advocacy. We can be thankful she focused her attention on food and, while the title of the book suggests that it is a guide for chefs, anyone in the good food space can learn her methods of advocacy.

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Miller begins by explaining how chefs sometimes do not realize that they have influence and access that most people do not because of the nature of their work. Everyone eats and influential people usually like to eat well. Using your access in an intimate setting to highlight the issues you care about is powerful. A chef's platform can also garner publicity against those you disagree with—remember in the last presidential administration when members of the cabinet were refused service at several high-end restaurants.

One of the best pieces of advice she gives is learning to say no. Chefs constantly get asked to contribute their time, labor, and gift certificates, among other asks. Not only can this be a financial strain on businesses that are usually marginal at best, but can dilute your impact on the mission you

most care about. The same goes for farmers and food producers: they are often asked for donations for special events when they should be paid for their products and efforts.

Throughout the book, Miller gives examples of chefs who have used her methods to advance their causes, ranging from local food, sustainability, gender equity, food access, and childhood hunger, to many others. It is these real-world examples that reinforce her methods, and these methods are applicable to any cause.

COVID-19. It is hard to think back now on how disruptive it was for everyone and almost everything. Miller explains how many of the chefs

she worked with and trained during the James Beard Foundation's Chef Bootcamps for Policy and Change used their newfound knowledge, along with the Chef Action Network, to lobby politicians to support the restaurant industry. She also examines how in its wake, paying a minimum wage became almost nonexistent in restaurants, with almost no one offering less than US\$15 an hour now.

This is a great book for anyone advocating for anything; her methods work, especially for those in the good food space. This is not a self-help book but a true guide. I cannot recommend it highly enough. 