

The Hot Seat



Anthony Bourdain

The roving gastronome embarks on his final *No Reservations* voyage. By **Sarah Bruning**

The ninth and last season of your show kicks off in Austin, during SXSW. Why did you decide to start then and there?

Those of us on the show who tweet were invited to do a social-media panel, and we're all music fans. It was really a chance to do a show unlike any we've done before, which gets harder every year. The episode is heavily music-based, with a lot of live performances.

You've done some pretty ballsy things on camera over the years. This time around, you swam with an 11-foot-long nurse shark in Australia. What was that like?

Well, they said it was safe! [Chef] José Andrés encouraged me to get my scuba certification recently, so I was vulnerable to the suggestion. I was looking for any opportunity to put on the apparatus.

At least it was in a tank and not the open ocean.

[Laughs] That just means there's no place to run!

Touché! So what kind of antics don't make it on air?

Most of the time, it's jokes that nobody else would get, things we can just laugh hysterically about. For me, those are usually the golden moments. Plumbing is a popular source of humor.

***No Reservations* focuses on the ways travel, food and culture influence one another. What experience made the biggest impact on you?**

Saudi Arabia was an eye-opener, and certainly Beirut. Nicaragua, too. The tougher shows [are] where

suddenly it's not just about what people are eating, but what they're *not* eating. Shows where I was confronted with my own spectacular ignorance—those are the ones that make the biggest impression on me and are the most pleasurable.

How can ordinary people find great under-the-radar spots?

Stop concentrating on what the "best" restaurant in town is, and look for what the locals enjoy. Not what they think is the best, necessarily, but the place they have an emotional connection to, the go-to spot that makes them happy. Talk to people, particularly while drunk.

Why end the series in Brooklyn?

It's a place that, I want to say without any sort of ironic snarkiness, I truly don't know well. And it's become increasingly embarrassing that somebody who supposedly knows food and chefs and who has been to so many places would be so ignorant about Brooklyn when there's so much happening there.

What's the weirdest thing you've ever put in your mouth?

I don't even know what weird means anymore. As for the things that I've just consumed for the novelty factor, it's something like the nacho grande plate at an airport. It's me and my crew, our flight's delayed, we're bored or cranky, and somebody comes up with the idea for us to do something really foolhardy and order the nacho grande with everything on it—maybe the chicken wings, too—and see who gets sick first.

No Reservations: The Final Tour airs Mondays at 9pm on the Travel Channel.