



SIMON WROE is a freelance journalist and former chef. He writes about food for *Prospect* magazine, art and culture for *The Economist*, and has contributed articles and features to a wide range of publications—including *Private Eye*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *The Independent*, and *The Evening Standard*. He is thirty-one years old and lives in London. *Chop Chop* is his first novel.

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Look at the book cover, the author's photograph and short biography:

- Describe the book cover (and the author). Be as precise as you can.
- Select one or two interesting pieces of information about the author.
- Draw conclusions :
 - o What do you expect the book to be about?
 - o Imagine who the main character or narrator could be.
 - o In your opinion, where could the book be set? When?
 - o Think of a plot. (use your vivid imagination)
- Get ready to report to the class. (speak for two minutes minimum)

Now read about the book:

Were you right? About the main character, the setting (time and place), the plot?

Select information that you think is important.

From what you have learnt so far, would you like to read the book? Why? Why not?

Get ready to report to the class.

Synopsis and Reviews

Synopsis 1 (from : <http://www.penguin.co.uk>)

Two months behind on his rent, young graduate Monocle swallows his dreams and takes the only job he can find: the lowest-rung chef in a gastropub in Camden. Here he finds himself surrounded by a group of deranged, criminal hoodlums (his co-workers) and at the mercy of an ingenious sadist (the head chef, Bob). What follows is a furiously-paced, ribald, raucous and deeply touching tale of loyalty and revenge, dark appetites and fading dreams, and a young man finding his way in the world as he is plunged into the fat and the frying pan and everything else besides.

Synopsis 2 (from : <http://www.goodreads.com>)

Fresh out of the university with big dreams, our narrator is determined to escape his past and lead the literary life in London. But soon he is two months behind on rent for his depressing Camden Town bed-sit and forced to take a job doing grunt work in the kitchen of The Swan, a formerly grand restaurant that has lost its luster.

Mockingly called “Monocle” by his boisterous co-workers for a useless English lit degree, he is suddenly thrust into the unbelievably brutal, chaotic world of professional cooking and surrounded by a motley cast of co-workers for which no fancy education could have prepared him. There’s the lovably dim pastry chef Dibden, who takes all kinds of grief for his “girly” specialty; combative Ramilov, who spends a fair bit of time locked in the walk-in freezer for pissing people off; Racist Dave, about whom the less said the better; Camp Charles, the officious head waiter; and Harmony, the only woman in a world of raunchy, immature, drug- and rage-fuelled men. But worst of all, there’s Bob, the sadistic head chef, who runs the kitchen with an iron fist and a taste for cruelty that surprises and terrifies even these most hardened of characters.

Once initiated and begrudgingly accepted, Monocle enters into a strange camaraderie with his fellow chefs, one based largely on the speed and ingenuity of their insults. In an atmosphere that is more akin to a zoo—or a maximum security prison—than a kitchen he feels oddly at home. But soon an altogether darker tale unfolds as Monocle and his co-workers devise a plot to overthrow Bob and Monocle’s dead-beat father (who has been kicked out of the family home) shows up at his door. Not only does his dad insist on sleeping on the floor of Monocle’s apartment; he starts hanging out at The Swan’s dissolute bar in the evenings. As the plan to oust Bob clicks into motion and the presence of his father causes Monocle to revisit lingering questions from his unhappy childhood, *Chop Chop* accelerates toward its blackly hilarious, thrilling, and ruthless conclusion.

Reviews

“Wit, vigour, and gleeful, necessary profanity... sheer crackling energy.” *The New York Times Book Review*

"An outrageously funny and original debut set in the fast-paced and treacherous world of a restaurant kitchen." [Goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com)

More book reviews. (From amazon.co.uk)

"Brace yourself for this lively, amusing and alarmingly informative novel ... the horribly plausible cast and foul-mouthed mania of the kitchen--described by a former chef who knows what he's writing about--give this book its energy and best laughs.", [Daily Mail \(UK\)](#)

"At its best, food is a sensory pleasure that also fosters less tangible joys. At its worst, to paraphrase one of the many vivid characters in Simon Wroe's first novel, *Chop Chop*, watching someone eat is like watching a body convert food into waste before your eyes. The character phrases it less delicately, but many of the book's funniest moments—and they are plentiful—are also its most unprintable. That's as it should be. Wroe depicts the literal underworld of a restaurant kitchen with wit, vigor, and gleeful, necessary profanity... Wroe adroitly contrasts the refinement of food with the coarseness of the cook, the cruelty of a leader with the miserable acceptance from his underlings, and Monocle's highbrow diction with some truly undignified subject matter. His voice provides the second-greatest pleasure of the book after the sheer crackling energy of the setting. Monocle doesn't revel in the mayhem but he delivers his account of it, often hilariously, with warped dignity of a man who resolutely remains his insecure, grandiloquent self, though being himself has never done him much good", [The New York Times Book Review](#)

"*Kitchen Nightmares* has nothing on the horrors of the Swan, the fancy London restaurant in Wroe's darkly comic novel. In the eyes of our unnamed narrator, a student-turned-novice chef, the Swan's kitchen is a torture chamber — but also a sanctuary for its staff of oddballs, who thrive on filthy potshots. ("You've got the fattest arse I've ever seen. We should get your arse in a pan and render it.") Plot isn't Wroe's strongest suit; the story hinges on a shadowy, underdeveloped villain known only as the Fat Man and his cultlike dinner club. But brightly drawn characters and delectable writing (a frazzled chef's head is said to look "farther away than ever, pushed out of the top of his body like toothpaste from a tube") make this debut a first course worth savoring. Grade: B+", [Entertainment Weekly](#)

"Brace yourself for this lively, amusing and alarmingly informative novel ... the horribly plausible cast and foul-mouthed mania of the kitchen--described by a former chef who knows what he's writing about--give this book its energy and best laughs.", [Daily Mail \(UK\)](#)

"Wroe's imaginative metaphors and gritty kitchen colloquialisms are the key ingredients in a story that will appeal to anyone with a taste for the morbid and the whimsical.", [Publishers Weekly](#)

"Addictively entertaining...Everything is amplified in this cramped, sweaty little space, but Wroe still leaves plenty of room for the unexpected, the uncomfortable and the uncommonly funny...A compelling debut from a mischievous new voice.", [Bookpage](#)

NOW, PRESENT THE BOOK (PLOT, CHARACTERS AND SETTING), ITS AUTHOR, YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND TELL THE CLASS WHY YOU WOULD OR WOULDN'T LIKE TO READ IT (AND MEET SIMON WROE) . (SPEAK FOR 4 MINUTES MINIMUM)

NEW VOCABULARY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE CLASS: