

ROCKKIN' GOURMAND

- Drinking and cussing his way through a stop at the Triple Rock, Anthony Bourdain maintained his image as the culinary world's baddest bad boy — almost. He's stopped smoking.

By KIM ODE • kimode@startribune.com

Anthony Bourdain's appearance at the punk club Triple Rock was like the adventuresome menu item at Vincent, the "something strange, but good" entree idea that Bourdain admires — trusting, perhaps, that his chef friend would never go so far as to serve warthog rectum.

Bourdain has been there, done that, and never again. Still, the Namibian snack made for compelling TV on "Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations," in its third season on the Travel Channel. Bourdain was here last week flogging a book by the same name. It was classic book tour: MPR, Barnes & Noble, swanky restaurant event, Mall of America. But also a detour to the Triple Rock Social Club, a red brick saloon in Minneapolis' West Bank neighborhood, where upwards of 400 people streamed inside the black room before owner Erik Funk finally had to close the doors.

Funk thought this was the first time the Triple Rock had hosted an author event, then remembered that porn legend Ron Jeremy had been in a couple of years ago. "Everyone's excited about it, but people are sort of puzzled, too," Funk said. "They're sort of thinking he's more of an entertainer, so we'll see."

City Pages restaurant reviewer Dara Moskow-

itz Grumdahl was the engine here. "I don't ordinarily act as volunteer publicist for visiting chefs, but I've had a sweet spot for Tony ever since I watched him chain-smoke while rolling his own spring rolls at St. Paul's Saigon," she said. "Food can be a very phony world, and Bourdain is the reigning phony-deflater and truth-talker in the business. I'd do whatever I could for him."

For the record, Bourdain was first an executive chef in New York City, then a best-selling author with "Kitchen Confidential" in 2000, and only now is a TV star. His calling card is his charisma, fueled by an uncensored commentary and a willingness to eat whatever he's offered — with the oft-declared exception of live monkey brains.

Bourdain continues: Best Euro country for dining? **E2** ▶

The Triple Rock crowd reflected all three legs of his celebrity. Some fans no doubt had used Mapquest, while others knew all the drink specials. Some ears sported gauges, others diamond studs. One questioner strived to sound excruciatingly sophisticated, while another woman was overheard blurting, "I just want to make out with him."

Bourdain, 51, bridged the generations, pleading that his musical tastes had stopped developing in 1978 with the Ra-

mones and the Dead Boys, while confessing that he'd quit smoking with the birth of a daughter in April.

"I live in a little pink world now, with a seven-month-old pair of lungs in it," he said, drawing supportive applause, which worried him enough to quickly urge: "Don't let that stop you!"

A blue streak

Bourdain's "bad boy" reputation survived the night, with him uttering his first profanity within two minutes of taking the mike. (We've set up a figurative "cuss jar," into which we'll throw a Franklin every time we have to veer off quoting him accurately.) To wit:

He took the stage fairly bursting with shocking news: "Emeril Live!" had been cancelled by Food Network. Gasp! For everyone knew that Bourdain over the years had verbally roughed up Legasse, calling him Ewok-like. Yet, he said Monday night, he'd warmed to the New Orleans chef for his commitment to food, and for how he compares to the network's current lineup of celebrity chefs.

"Look at him now," Bourdain said. "He looks like [Franklin] Escoffier compared to these people! I mean, what the [Franklin]?"

Hard to say, but that might have been the first time Escoffier had been discussed on the premises — no less to knowledgeable whoops and hollers. But that was nothing compared to the discussion about ortolan that followed.

"Ah, ortolan," Bourdain said, prompted by a question from a guy in the back. "This is the delicacy, highly illegal, in which small songbirds are captured and fed until they basically suffocate them-

selves ..."

"Yeahhhh!" from the crowd.

"Yeah?" Bourdain said, laughing. "What — let's hear it for suffocation?"

"Eat 'em!"

Bourdain took a pull on his longneck, still laughing, and continued, describing how the birds are drowned in Armagnac, then cooked and served piping hot as diners don hoods to capture the aroma (and perhaps hide the sight) "of chomping down on their little Armagnac-soaked guts and eating them bones and all."

And so the hour went, with talk of "flavor profiles" and his choice for a last meal (sushi from Masa). Best European country for dining now? Spain (bouncing between Barcelona and San Sebastian). Worst drink? Chocolate martini. Actually, he added, "no words should ever come before 'martini,' with the exception of, 'I would like to have a ...'"

Oddly, even his author predecessor Jeremy was invoked, during a discussion of Bravo's "Top Chef," on which Bourdain has been a judge. He dissed one contestant for serving Roquefort on beef filets for two weeks running. "Come on, maybe if you're in a Ron Jeremy film," Bourdain said. "That's so [Franklin] '70s."

Before he took the stage, Camille Greider of St. Paul had wondered just how family-friendly the all-ages show would be, since she and her husband had brought their teenagers, to whom Triple Rock was familiar turf. As a longtime fan, though, she suspected the answer. "We've read him for a long time."

Kris Shackle brought her son and husband with her from New Brighton. "I love

him," she said, recalling how she'd seen him several years ago when he was signing books at the Hungry Mind. Yes, Triple Rock was a change. "I have not been here before."

Funk figured that 75 percent of the crowd were first-timers, and perhaps only-timers. And no, Triple Rock isn't lining up any other author events.

After nursing a single beer (although accepting a shot handed up from the crowd), Bourdain decided the evening shouldn't end without one rip directed at a familiar target, Rachael Ray.

"Is she looking more like a kielbasa every day?" When someone asked if she'd ever responded to his jibes, he laughed. "Why should she respond to me? For what she spends on lunch, she could [Franklin] have me killed."

Then, playing to his crowd full of waitpersons and line cooks and the harsh memories of Ray winging through cities on \$40 a day, he finished her off: "Bitch should tip."

Place went crazy.

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RICHARD TSONG-TAATARII • StarTribune

At the Triple Rock Club, Anthony Bourdain got a kiss from Jessica Maldonado during his book signing. She described herself as a "foodie to the core." Hundreds of fans hooted and hollered as Bourdain entertained the crowd.