

## Chef Emerges in ‘Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 28, 2017 - 9:54am

- [Anthony Bourdain](#) [2]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [3]
- [Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent](#) [4]
- [Mario Batali](#) [5]
- [Martha Stewart](#) [6]
- [Movie Review](#) [7]
- [New York City](#) [8]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [9]
- [San Francisco](#) [10]
- [Tavern on the Green](#) [11]
- [The Orchard](#) [12]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The culture of food has never been more pervasive, from entire broadcast channels devoted to it, to new trends in eating being invented seemingly every day. Where did it all start? The new film ‘Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent’ documents the chef that opened the door.

Produced by foodie guru Anthony Bourdain, the documentary explores this little-known chef – with the “last magnificent” title implying he may have been sprung from the gods – and exposes his journey through the use of re-creations of his childhood and career. The film has a dreamy quality to it, with flights of poetry also served up with the history of the elusive chef. Like the newspaper mogul in “Citizen Kane,” the documentary asks us to put the puzzle pieces of Tower’s life together, with no one piece being the key to his motivations. It comes down to “what becomes an unknown legend most?”

Jeremiah Tower starts his life as a lonely rich kid. His parents are indifferent to his odd and separated ways, and allows him to roam freely through his atmosphere of overseas travel, luxury hotels and cruise ships. This attachment to finery is the origin of his interest in food, as the kitchens of these various places always seem to be his destination.



The Lion in Winter in ‘Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent’

*Photo credit: The Orchard*

He grows up aimlessly through the 1960s, always maintaining his interest in cooking, even as he matriculates through the war-protesting



campus of Harvard University. Like many college graduates of the era, he ends up in California – specifically San Francisco – and begins his career as a chef and inventor of the “California Cuisine.”

There is no denying that the life of Jeremiah Tower (what a name, he was almost destined for notoriety) is a fascinating American story. His childhood is re-created by actors, and the director Lydia Tenaglia took some real care in these flashbacks. Tower’s early life of privilege is shown to be his blessing and curse, as his need to escape... which began a child... results in his “retirement” from the scene just as the era of the celebrity chef was emerging.

But among those celebrity cooks – Mario Batali, producer Bourdain and Martha Stewart add perspective – Tower is revered as the first chef to come out of the kitchen and inject his personality into his San Francisco eateries (called “Star”) to become as necessary as the cuisine he was inventing. His California cuisine was a major American food innovation, highlighting “fresh and local” and “farm to table” years before these restaurant characteristics were necessary to charge a 100% markup on the final bill.



Rosebud: A Flashback in 'Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent'

Photo credit: The Orchard

There are a bit too many talking heads in the documentary, and director Tenaglia’s Citizen Kane-style use of flashbacks could have been edited some more, but overall there is enough kick in the story to maintain interest. For his curtain call, Tower comes out of retirement to run the kitchen at the “tourist trap” Tavern on the Green in Central Park, New York City. Mostly what comes out of that situation is owners always know more than the experts they hire. But it was engaging to get all the build-up, and then experience the last act.

The explosion the food cult is entrenched in “First World” culture, from people going to fancy restaurants and taking pictures of their food, to the 24/7 channels that almost use food as pornography. In the land of plenty, there never seems to be enough, and maybe that’s the key puzzle piece to Jeremiah Tower’s life.

*“Jeremiah Tower: The Last Magnificent” continues its limited release in Chicago on April 28th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring interviews with Mario Batali, Martha Stewart, Anthony Bourdain and Jeremiah Tower. Directed by Lydia Tenaglia. Rated “R”*



[13]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [14]  
Writer, Editorial Coordinator  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [13]

© 2017 Patrick McDonald, [HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 24 2024 - 1:24am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/27472/a-chef-emerges-in-jeremiah-tower-the-last-magnificent>

#### Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/anthony-bourdain>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jeremiah-tower-the-last-magnificent>  
[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/mario-batali>  
[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/martha-stewart>  
[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>  
[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/new-york-city>  
[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>  
[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/san-francisco>  
[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/tavern-on-the-green>  
[12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-orchard>  
[13] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>  
[14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>