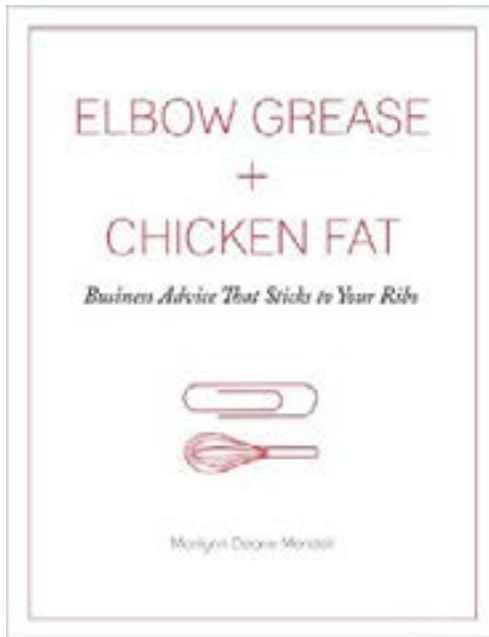


Book Review: *Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat: Business Advice That Sticks to Your Ribs* Scott D. Butcher, FSMPS, CPSM



There was a running catchphrase on the popular television show, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, which served as a transition between one skit and the next. “And now for something completely different” is still uttered by many today—even though perhaps the originators of the saying have been forgotten by those using the phrase. However, it seems an appropriate way to introduce this month's book review for *Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat: Business Advice That Sticks to Your Ribs* by Marilyn Deane Mendell.

Before we get to the book, here's a bit about the author. She found herself in a tough situation with limited marketable skills, no income, three young children, and only a few bucks left in the bank. She needed to provide for her family, but didn't even know where to start. After some soul searching, and a bit of wine, she decided that her profession of choice would be cooking.

Unfortunately, she did not know how to cook. What she did have, however, was an entrepreneurial spirit, which helped her build the largest off-premise catering business in Western New York and eventually graduate from college. She later founded WinSpin CIC Inc., a marketing, PR, and change management firm, got published, joined the speaking circuit, and became an adjunct professor at two prestigious universities.

You know right off the bat with a title like *Elbow Grease + Chicken Fat*, you're in for something completely different when it comes to a business book. Mendell literally blends sage business advice with some of her favorite recipes. The book is large—8.5" x 11"—and most of it features business advice on the left pages, and recipes on the right. The recipes often relate to the advice.

The business advice dispensed is much like a long list of ingredients necessary to succeed as an entrepreneur. This advice is very much a collection of stories, examples, and lessons learned along the way. There's a lot of humor as well, my particular favorite being the frosting-eating squirrel that crashed a wedding reception. This particular anecdote was told under the appropriate heading of, “Keep Your Sense of Humor.”

I have to confess that when it comes to cooking at my house, there's a simple rule: unless the meal entails grilled cheese or pancakes, I'm to stay far away until clean-up time. So other than looking at the headings of the recipe pages, I skipped right over them. The transitions from advice/lesson learned to recipe are very clever, however. At the conclusion of “Getting Fired is a Good Thing,” Mendell writes about the importance of chocolate desserts under such circumstances ... cue the transition to “Moist Chocolate Cake.” *Elbow Grease + Chick Fat* is extremely

creative, inspirational, and filled with a smorgasbord of delectable wisdom, no matter what your profession. I thought I'd relate more to the PR-side of her career, but the reality is that her experiences as an entrepreneurial caterer translate across all types of businesses, including A/E/C. In fact, if you check out her company's website, www.winspincic.com, you'll notice quite a few design and construction clients.

Perhaps that's because throughout the book Marilyn Deane Mendell continually reminds us that ultimately, there's one ingredient that can never be substituted: hard work. ●



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