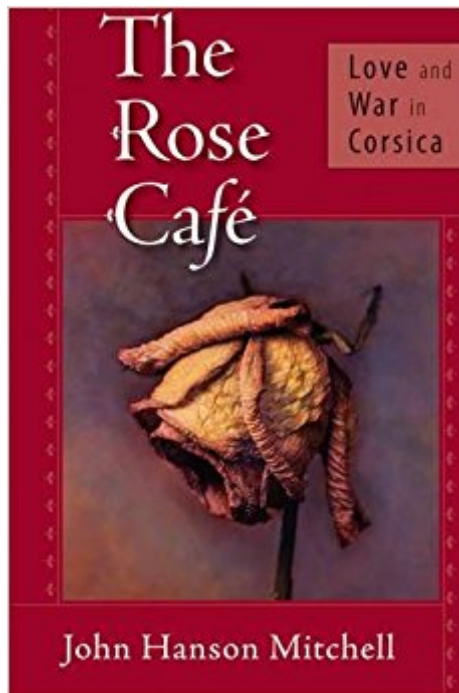




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The Rose Café: Love And War In Corsica



Synopsis

John Hanson Mitchell recounts his time in the isolated backcountry of Corsica in 1962. While working (illegally) at the Rose Café in Ile Rouse, Mitchell spent his days observing the lives of the regulars: a local group of card players, colorful reprobates from the continent, and a younger crowd of fellow students, all spellbound by the lush charms of the island. Depicting the pivotal role that his time in Corsica played in his own development as a writer, Mitchell captures the rhythms and intrigues of a life lived elsewhere.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Avoiding military service in Vietnam, American author Mitchell spent six months working in the kitchen of the Rose Café on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica, a season of which he recollects in this powerful memoir. A restaurant "at a remove from the village ... where any local could retreat," the Rose Café is populated by a great number of characters-including owners Jean-Pierre and Micheline, Mitchell's love interest Marie and a wealthy, mysterious foreigner called "Le Baron"-who don't do a whole lot: eat, drink, play cards, swim, argue, fall in love and share what they know of the island's history. What makes this story remarkable is the way Mitchell allows each character to reveal their experience of World War II, ended just 15 years before; some nights, Mitchell hears "a terrible scream from one of the upstairs rooms, a guest awakened by the all-too-real nightmare of the past war." The tale of a lone Nazi shot down in a friend's garden makes for one searing anecdote; others involve entertaining if dubious tales from French resistance fighters (as one Corsican woman tells him, "after liberation, all of a sudden half of the males in France were

in the resistance' "). The juxtaposition of the beautiful island's vitality and the horrors it so recently survived are captured well in Mitchell's precise and evocative prose, making this well worth reading for fans of memoirs, Old World European culture and WWII narratives. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Say the name "Corsica" and images of inscrutable spies, nefarious gangsters, and internecine warfare taking place within a sultry island setting come to mind--and with good reason, as Mitchell so vibrantly conveys in his Graham Greene-like memoir of his days spent as a young college student exploring the unfathomable intricacies of life in the polyglot culture of this shadowy Mediterranean haven. The time was 1962, and as an American student abroad, Mitchell was keenly aware of the looming military crisis in Southeast Asia, while around him, Europe was still tentatively reeling from the aftereffects of World War II. Taking a job as a busboy-cum-cook at a local restaurant, Mitchell capitalized on his fly-on-the-wall status to observe and consider the kaleidoscopic cast of characters that used the cafe as a safe harbor from the exigencies of the outside world. With an acute sense of character and precise flair for dramatic detail, Mitchell's picaresque memoir renders this seductively vaporous world in crystalline prose. Carol HaggasCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Memoir of young American study abroad student who finds staying in Europe, particularly a summer in Corsica, more rewarding than risking draft and Vietnam. He has a good eye for characters and detail.

At the highest literary level for a personal memoir. After the passage of decades, a gifted American writer looks back on a formative period of months he spent on Corsica when he was twenty and at a time when the emotional scars arising from World War II were as yet unhealed. Clear, precise prose on the goings-on associated with the small, isolated but ever-interesting Cafe Rose. Aspiring writers would especially benefit from receiving this book as a present -- if not buying it themselves. (I sadly admit to being unaware of John Hanson Mitchell prior to reading this fine work.)

Though somewhat dated, this book gives a good sense of the rhythm of life and the turning of seasons in a small Corsican town, before the advent of mega tourism, yachting clubs and all-night

discos. The book feels slow paced but that is surely intentional and part of the charm. While mostly devoid of plot, the book provides a fascinating and lyrical glimpse into European culture in the 1960s. Definitely worth reading, particularly for those lucky enough to travel to the "island of beauty."

The book, the actual storyline was enthralling. I could not put the book down. It was a combination, historical, romantic, mystery and travelogue all in one. My only complaint is that the actual physical book fell apart as I read it. If you can get this book in hardcover or on a kindle; it is a keeper for any library. But a book that falls apart like snowflakes on a lazy winter evening, is hard to recommend. I WOULD recommend that you purchase the HARDCOVER. It is a great rainy afternoon or sit on the beach kind of read.

The recipient of the gift loved it.

This is a great summer read! Or, perhaps even better, if you read it in winter, it will warm you up! The author is best known for his deep explorations into an eastern Massachusetts square mile tract, known as Scratch Flat, but he's wandered away from his known territory in recent books. The Rose Cafe, his latest and, I think, his best, takes us to the sun-drenched island of Corsica in the Mediterranean where Mitchell lived for nine months in the early 1960s. It is, in part, a memoir of a pivotal time in his youth that launched him into his writing career. In his typical lyrical style, Mitchell weaves a magic spell as he introduces us to the breathtakingly beautiful, sensuous, and fragrant land of Corsica, where an odd collection of local types --- dreamy, eccentric, troubled, lovely, even some from Corsica's underworld --- frequent the charming, somewhat isolated cafe/auberge where he worked. In keeping with the subtitle, Love and War in Corsica, there is a lot of love in this book and a lot about the remnants of wars, World War II in particular; and you'll relish reading about delicious Corsican food and how it is prepared. Wild nature and local history serve as a rich metaphorical backdrop for this delightful book.

50 years later after this took place, Corsica has changed. We didn't visit L'Île-Rousse on an extended trip in 2010 (we'll be back) but there were things in The Rose Cafe that were definitely evocative. This is a sweet story even if you have no clue about Corsica but I recommend it particularly if you are planning on visiting beyond the tourist beaches. Also, read Columba by Prosper Merimee, a novella that helps explain the somewhat darker past of La Corse.

I was so sad when this book ended. It is a beautiful book how it draws you into the place where it is set, an auberge during a summer in Corsica. You get to know all the people that come and go, and the landscape, and the culture. It is like really taking a summer in Europe, which you can't always do in real life! The writing is gorgeous. And you are drawn in, not wanting to put the book down, which is a rare thing with travel-type books.

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