

her family wealth with the abject poverty she experienced in the U.S. and Central America; confronting personal issues of family, race, sexuality and religion. And she writes about the practical aspects of activism, such as how to do war tax resistance without going to prison, and the benefits of working in small groups. She ties it all together with humility, gratitude and a profound respect for life.

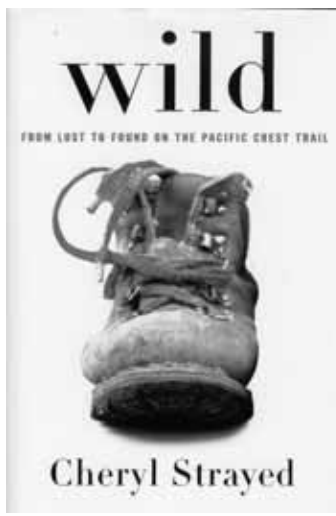
"I am and have always been spiritually called to join with others who are living and engaging in activism for a better world," she writes. "Doing nothing is less than effective. For me that is not an option." — *Ted Taylor*

### Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail

By Cheryl Strayed. Random House, \$25.95. Oprah's Book Club 2.0, No. 1 on The New York Times bestseller list.

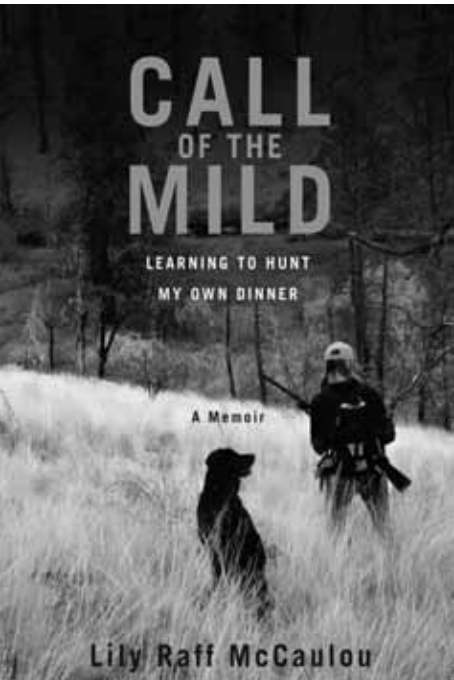
Dear Sugar, thank you for writing such an honest, funny, sad, infuriating and entertaining memoir. That's exactly what Cheryl Strayed, or has her legions of fans know her, *Dear Sugar* (her alias for an advice column on *The Rumpus*), has done with *Wild*. Now Strayed has a new fan pool, the rest of the world (and Oprah), for bringing readers along to share in her triumphs and shortcomings on her path to figuring out this crazy thing called life.

*Wild* bounces back and forth in space and time as Strayed doggedly walks the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), woefully unprepared, revisiting her past like a



detective looking for clues into her own psyche, finding meaning in her poverty-stricken and love-filled childhood in rural northern Minnesota, the death of her mother to cancer when Strayed was 22, a failed marriage before she was 25 to man she loved but not quite in the right way, her heroin-and-sex-fueled escapades in Portland and her forays into the Pacific Northwest wilderness to make sense of it all.

Strayed's youthful bravery is both exhilarating and frustrating. At the tender age of 25, the rookie hiker walked, stumbled, laughed and cried her way through the PCT, from the Mojave Desert through Oregon, ending poetically at the Bridge of the Gods over the Co-



## Meaty Tomes

Books on hunting your dinner

### CALL OF THE MILD: Learning to Hunt My Own Dinner

By Lily Raff McCaulou. Grand Central, \$24.99.

### MEAT EATER: Adventures from the Life of an American Hunter

By Steven Rinella. Spiegel and Grau, \$26.

The image many non-hunters have of hunters isn't pretty. Hunters are callous, camo-clad rednecks in big trucks, gun-nuts unconcerned about their prey and the environment in general. There are boorish hunters to be sure. But let's not forget, Steven Rinella (*American Buffalo*, *The Scavenger's Guide to Haute Cuisine*) tells us, that America's first conservationists were avid hunters. And — as Lily Raff McCaulou finds to her own amazement — becoming a hunter might make one a better environmentalist. Digging deeper, both agree that hunting has something to tell us about who we are and how we fit in with the world around us.

McCaulou, raised by uber-hippie parents in suburban Maryland, a stone's throw from Washington, D.C., is the epitome of the clueless urbanite when she ditches the glamour of the New York film industry to take a newspaper job in Bend in 2003. Assigned a rural beat, McCaulou stumbles onto a discovery: Hunters know an awful lot about the places they hunt. What's more, the hunters she meets evince a profound love for the animals they pursue and nature in general.

Soon, McCaulou herself is hunting, in order to build a connection to the Oregon country she's learning to love and, more importantly, to the food on her plate. Hunting proves no small challenge for a woman who doesn't know the front end of a deer track from the back, and who is so afraid of guns that she frets in *Call of the Mild* over even touching an unloaded rifle.

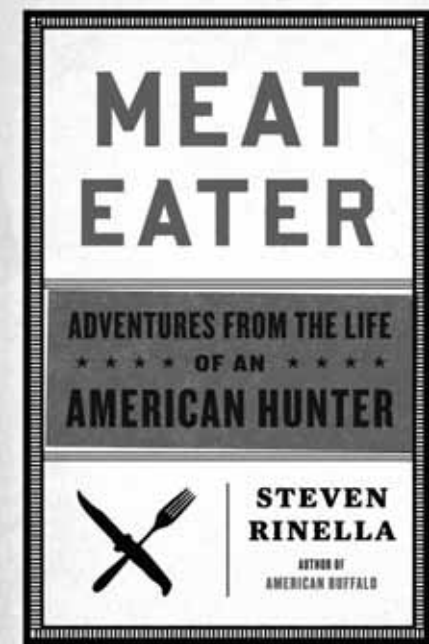
McCaulou doesn't just struggle with her fear of firearms. What kind of relationship does she want with nature? Does she have what it takes

to kill her own dinner? Finding out becomes gut wrenching when McCaulou faces a wave of deaths among her friends and family and draws connections between the lost lives of her loved ones and the wild animals she targets. Ultimately, she decides the connection hunting gives her to the food she eats and the place she lives — a connection missing in the prepackaged meat on grocery store shelves — is vitally important: "If humans stop hunting, we could lose some of our humanity."

Rinella is McCaulou's polar opposite: born into rural Michigan's hunting culture, a former professional trapper, author of two previous hunting books and host of two hunting-related cable TV shows. Though aware of the disdain that urban, agriculturally dependent society feels for hunters, Rinella doesn't need to discover that hunting is part of the primal human identity — that's where he starts out. He sees hunting, and writing about it, as "an act of guerrilla warfare against the inevitable advance of time," probing what it means to be a hunter in 11 episodes from a lifetime spent in the field. Most include "Tasting Notes" on an impressive variety of game, from squirrel and venison to beaver tail and cougar.

Where McCaulou's memoir is geared towards non-hunting readers — maybe to explain why a perfectly sensible liberal woman might embrace camouflage and pick up a gun — Rinella's is fully grounded in the genre of hunting stories, gritty and primal, perhaps exhaustively so to the non-initiated.

If you didn't guess from reading the title, *Meat Eater*, Rinella is unapologetically enthusiastic about turning animals into food. He doesn't shy away from the bloody underbelly of hunting, pondering the exhilaration of the kill, the metaphysics of the "right way" to kill and reconciling the hunter's "happiness over an animal's death with your sense of reverence for its life." By justifying the role of hunter in a modern world, he's arguing for protecting the remaining wildness in human nature against the creeping encroachment of civilization. While his philosophies might ring true for those comfortable with eating meat, they could be tougher to swallow for the animal rights crowd. — *Ephraim Payne*



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