

It's hard to believe. Condé Nast pulled the plug on Gourmet Magazine. The longest running show in food town is closing. And with it, an era comes to an end.

Here is what the website says: "Please be advised that Gourmet magazine will cease publication after the November issue.

"Subscribers can look forward to receiving Bon Appetit magazine for the remainder of their subscription. The Gourmet.com website will remain available during a transitional period, and access to Gourmet recipes will also remain available via sister site Epicurious.com."

That's it. It's over. The fat lady has sung. But she ate well, due in part to this publication.

Several months back, the corporate cost experts came in. That's never a good sign. After they left, four magazines including Gourmet were gone from the Condé Nast portfolio.

These folks publish some high line magazines: The New Yorker, Vogue and Vanity Fair for example.

Gourmet always epitomized elegance and sophistication in food and life style. It captured something to be and a way to approach it that left little compromise.

The same was true with its prose. Some of the best food writing and journalism came from the pages of Gourmet. It was the leader for years and was still part of the big three: Food and Wine, Bon Appetit and Gourmet. It's sister publication, Bon Appetit, will continue at this point.

Gourmet was first published in 1941. And over that last 70 years it has been held in the highest esteem in not only the food world but in publishing in general.

Gourmet had a centerfold. It was something to look forward to. It was instructions for an entire meal complete with pictures.

In recent years Gourmet lost some subscribers. It still had about a million at the end.

The real problem came in lost advertising revenue. Magazines are pretty to look at but not easy to use. Online editions are becoming more popular all the time. And Gourmet had addressed that, becoming much more active on its website.

The time was that no self respecting New York City restaurant did not have a listing in Gourmet. All the good ones did and some of not so good. There was page after page. And then followed the remainder of New York and then the rest of the country. New Yorkers tend to have that "us and everybody else" attitude.

Readers could plan where to go or fantasize about a trip by just reading about the food being served. And that was just the ads. The articles were even better.

Then came the monthly reviews. Three New York City restaurants were reviewed every month. Writers, like Jay Jacobs, told it like it was. His was a great style of prose.

It was a time when print journalism could make or break most anything. With a good review from Gourmet and The Times, a New York restaurant was on the map and for a long time. Now a blog can accomplish almost the same thing.

Gourmet's position was first eroded by other magazines. Besides the ones I mentioned, there are several. The best of the others is probably Saveur. Its style started a new trend in food magazines. It's full of pictures and has a flashy look that is quite appealing. The writing is pretty good, too.

Along with the damage from other magazines came the popularity of food television. Food TV is big business. It's big enough to have reruns on other channels.

Emeril started out as informational and evolved to basically entertainment. He and Mario Batali put their restaurants on the map with Food TV. "Molto Mario" is arguably the finest food show ever. It was superbly researched and excellently executed.

Tony Bourdain is an excellent writer. "No Reservations" may not be your style but it's well done. Ditto for "Bizarre Foods." Guy Fieri is entertaining and informative but you don't learn anything. The new kids on the block, like "At Home with the Neelys," don't come close.

There are spin-off shows like "Hell's Kitchen" and "Top Chef." "Iron Chef" started an avalanche. Alton Brown is a good guy and "Good Eats" can be excellent, especially if he is not in a cute phase. His suits on "Iron Chef America" don't hold a candle to Kaga's though.

From an advertising standpoint, the Internet is where we are going – if we aren't there already. So all print ads are down. Newspapers are in trouble if they are just a paper. The big papers are still OK. There's lots to write about. The locals are surviving but barely. They all have to become Internet savvy to make it.

All the above got Gourmet. Loss of income and high expenses made it happen - at least with the accountants. Condé Nast may improve their bottom line but not journalism.

Si Newhouse, owner of Condé Nast's parent, loses millions a year on The New Yorker. And it's money well spent. This magazine is a bastion of excellent writing and some of the best cartoons ever.

The New York Times called Gourmet "a Bible." That's right. The writing used to be that good and had begun to approach that again under Ruth Reichel.

Too bad Gourmet is gone. It's sad that Si the fourth didn't choose to keep it alive. The pen may be mightier than the sword. But it's still susceptible to the power of the greenback.

It's too bad and very sad indeed.