



Cooking for Picasso

Camille Aubray

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For readers of Paula McLain, Nancy Horan, and Melanie Benjamin, this captivating novel is inspired by a little-known interlude in the artist's life.

The French Riviera, spring 1936: It's off-season in the lovely seaside village of Juan-les-Pins, where seventeen-year-old Ondine cooks with her mother in the kitchen of their family-owned Cafe Paradis. A mysterious new patron who's slipped out of Paris and is traveling under a different name has made an unusual request to have his lunch served to him at the nearby villa he's secretly rented, where he wishes to remain incognito.

Pablo Picasso is at a momentous crossroads in his personal and professional life and for him, art and women are always entwined. The spirited Ondine, chafing under her family's authority and nursing a broken heart, is just beginning to discover her own talents and appetites. Her encounter with Picasso will continue to affect her life for many decades onward, as the great artist and the talented young chef each pursue their own passions and destiny.

New York, present day: Celine, a Hollywood makeup artist who's come home for the holidays, learns from her mother, Julie, that Grandmother Ondine once cooked for Picasso. Prompted by her mother's enigmatic stories and the hint of more family secrets yet to be uncovered, Celine carries out Julie's wishes and embarks on a voyage to the very town where Ondine and Picasso first met. In the lush, heady atmosphere of the Cote d'Azur, and with the help of several eccentric fellow guests attending a rigorous cooking class at her hotel, Celine discovers truths about art, culture, cuisine, and love that enable her to embrace her own future.

Featuring an array of both fictional characters and the French Riviera's most famous historical residents, set against the breathtaking scenery of the South of France, "Cooking for Picasso" is a touching, delectable, and wise story, illuminating the powers of trust, money, art, and creativity in the choices that men and women make, as they seek a path toward love, success, and joie de vivre.

Advance praise for "Cooking for Picasso"

Thrilling, fast-paced, and engaging, "Cooking for Picasso" is a novel that vividly portrays the South of France. Intrigue, art, food, and deception are woven together in a tale of love and betrayal around the life and legacy of Picasso. Touching and true, this well-written narrative made me long for my mother's coq au vin and for the sun of Juan-les-Pins. Jacques Pepin, chef, TV personality, author "From the Hardcover edition."

Cooking for Picasso Details

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From Reader Review Cooking for Picasso for online ebook

Mollie says

Aubrey's painterly writing style awakens the senses to the beauty of the South of France, to the sensuality of a multi flavored meal, to the brush caressing the canvas.

The reader is seduced by Picasso while being repelled by him at the same time. His story includes the effects of war and abusive relationships along with his passion for painting.

The author teases the reader with a mystery that, if solved, will be life-changing. How will betrayal and abuse affect the process? Will the solution, if found at all, come too late? The reader's only solution is to upkeep turning the page.

My one disappointment was that I found myself caring more about the grandmother..her character seemed more fleshed out. Since it was the granddaughter who was faced with solving the mystery, I wish I could have felt drawn to her.

Overall, in the "big picture," there is an art to writing and Cooking for Picasso is well framed.

I received this book through NetGalley.

Susan Heim says

"Cooking for Picasso" is a fascinating blend of fact and fiction. The author's imagining of what occurred during Picasso's stay in the French Riviera in the spring of 1936 felt compellingly real. Those few months had a lasting impact on Ondine, the seventeen-year-old who cooked for him, and the generations that followed. Although the parts about Ondine were my favorite, it was also a delight to read about her granddaughter's quest to find out more about Ondine's life. The characters were vividly realized and are still fresh in my mind after finishing the book. The scenery and the food were also deliciously portrayed. Readers will want to book a trip to Juan-les-Pins after reading this book! "Cooking for Picasso" is a sumptuous feast featuring France, food, and family -- an unforgettable combination. [I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher but was not obligated to write a review. All opinions are 100% my own.]

Nese says

I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads in exchange for a fair review. I was lost in the story and enjoyed reading this book so much that I could hardly put it down. Although I don't care for stories going back and forth in time, two parallel time lines expanding from 1936 to 2016, covering the lives of four generations of women, great grandmother, grandmother, mother, and the daughter, is done so skillfully and personality traits of each woman are portrayed so intimately, one feels like living events in the lives of the characters instead of reading them in the pages of a book. What is so exceptional is the way the complexities of the characters' personalities and the twists and turns of their lives are written. Normally the real life is so complex and so unpredictable that most novels don't come close to capturing the complexities of real life, unlike this book which does an amazing job of doing just that. The story telling, the

intricate details of the feelings of the characters, and psychologically consistent personality descriptions make this book a pleasure to read. While reading, I felt transported in time and place living the events right along with the characters in the book.

Cindy Burnett says

2.5

I want to start my review by saying that I expected to love this book. I loved the last series that this author wrote, writing as CA Belmond, starting with *A Rather Lovely Inheritance*. I also have a great fascination with art and artists so I fully expected that this would be the book for me. However, sadly it was not.

The story takes place across the decades, the modern story completely in 2016 and the historic part starting in 1936 until shortly before the main character in 2016 is born. Both women are weak and not very likeable. Celine, the main character in 2016, cannot even stand up to her step siblings and lets them ferry her own mother away (step mother to the step siblings) with hardly a word and no action. Meanwhile she goes to France with her aunt on a trip the sick mother was supposed to take. Huh?! Meanwhile back in the 1930's, Ondine vacillates between being free spirited as she engages in a relationship (if you can call it that) with Picasso and silly and lacking a backbone.

Another part of the story that did not ring true for me was the dialogue between Picasso and Ondine. It was awkward and stilted, and I just can't believe he spoke that way. Picasso was not portrayed kindly, and that viewpoint I did find more realistic. He struggled in his personal life, and the author portrays this accurately.

I am sorry I did not like this book more. Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for the opportunity to read it in exchange for an honest review.

Lorna says

Cooking for Picasso was a diversion that I enjoyed to take me to a place that I love, namely the beautiful French Riviera as the backdrop of the multigenerational saga of three women. At its heart is the young and spirited 16-year old Ondine helping out in her parents' restaurant Café Paradis where she cycles daily taking one of their spectacular luncheons to a mysterious guest from Paris, an artist who is going by his family name of Ruiz but is the famous Pablo Picasso. Ondine begins to prepare a cookbook with the recipes and notes of Picasso's comments to tweak the recipes with a Spanish twist to these traditional Provencal recipes. We also meet Celine as she comes to the Cote d' Azur to explore the mysteries of her grandmother Ondine and her mother Julie as she takes a cooking class in the village where her grandmother lived to try to resolve the mystery of whether Picasso painted a portrait of Ondine those many years ago. If you love art, the Cote d' Azur, Provencal cooking and a sweet story, this is it.

"For, no matter how many times I see this view, I still catch my breath at the way the Riviera's intense-but-soft sun fires up every color it touches to dazzling perfection: the pomegranate-red tiled roofs on candy-colored stone houses snuggled against terraced hills; the green of dense pine that clings to the shoreline and mountains; and most of all, blue--that infinite canopy of cobalt-blue sky over my head, and a wide-open aquamarine sea lapping at the shores, each reaching out to the other until they meet in a blurry watercolor

embrace at a violet-blue horizon."

Martie Nees Record says

The novel is actually two stories. Yes, it alternates in time but it also seems to be of two different genres; a romance novel and a historical fiction. One is narrated by a current day young American woman who goes to France to find a long lost treasure of her French grandmother's. She enrolls in a cooking class, finds love with a bad boy chef (who of course has a heart of gold like most romance novels dictate), while embarking on an utterly unrealistic adventure. It reads so saccharine I might never need to add sugar in my coffee again. I feel that the title belongs to the current day part of the book; a chick lit cooking/love blog.

The second and much more interesting story was narrated by the grandmother. As a seventeen year old girl she actually was cooking for Pablo Picasso. In 1936 Picasso left Paris for the French Riviera in order to escape his chaotic life caused by the friction between his wife and his mistress. And there was nothing Picasso loved more than pitting one of his women against the other. During his hiatus of Paris, the young budding chef also became his model and his lover. The author captures the artist's complete and total misogynist nature (and I read "The Private Journal of Fernande Olivier" who was one of his first loves.) The author did not exaggerate his brutish treatment of women. Aubray also gets into his genius which went hand in hand with his narcissism that fueled his behavior. But the grandmother's story is not really about the great artist. It's about a girl becoming a woman in wartime France, immigrating to America, and how her love of cooking good food encouraged her to discover her sensuality. Unlike many, she led a full life enabling her to die without regrets. Surely, such a story deserves a more serious title. (Feel free to visit my book review blog at <https://books6259.wordpress.com>)

Publishers: Random House

Publication Date: August 9, 2016

Paula Ackley says

I loved this book! Romance, mystery, family squabbles, picturesque France, and great food. Engrossing story, wonderful characters, great writing, and beautiful imagery all come together in one satisfying meal! The storyline goes back and forth between two characters and two timelines but they blend so well together like a flavorful stew. (Corny I know but "stew and meal" seem appropriate for this book). If you have the time curl up in your favorite chair, turn off the phone, have a glass of something at hand and don't forget the brioche! You are going to want to keep devouring Cooking for Picasso. Merci Camille Aubray for allowing me to read this wonderful story.

Leylak Dal? says

?çinde Picasso'nun çokca bahsi geçse de kurgu bir roman. Vakit geçirmek için uygun, fazla beklentiye girmeyin...

Julie Boudreau says

I had such a hard time putting this book down. although this book is technically fiction. It felt so real and informed that you want to believe it with everything you have. the author's ability to whisk you away into her own fantasy is uncanny. make sure you start reading this when you have no plans for the next say 12 hours.. because it is THAT good

Debra says

If you are a Francophile and food and art lover, you will adore *Cooking for Picasso* by Camille Aubray.

I received a free audio book from Blogging for Books for this review. All opinions, exclamations, gushings and rants are my own.

Let me just say that I didn't realize I would receive an audio book and was a bit disappointed when it came in the mail. My mood soon changed. Since it was the holiday season and I had no time to read, I popped the first CD in the car and I was soon hooked. (This unabridged version is 13 1/2 hours long.) The book is narrated by Mozhan Marno, an actress whom I was familiar with from *The Blacklist* and *House of Cards*. Her voice is so melodic that I was wishing my drive to work every morning would go on and on.

Aubray's tale is told from two points of view and covers three generations of women:

1. Ondine, first portrayed as a young woman whom we follow into her sixties.
2. Julie, Ondine's daughter.
3. Celine, Julie's daughter, a thirty-something Hollywood make-up artist.

The flashbacks of Grandmother Ondine's tale are told in third-person. Celine tells her story in first-person. The action of the novel swaps back and forth between Celine's modern world (set in New York, Nevada, and France) with Ondine's tale of the mid-thirties in the quaint village of Juan-les-Pins.

Where does Picasso figure into this tale? The young Ondine cooked for Picasso when he spent time on the Riviera. She starts out as a personal chef but is soon posing for Picasso.

Many years later, Ondine's granddaughter, Celine, treks to the same French town to seek the truth about her grandmother's connection with Picasso. She is also there to hopefully find a better life for her mother, Julie. Celine finds herself in an upscale cooking class (accompanied by her Aunt Matilda) taught by a Gordon Ramsey-like chef.

There are lots of French delicacies and good hearty peasant food in the novel, but it was hard for me to keep up with all the food as I was driving and listening. Honestly, as the intrigue and drama (and heartache) escalated in the novel, I found myself forgetting to notice the food as I was swept away by the story. (This tale is vast and encompasses 1936-2016 and settings of France, Monaco, Las Vegas, New York City, and New Rochelle.)

If you have a long drive ahead of you pick up this audio book. If you have a few days to spend on the French Riviera, you might also want to pick up the novel and become entranced with the lives of Ondine, Julie and Celine.

You can see my full review at [Cooking For Picasso: A Book Review](#)

Marjorie says

This book is a complete imagining of what might have transpired during a short period of Picasso's life. It's true that Picasso took some time away from society in Paris in the spring of 1936. He anonymously rented a villa in the French Riviera. He was going through some nasty marital problems (having a mistress didn't help there) and he hadn't been able to paint for months but that spring he was able to paint again. Most of Picasso's paintings referenced in the book are real except for one.

I had so believed that I would love this book. I find the art world a fascinating one and love to read about France. And French cooking – what's not to love? But I should have known better. I know the reputation Picasso has and feel rather dumb for thinking this would be a charming book actually about cooking for Picasso. Sure, the main character, Ondine, did cook for him but their relationship didn't stop there. He was 54 and she was only 17. I felt so let down when the story took this turn. It felt far too obvious to me and I had hoped that this would be a different type of book. Apparently, cooking for Picasso = modeling for Picasso = sleeping with Picasso. What else is a young girl to do being around such a great artist? Ho hum.

Of course, there's much more to the story than that. There's also the story of Ondine's granddaughter, Celine, who, when she learns that her grandmother once cooked for Picasso, decides to visit the place where Picasso and Ondine met, sort out a fight for an inheritance and search for a possibly missing painting. And there are lovely descriptions of France and its cooking. But although parts of the book were in fact as charming as I had thought they would be, it wasn't enough to save this one for me.

I did enjoy looking at the photos on the author's website at www.camilleaubray.com of the places that inspired some of the locations in her book.

This audio book was given to me by the publisher through Blogging for Books in return for an honest review.

erica says

I really wanted to like this book. It had all of the elements I like: France, art, cooking, and a mystery. But overall the book was just ok. The storyline was just too unbelievable with way too many coincidences. Sigh.

Mary says

This was a wonderful story. Told in 2 timelines, we have Ondine in the 1930's in a lovely seaside town in France. She is willful, and not satisfied with what life has handed to her. Her fiancée disappears while trying to raise money to marry her, and she slaves at her parents' cafe, hoping he'll return, and that her life will be different one day. Picasso is in hiding in that town, and she takes him lunch daily and a relationship develops. I have to say this. The sexual relationship made me feel a bit "icky". Ondine is, after all, only 17. The fact that she was not a virgin is the only thing that made me not throw up when the old man takes her as his lover. Although it still made me feel kind of dirty. He really was horrible to women, and the author was brutally honest about that. That being said, Ondine's eventual pregnancy is what made the whole book work.

Her granddaughter Celine is in the current story line, and she is trying to save her mother from her horrible siblings greedy grasp as well as trying to find a priceless painting of Ondine painted and "gifted" (for lack of a better word) by Picasso himself.

There are some parallels with me and this book. I am also embroiled in a legal battle with my siblings over custody of my mother who is in a nursing home. I also happened to grow up in beautiful New Rochelle, NY. I love to cook and dream of living in a lovely seaside town someday. These things made this book more personal for me. Ah, if I only had a hidden Picasso somewhere to solve my problems and rescue my "Maman" sigh.... :)

The older storyline was my favorite. I loved Ondine and her passionate love for Luc and little Julia, and for her cooking. Aubray's writing is really good, the descriptions brought everything alive for me, fragrances, tastes, emotions. Her characters were all wonderful in their own way. Celine's storyline was definitely more modern, and vaguely reminded me of "Stephanie Plum meets Gordon Ramsey". Hers had more humor, more sass.

I really loved this one.

Jordan says

This is the story about two women of the same family, living in different times and separate continents, who are connected by blood in history. The narration alternates between 17-year-old Ondine, a cook at her family's café in a small town on the French Riviera in 1936, and Celine, Ondine's granddaughter, who lives in present day California and learns from her ailing mother that Grandma Ondine once cooked exclusively for the great and notorious Picasso. With her mother's health in rapid decline, Celine finds herself traveling to the small town of Juan-les-Pins, France, in hopes to uncover the mysteries of her family's history and determine what part the great painter, if any, played in her grandmother Ondine's life and legacy.

This was my first introduction to author, Camille Aubray, and I was pleased to find she is an absolutely exquisite writer. I listened to the audio version of 'Cooking for Picasso' on CD and it was such a beautiful and relaxing experience that I was truly sad when the book was over. I primarily listen to audiobooks while driving in my car and I found myself purposefully taking longer routes and remaining in my vehicle even after reaching my destination in order to continue listening to this eloquent novel. Aubray's descriptive style and attention to detail made me feel like I was on holiday in the French Riviera, at a café in a little seaside village, enjoying authentic French cuisine, cooked to order and prepared with love.

My boyfriend is an inspiring chef who recently returned to school for a degree in culinary arts and he listened to most of this book along with me (which isn't at all typical behavior for him) and he was completely captivated by all the references to food preparation and cooking and all the detailed descriptions of French meals and the ingredients included to make them, as was I.

Overall, this book was an absolute joy and I feel I must give credit not only to the author, but also to the talented narrator, Mishandled Marino, who did a wonderful job giving voice to these three-dimensional, complex, characters and really bringing the story to life. The only complaint I have is a very minor one and more of a technical issue than one with the writing itself and that is that I felt like the narration speed was extremely slow and I would have liked the narrator to pick up the pace significantly because at times it felt like it was being read in slow motion to me. However, after a while I was able to adjust, somewhat, but I normally get my audio books from Audible, where I have the option of adjusting the narration speed and I normally set it to x1.5 or x2, when listening. But again, that is just a personal preference and, of course, no

fault of the authors so it did not affect my ratings for this book to which I happily gave five out of five stars! I highly recommend this book, especially to those readers who enjoy beautifully descriptive writing, art lovers, or "foodies."
Bon appéti!

I received a complimentary copy of 'Cooking for Picasso' from Blogging for Books in exchange for my honest, unbiased review.

Liz says

One of my regrets was not taking an art appreciation class in college. So, I have a thing for novels about artists. This book alternates between two time periods. The first is 1936 in Juan-les-Pins during the time Picasso was creating his Minotaur series. The second is modern day, as the granddaughter of the cook researches the prior period.

It helps to have access to visuals. Thank God for Google and being able to view the paintings in question. It's almost a shame novels like this can't include pictures of the art.

At first, Ondine, the main character, seems to be more conduit than real person. She is the eyes into Picasso's life, but she seems almost two dimensional. At the beginning, the author does a better job describing the meals than her thoughts. It's not until she becomes the subject of his paintings that her thoughts become meaningful and she seems real.

The second story of Ondine's granddaughter, also takes a while to become interesting. But a siblings' fight over their parents' finances rang very true. And at that point, as Celine goes on the hunt for her grandmother's story and possible treasure, the plot line picks up.

A recurring theme is the lack of equality between the sexes. Picasso was not a believer in women as equals and saw them solely as a means to satisfy his needs. Pure and simple, he was a misogynist. To quote him "your job is to remain by my side, to devote yourself to me and the children. Whether it makes you happy or unhappy is no concern of mine." Celine's father is worse, as he is also abusive.

Once things get going, this is a fast and easy read, a little heavy on coincidences. I can't say that it totally grabbed me. It was the kind of book you didn't regret having to put down.

My thanks to netgalley and RH Ballantine for an advance copy of this book.
