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At forty-three, Myriam has been a wife, mother, and lover—but never a restaurateur. When she opens Chez Moi in a quiet neighborhood in Paris, she has no idea how to run a business, but armed only with her love of cooking, she is determined to try. Barely able to pay the rent, Myriam secretly sleeps in the dining room and bathes in the kitchen sink, while struggling to come to terms with the painful memories of her past. But soon enough her delectable cuisine brings her many neighbors to Chez Moi, and Myriam finds that she may get a second chance at life and love. Redolent with the sights, smells, and tastes of Paris, *Chez Moi* is a charming story that will appeal to the many readers who fell in love with Joanne Harris's *Chocolat* and Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*.

Chez Moi Details

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From Reader Review Chez Moi for online ebook

Megan Bozzelli says

I have to agree with another reviewer. Sometimes this book was a little tedious. I wanted Miriam to just get over her insecurities and live! but there were moments of beauty in the book and passages I would underline and reread if it weren't a library copy.

Clare says

I forced myself to finish this book and then was mad at myself that I wasted so many minutes of my life. Perhaps if I read it in French? Nah. It's just depressing.

A woman gives birth to her son, adores him instantly, and then her husband slaps her across the face. (Ok, that's weird enough.)

Then she goes into a post-partum depression that lasts 14 years (!), until she has sex with her son's friend, and he catches them. Ok.

Then she runs away and cooks for the circus. Ok.

Then she decides to open her restaurant and it does badly until a young man helps her cook and market it. When her picture gets in the paper, her son finds her again and she gives up the restaurant. Wha?

Plus it's a very non-linear story, and you know that's not me.

Ruthie says

The blurb on the back cover compared this to Atonement - someone should be shot! A dull self-indulgent read. WOP - waste of paper!

joyce g says

Wish she could find more happiness within her life.

Jeniel says

I could not relate to Myraim at all. She seemed like a person who did not even try to enjoy anything in her life. She over-thought everything that happened to her and seemed happy to let others run her life. She did not seem to really have a passion for anything and I thought she was pathetic. Some of the writing was really

extraordinary and that was what kept me reading. I was hoping that it would get better but it never did.

Ilona says

I absolutely adored this book. I would read it again, just for the pleasure of the lush stream of metaphors that comprise the bulk of Myriam's thinking.

And at the same time, I was stunned by the enormous, gaping holes in the story. Most jarring was the complete lack of explanation for the event that jolted her from her marriage and estranged her from her son. Why did that happen? What on earth was the young man's motivation for his horrifically destructive actions? No idea. The event was simply described in a few short sentences.

Yet, somehow, despite what felt like an egregious oversight, the book drew me in. I had to accept that the event had happened -- and that I'd never know why. With that event established, Myriam's trajectory was set, and the story unfolded from there. I shook my head, even rolled my eyes at times, at her self-destructive impulsiveness. But she is who she is, the pivotal event was what it was.

The surrounding characters were more types than fully-rounded human beings, and yet they were pleasing types.

So. Giant hole in plot. Occasionally annoying, and generally not quite sane, main character. Supporting cast not fully developed. Motivations for actions often completely lacking.

And yet. And yet, the book drew me in. Pulled me along. Engaged me. Kept me curious. Made me care.

And in the end, gave Myriam as close to a happy ending as her faults and foibles will allow her.

Quirky and engaging.

Judy says

I've been eyeing this book on my overflowing bookshelf for the longest time, and finally just pulled it out and read it. This book is definitely written in a style some folks would not appreciate. There's not a great deal of action, only a handful of characters, and the story unfolds somewhat by stream of consciousness from the inner thoughts of Myriam. She is a very unusual character, and yet not so entirely unlike the rest of us. Some things in her life went well, some went very very badly. Some expectations she had were never fulfilled. At the beginning of the story she is emotionally and socially crippled, I would say, but she is at a point where she has finally decided to take some actions and create a new life for herself by opening a restaurant. It all unfolds from there. She meets people, she creates amazing meals, and surprises herself by making friends and becoming part of a community. She is still haunted by past mistakes, but this is a story of movement, the movement through life and the twists and turns it can take, and how even someone as sad and damaged as Myriam can start over, pick up the pieces, and find some peace. I found it to be a sad story, and yet hopeful...

Michelle says

Amie sent me this book awhile back and I have to say it was fun reading a book with the same title as my blog!

Myriam is a 43-year-old woman who lost her maternal love for her child when he was 3 days old. Years later, she left her family, worked for a time as a cook for a circus, and then opened a small Parisian restaurant called Chez Moi. The portions of the book that deal with her son and her past were somewhat difficult for me to read, if only because I didn't completely relate to her, but the writing has a light touch that keeps the subject matter from plunging into despair.

I much preferred the portions of the book having to do with her restaurant and cooking, and especially the characters that crop up at the restaurant. Ben is completely lovable, even though he says he has no love in his life.

In all, a quick, fun read (a few instances of language).

Merkurius says

Som en fransk motsvarighet till "Små citroner gula". Boken genomsyras av en väldigt behaglig ton och det är svårt att inte bli hungrig av att läsa om alla läckerheter i boken. Mysig!

Bree says

I think sometimes we review books based on the actual merits of the book...is the grammar correct? Do they use the words cold and hard to describe the main character 500 times too many? Are the sentences perfectly formed or can a high school student create more interesting sentences and plot devices? But sometimes there are certain books that we love because they speak to us. We relate on some level with the characters in the story. It's subjective and unquantifiable. Yes the book is written well, but goshdarnit I totally get what the characters are thinking, what they are going through, what they want, what they dream and what they fear. I relate to Myriam on so many levels, her thought processes, the way she feels about the inevitability of the consequences of life, I have loved who I shouldn't and haven't loved who everyone thought I should. I may not like everything about her. I may even be uncomfortable with the nature of her sins. In fact i think its the only drawback of the story...it was so difficult to get past her ultimate sin even though the revelation is only dwelled on for maybe 5 pages. But I hear her inner thoughts, her pain, her doubt, her confusion, her joy and I felt like I was reading my own. I loved Myriam's voice and in the end this is why I loved the book. This may be subjective, but I think it also smacks of damn good writing.

Maria says

En intressant skildring av ett moderskap, en katastrof och vägen tillbaka.

Jen says

Couldn't finish this one. Some of the words I saw in reviews for this book were "tender" and "profound." I

disagree. I thought it was self-indulgent, myopic and whiny. Oh, Myriam had beautiful ways of looking at things. She could wax eloquent about food and herbs growing in a garden, but couldn't find it in herself to love her own son. I was trying to stick it out, but when she was able to feel all that maternal love for a child not her own--that was the last straw. Wallow in self-pity all you like, my dear, but I am done reading about it.

Thyago | MrsMargotBlog says

Este livro ensinou-me uma grande lição, não desistir do livro por mais arrastada e lenta esteja a ser o seu início, confesso que estive quase a desistir, mas se o fizesse não iria perceber realmente do que trata o livro. Desengane-se quem como eu julga o livro pela capa, esta não é uma história chick-lit, na verdade é um drama, a história de uma mulher que sofreu de depressão pós-parto, que a deixou num estado de profunda dormência, sem conseguir amar e cometeu erros graves.

Erros que a levaram a viver na rua, ser cozinheira num circo e agora estar arriscar a abrir o seu pequeno restaurante (onde vive também).

Muitas vezes a leitura do livro é lenta, arrastada, com demasiadas “palavras caras” e muita divagação, que eu acho que foi propositado devido às questões mentais e ao facto de ser uma leitora.

Não foi uma leitura fácil, mas teve vários momentos que eu gostei, sobretudo quando apareceu Ben na vida de Myriam e gostei muito do final, apesar de apressado foi bem decente para esta história.

Lena Ragneskog says

Jättemysig bok som väcker mycket tankar. Vackert språk och intressant skriven. Rekommenderas!

Smirking says

I am and have always been a foodie. I love trying new things, new recipes included, quite regularly. I perhaps learned this from my father who was always trying new recipes, so much so that we never really had the same thing twice. Sometimes books and food collide. Not in the I got jam all over my copy of *Pride and Prejudice*, but that you have a book all about food. Sometimes if you are lucky you get recipes (Like *Water For Chocolate*) and the way food is used in the story is unique. The food becomes another character. It helps tell the story. It advances the plot. Maybe this is why I love books such as *Like Water For Chocolate*, *Chocolat*, *Mistress of Spices*, *Julie and Julia*, and *The Kitchen God's Wife*.

Chez Moi was one of those books that got me with its cover. It's a simple cover, the front of a café, but it was enough to get me to pick it up at the Library book sale. The back snippet reads a bit like *Chocolat* and there are some obvious comparisons. Myriam is a 43 year old woman whose life has certainly had its ups and downs. Wanting to start life again and find something she feels has been missing for so long she sets up a small café on a quiet part of Paris, funded by a bank loan she obtained using forged documents. She uses every bit of money she can into this endeavor, so much so that she lives in the restaurant as well.

Cooking is what Myriam knows. She finds a peace in cooking that she cannot seem to find anywhere else in her life. When she feeds her guests she is feeding them part of her soul because that is what went into her cooking. She lays it all out there in the kitchen, hopes, dreams, wants, expectations. And then she creates an amazing meal. For a time she finds herself, finds solace. And then the meal is done. Soon her small café is

filled with customers and maybe, just maybe, she will find what she has been looking for all this time and get a second chance.

Things I liked: Myriam has made many mistakes, mistakes that haunt her still. She is a flawed character in exile. When we meet her she has nothing left. She is broken, struggling to come to terms with her past, who she is, and what she wants. The restaurant and the food grow as she does.

It's written in the stream of consciousness style as we listen to Myriam's thoughts and motivations. There is no exciting plot, but the story of a woman who has lost much and is trying to find her place in the world and reconnect with it all. As I said Myriam is flawed as is her storytelling. Sometimes you don't like her and you are not sure if you can trust her at all. But that is why I kind of liked it. Sometimes the best narrators are ones that leave you questioning their motives or the truth of anything they are saying. It's a nice little character study of a woman who seems as real as both you and I. I am not perfect and neither is Myriam. I love that she is gifted in the kitchen but kind of sucks at life. She doesn't know about budgets, bills, or even running her restaurant, but she can make food that will keep you coming back. I love that she wants a kids menu that is grown up food not watered down "kiddie" food.

The secondary characters in this novel are charming as well. Sometimes more so than Myriam. Ben, is an idealistic orphan who helps Myriam with her bills and becomes her first waiter. In him she sees a lot of her past and comes to terms with it. Her neighbor, the florist from next door, is awkward and a bit odd and I love the pair of schoolgirls she basically feeds for free.

As the novel continues and we learn more about Myriam's past and where she has been since she left her husband and son. She spends time as a cook for a small traveling circus. We discover she was never really comfortable being a mother and a wife, that years ago she shut down all parts of her emotional self. The writing is interesting as it really is stream of consciousness in the way the story is told. At times the prose is descriptive, languid almost and then other times short and abrupt. It really depends on Myriam's mood really. While this is interesting it was also a bit unbalanced for me. Which brings me to...

Things I didn't like so much: I love the focus on food, but I couldn't help but make comparisons to other foodie books that I have read in the past and this one didn't hit with me on every level as the others did. It can be a bit slow as there is no real plot. It's a character study. I found myself reading a couple of chapters and then putting it down for a couple of days while I read another book. I did keep coming back to it though and ultimately I did finish it.

I think my biggest problem is I never really connected with Myriam. I didn't understand her. I couldn't relate to her the way I wanted to. Though I totally understand the themes of coming to terms with yourself and your past, she is a bit too odd for me, a bit too distant, a bit too...I don't know. I was on her side for a good deal of it because this is a new, on a journey Myriam instead of the woman she once was (who I could not get behind). But the choices she makes...ugh. I don't know. I really wanted to like this book far more than I did.

Buy or Borrow: Borrow. In the end this was not for me, but I would still recommend it as it is a different sort of story.

Part of: Stand Alone

Also Recommended: Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel, Chocolat by Joanne Harris, Mistress of Spices by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Julie and Julia by Julia Powell, and the Kitchen God's Wife by Amy Tan