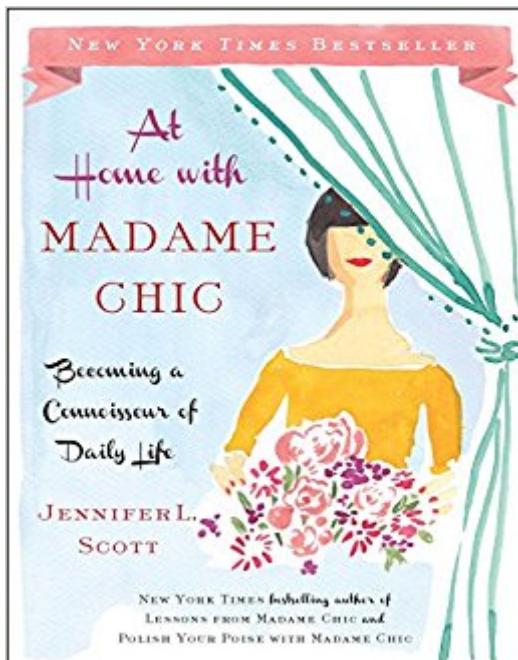


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At Home With Madame Chic: Becoming A Connoisseur Of Daily Life



Synopsis

Approach life at home the Madame Chic way: a beautiful, illustrated toolbox of tips and ideas for organizing, entertaining, and savoring a stylish life. When she arrived at Madame Chic's Parisian apartment as a foreign exchange student, Jennifer Scott was a casual California girl who thought sweatpants were appropriate street attire. Madame Chic took Jennifer under her wing and tutored her in the secrets of how the French elevate the little things in life to the art of living. Years later, Jennifer was back in California with a husband, two young daughters, a dog, and her first home. Every day she confronted mundane duties like folding laundry and unloading the dishwasher, and she began to think about Madame Chic's home: "how the breakfast table was set beautifully the night before, the music that always played in the background, the calm of Madame and Monsieur Chic's ritual cocktail hour together. Jennifer wanted that life. She decided to see what would happen if she didn't perform her chores impatiently or mindlessly, if, instead, she could live like Madame Chic. *At Home with Madame Chic* reveals the secrets to having a happy, fulfilling, and passionate life at home. Jennifer explains the morning send-off need not be chaotic, it's possible to look stylish with minimal time and effort, a little forethought makes it possible to serve a home-cooked dinner every night, and details like music and scented candles can set the tone for the whole family's evening. Organized by the pleasures that can be found throughout the day, this charming, helpful book is full of ideas, playlists, recipes, beauty routines, and advice that can turn an irritating day into an enjoyable experience.

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Customer Reviews

I should begin by saying that I loved Jennifer's first book, *Lessons from Madame Chic: 20 Stylish Secrets I Learned While Living in Paris*. And after my first two reads through it I discovered her blog, *The Daily Connoisseur*, which I have read fairly frequently in the last few years (and which I also love.) Jennifer's first book was my first foray into "how the French live" literature, and certainly the best. To come to the realization that it was "normal" somewhere else in the world (France or otherwise) to cultivate daily beauty, find balance, enjoy the small things, find pleasure in great food, (really the list could go on and on) was entirely new to me! It was certainly a lightbulb moment! And in the last few years I have been (slowly) applying so much of her advice: always trying to dress my best, a 10 item wardrobe, savoring high quality things instead of focusing on quality, etc...I cannot even describe how excited I was when I found out that this book was coming out! A book all about applying these principles not only to your life, but specifically to your home and daily routines? I couldn't wait and purchased it on pre-order immediately. At first blush, I wasn't sure how I would actually end up feeling about the book. The introduction didn't seem to really fit to me. The word "chic" is repeated so many times and I left this section feeling like the author was pressured into making the connection between her first book and this book. Personally, I feel the book would have been better off with just a light sense of connection between the two. The author's blog has certainly grown beyond just learning about "madame chic" (as lovely and worthy of learning about as she seems to be!) and this book has done the same. The focus on this is less on learning lessons from another culture, and more about learning how to be your own daily connoisseur of life! After the introduction, the book is broken into two sections: Part 1: *Chez Vouz* and Part 2: *Les Routines De La Journee*. The first section was lovely. The French Connection (chapter 1) was interesting enough and I certainly love this quote which set the tone for the entire book, "... they are in on the secret that a passionately pleasant home life sets you up for a very happy life in the outside world." Yes! That is precisely what I would say this book is about: how to have a passionate and pleasant home life all while enjoying the process. The following two chapters of the first section, "Fall in Love with Your Home Again", and "Clutter" both set the tone of the book, disperse many wonderful tips and guides, and truly get to the heart of the book: Loving what you have, being in the moment, cultivating beauty in the every day, and learning to find balance. However, to me, it was the second section of the book (and the last 75% of the book) that really shined. Divided into three sections: The Pleasures of the Morning, the Pleasures of the Afternoon, and the Pleasures of the Evening. Jennifer walks us

through the three phases of each "mundane" day and teaches how to truly find passion, beauty, mindfulness, and joy in the little details. After all, as Charles Eames has said, "The details are not the details. They make the design." Starting with ways to wake up with a grateful and peaceful mindset and moving through all of the major as well as minor details of the day from washing dishes, balancing work and home life, entertaining, self-care, beauty routines, family time, and all the way to getting ready for bed. This book is literally chocked full with wonderful ideas, beautiful quotes, and so much inspiration! And yet, despite how much content their is, each section has just enough discussion and depth and all somehow flow together beautifully. As a brief list here are some of the topics covered:

HOME:-How to fall back in love with your home-How to make your powder room inviting for guests-Cleaning lists for stay-at-home or work-at-home moms-Separate cleaning lists for working people-The best house plants for your home (based on amount of work & light needed)-How to fold a towel (I actually loved this! I had never heard of this way =))-How to keep your home de-cluttered and well organized

THE PLEASURES OF THE MORNING:-Waking up peacefully-Finding balance with technology, media, & news-Affirmations-Candle scent & music selections for the morning-Gratefulness-Ten Item Wardrobe Lists FOR EACH SEASON! (These were wonderful, simple, and yet perfectly detailed!)-Three different makeup routines-Ten different easy and yet elegant hair styles (directions, no pictures, although very easy to understand)-Getting ready suggestions for working women-Music selections for the morning commute-Five morning drink/smoothie recipes-Discussion around elevenses, brunch, and other casual entertaining-Exercise as a part of life-Mindfulness

THE PLEASURES OF THE AFTERNOON:-Music & candle scent selections for the afternoon-Discussion around working from home-Bringing beauty to your home (or work) office-Lunch & Still Moments-After school schedules & finding the balance with enrichment activities for children-Beating the energy slumps-Decluttering chalenge-Natural cleaner recipe-Menu Planning-Afternoon Past times-Preparing Dinner-Signature Dishes (& creating your own signature recipe book)-7 Recipes for afternoon entertaining (casual to more formal)-Outings-Mail & paying the bills-Afternoon tea with a lengthy tea guide giving directions on what times of the day for each tea and how to serve them-Casual & formal get-togethers as well as afternoon tea-parties-Discussion about television-Getting through a difficult day-Commute home (including music selections)-Meditation

THE PLEASURES OF THE EVENING:-Cocktail Hour-Werewolf (Games to Play with friends)-Music & candle scent selections for the evenings-Dinner-Making takeout chic-Using your best everyday-Low key dinner party-Recipe for flour-less chocolate cake-Changing People (or why not to)-The Arts (including specific tips for arts fro the stay-at-home mom)-Cleanup time-Family Time-Children's bedtime routine-Evening tidying

up-Evening grooming (including instructions for skin care, home manicures, home pedicures, and overnight hair treatments.)-Exfoliating body scrub recipe-Pleasure-Still moments and winding downThese topics are all interestingly discussed. Quite welcomed are the stories and experiences (including some of the blunders and falters) Jennifer shares from her and friend's lives. How refreshing it was to hear her slip ups, times that she has nagged, and little struggles with parenting. It certainly makes this feel relatable and gave me a sense of, "I have bath time struggles with our little one as well! If she can find time to cultivate (beauty, the arts, etc ...) then perhaps I can as well!"While you could likely read about all of these topics online, it's the author who really make these work. Her experience with applying things she has learned from travel, reading, her own growing up life, and other experiences and being very honest with what does work and what does not resonates. But beyond that it is her message: that the details do matter, that you can have joy in the every day, that you don't need to feel guilty for eating but should find pleasure instead, that you are beautiful, and that life is worth cultivating is what truly stands out.My greatest regret with this book was reading it much too quickly. So much for learning how to be mindful. =) However, I look forward to the many re-readings I will not only savor, but also apply. I already know our home and life will be so much richer for reading it.I will end this review with a wonderful quote from the end of the book:"Your home is more than just a shelter. It is more than just a place to showcase your design skills. It is more than just a means to an end ... It is the most important place of your life. It provides you solace and refuge from the harsh world. It provides tangible comforts ... But it also provides other comforts in the energy it gives off ... And even though over the years I've lived in everything from a cramped dorm room at school to a grand apartment in Paris and finally to our family town home in Santa Monica, I have taken the soul of the home with me, wherever I am."

This is a sweet, earnest book with practical advice, engaging personal anecdotes and absolutely beautiful artwork and design. I enjoyed the author's writing style and hearing about her life and ideas for adding simple pleasures to everyday life. I also read her first book, so I was excited to see what she would write about next.The main drawback of the book is that it is really geared toward women like Jennifer -- stay-at-home moms. I'm not a stay-at-home mom, so much of the book didn't directly apply to me. For example, the entire section about "the pleasures of the afternoon," offers very little for people who have full-time jobs outside of the home or who don't have kids. Jennifer suggests taking up a hobby, sitting down to read a book for enjoyment or driving to the coast and watching the waves as an afternoon break. I could never do any of these things during the afternoon with my work schedule. I wish she could have talked to some of her working friends and

made suggestions for what working people can do during the workday to lift our spirits (because we certainly need help with that too). At the end of this section, she includes a music list for the evening commute, which was weird, because the rest of the section doesn't directly apply to people with full-time jobs. I was thinking, what about the rest of the afternoon, besides the commute? Aren't there any tips for us? Maybe her editor could have suggested more content for a wider audience, besides stay-at-home moms with young kids. I was also a little put off by the sample chore schedule she suggested. I doubt I'll ever vacuum or mop the bathroom floor and clean the tub before going to work, as she suggests. For people who have full-time jobs, it makes more sense to do some of these things on the weekend. As I was reading her suggested chore schedule, I felt like, "Oh no, now I'm going to feel guilty for not doing MORE work during the work week than I already do, and I already feel like I have too much to do." Her suggestion for prepping the week's meals on Monday afternoon was another example of how her mindset is geared toward stay-at-home moms. It would be nice if there could have been more realistic alternatives included for people who are not at home during the day, or maybe the publisher could have written the back cover copy so it's more clear that the book is mostly for stay-at-home moms. Even so, this was truly an enjoyable read. Her ideas are simple, and it's still reaffirming to think about them. I'll probably read this book more than once, when I need a little pick me up, because it is beautiful and thoughtful and enjoyable. I just wish that more of the content applied to me.

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