



Apron Anxiety: My Messy Affairs In and Out of the Kitchen

Alyssa Shelasky

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Apron Anxiety is the hilarious and heartfelt memoir of quintessential city girl Alyssa Shelasky and her crazy, complicated love affair with...the kitchen.

Three months into a relationship with her TV-chef crush, celebrity journalist Alyssa Shelasky left her highly social life in New York City to live with him in D.C. But what followed was no fairy tale: Chef hours are tough on a relationship. Surrounded by foodies yet unable to make a cup of tea, she was displaced and discouraged. Motivated at first by self-preservation rather than culinary passion, Shelasky embarked on a journey to master the kitchen, and she created the blog Apron Anxiety (ApronAnxiety.com) to share her stories.

This is a memoir (with recipes) about learning to cook, the ups and downs of love, and entering the world of food full throttle. Readers will delight in her infectious voice as she dishes on everything from the sexy chef scene to the unexpected inner calm of tying on an apron.

Apron Anxiety: My Messy Affairs In and Out of the Kitchen Details

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From Reader Review Apron Anxiety: My Messy Affairs In and Out of the Kitchen for online ebook

Liz says

It's an ok read. I found it hard to care for the main character. She moved to D.C. to follow her boyfriend, a hard-working Chef (Spike Mendelsohn, though he's not mentioned by name--I googled it), who is opening a new business and has lots of commitments, and doesn't have time for Alyssa. She, after abandoning her life in NYC, leaving her job, family, and friends behind, is all of a sudden very surprised that Chef doesn't spend every minute of his waking hours with her. She is, subsequently, going through a crisis and decides to try her hand in cooking. Most of the recipes are borrowed from other sources and quite frankly uninspired. So, why should I care? Well, I don't. Beach or airport book at best.

Jamie says

Messy indeed, and delicious in texture and flavor, this not-quite-foodie memoir packs a solid punch with alternating blasts of humor and pathos. The story winds and weaves through good days and bad that are filled with friends, family, food, and all manners and degrees of love. This is not a "read at the beach" lightweight of a narrative, but rather a serious contender full of serious insight and comprehensive diagnoses of what makes us tick, what makes life worth living (and possible to survive), and how to navigate between the two. Although the first few chapters hit overbearingly hard on the "I was never really interested in food, beyond the actual act of consuming it" note, once Shelasky finally decides that we've gotten the message, she leans in and kneads out the story. As an extra bonus, the star dishes of the stories make a second appearance in complete recipe form at the end of each chapter. Fantastic wordplay, clever prose, entertaining anecdotes, and a cardio-healthy pace work together to shape a scrumptious concoction of a life fueled, in so many ways, by the simplest and most basic of propellants - food. Grab a slice of cheese toast and enjoy!

This book was won from the publisher through the Goodreads First Reads program. Thank you!

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Because I received a copy of this from the publisher, I am reviewing it the same week it comes out! While I was given a copy for free, I wasn't asked for anything (nor did I ask for a copy!), so these are my honest thoughts.

Anyone who knows my feelings on memoirs should understand that four stars is no slight praise for Alyssa Shelasky. After all, I almost gave up in chapter 2, which I will refer to as the "name dropping chapter," where she talks about her days (more often: nights) as a writer for various well-known TV networks and fashion/entertainment magazines in New York. It is shallow, it is silly, and I found her incredibly annoying.

Without that contrast, I think you wouldn't get a chance to understand how she grows. Alyssa had a relationship with a fairly known 'celebrity' chef (I'll let you Google it since in the book she refers to him as Chef), one taking her from her comfort zone and dumping her into a solitary existence in DC as he rode the swell of fame to opening several restaurants. It is an isolation that anyone living with a restaurant person would know well.

She has to go through a journey to find herself, to find happiness but also just a hobby, and food becomes her salvation. The fact that she'd never cooked in her life makes the story more charming, and it helps that she has no problem making public mistakes. It started with her blog, Apron Anxiety, and turned into this book. I don't often laugh when I'm reading, but her description of her first meal for Chef had me giggling.

It isn't just that she learns about food. Any tedious journalism major could go through that journey, and the potential for an inauthentic experience is what I was fearing when I started the book. I felt her personal journey to be far less shallow than she appeared toward the beginning, and she learned to get to know people who she had originally dismissed, and to stand up for what she needed from her life.

There are recipes throughout this that make for a feel-good read, as if the reader could recreate moments that were meaningful for the author. And... yeah, I might need to make that tomato soup.

A few bits from the end:

"You learn that there's nothing bad about feeling safe and there's everything good about inner stillness; and above all, just because you're an extraordinary person who deserves extraordinary love, it can't come at the expense of everything else that makes you whole."

"Everyone cooks for matters of the heart. We're all in the kitchen because it fulfills a longing inside, whether it's for grace, survival, a renewed sense of self, or just the thrill of it all - these are the stories that get us there, keep us there, or sometimes take us away. But without the people who have moved us, pushed us, left us, maybe even hurt us, then really, it's only food."

Laurie Gold says

"Alyssa Shelasky's memoir thoroughly details her childhood within a rather bohemian family, the subsequent death of one of her close friends on September 11th, her experiences as a celebrity journalist in New York and Los Angeles, her love life, and how she transformed from a woman who never cooked into a foodie and amateur cook. The book includes recipes, often reprinted from other sources, which nonetheless sound tasty. Her growth as a foodie and cook began during her relationship with celebrity chef Spike Mendelsohn (Top Chef, Top Chef All-Stars). She never refers to him by name in the book...or the cooking shows on which he appeared...he is always "Chef." Some may find that mysterious, but others, compelled to google her name to verify his identity, may be irritated. It certainly annoyed me."

Read the rest of my Amazon Vine review.

Pechluck Laskey says

My Summary: Apron Anxiety is the memoir of a young, pretty, popular and privileged "it" city girl Alyssa Shelasky and her complicated love affair a celebrity chef that introduces her to the kitchen and food appreciation. Expect the tone to be chick lit, with a wry New York humor to it. Essentially, the book is about her being able to find some center through food that grounds her previously flighty social life and her self-identity as she documents her time back and forth in New York City, Washington DC, and LA. She does "dish" a lot- lots of name dropping in all three cities of celebrities, and although she is vague on who her love, "Chef" is, you can google and find the answer pretty easily though I don't think knowing his name is essential to the story. But, I know you will totally look it up.

My Humble Opinion: If you are hoping for a lot of stories about how she conquers the kitchen, you won't see them here- not the way you are told tales by Julie & Julia-My Year of Cooking Dangerously by Julie Powell. Alyssa only shares a few- though the few stories she does share (mac and cheese, banana bread loaves, and cherry pie) are great. I and probably everyone has major oops like that in a dish which still end up being served and eaten hoping no one will notice the screw-ups.

Overall, I thought it was an interesting take on the opposite side of what was Cooking for Mr. Latte by Amanda Hesser where she was the foodie trying to educate her man, but this time Alyssa is the one who knows nothing about food. Both books pair sharing recipes with personal stories of how that recipe fit in with her life.

As you would expect, all three of these books (Julie and Alyssa's books both come from their blogs, Amanda's from her column) are self-indulgent, and there were times I had to put each of them down to give myself a break from being irritated. This was particularly the case with Alyssa.

You have to get through the first few chapters, before cooking gets into the tale, to get to the good part of the story. Apron Anxiety first few chapters were especially hard to get through (I did resort to skimming, and maybe put it down a couple times distracted or annoyed). For page and pages, she talks about essentially and incessantly being a popular fun girl in high school and all the partying she does in her 20s as a gossip and celebrity writer, being paid to essentially live it up on the edge of celebrity world and write about it.

That is, until she gets whisked away to Greece after 3 months of dating Chef and drops her life to follow him. Then for the next 9 months makes no friends and doesn't work. She writes in these chapters essentially of shutting that social life/career down to be celebrity-supported eye candy that waits for him to get home in order to make sandwiches or cereal- she doesn't even clean because they have a weekly housekeeper.

It's amazing in that it seems she is able to paid/supported to be living it up not through any moment of hard work (just existing and dealing with the world already seems to be hard work for her), but mostly courtesy seemingly of her looks, the luck of being well-connected with influential people, wit and charm. Fortunately, these latter two characteristics spills over into the voice in her writing. Reading the book's first few chapters you may want to skip it, but at least skim it – it does help establish a baseline of how crazy she was and how low she goes before food and cooking saves her.

Apron Anxiety at least has the bonus that Alyssa can write well, turning phrases such as “As I cope with the collapse of us, Zagat is my Zoloft” which keeps you reading for how she might describe something dramatically next. She also has a knack for writing honestly and openly like a girl friend in your early-mid 20s talking all night at a sleepover after you've opened your third bottle of wine and are getting into the “confessional/emotional truths” part of the late night. Example: her admitting that rather than dining out a lot because she loves exploring, she is using lists of Best Bloody Mary or Favorite Fish Taco “as arrows, as I have no idea what else to do with myself, or where I belong”.

Come on, I know you know what part of the night I am talking about. This whole book is basically Alyssa and you having that part of the night- with only Alyssa doing the talking.

She does a pretty good job of capturing the ups of the relationship with chef (that she dubs “relationchef”) which they just watch reality shows and toasted cheese sandwiches when he is around, and the disappointment and hurt of being second after his push for his career and fame because most of the time, he is not around. I think every woman can relate to at one point, putting herself second to a man, and defining herself by trying to live in his world- it's an easy mistake of youth that in using society as a mirror, when that first intense love comes along he becomes the entire mirror.

The kitchen and food are what pull Alyssa up finally from her way too dependent life she was existing in for

almost a 9 months since moving to DC. Great... but seriously, it took her the amount of time that other women might have a baby to figure out she needed to do something with herself instead of waiting for him to come home from work.

She talks about how she is lonely in DC, but you are told early on about all the people she knows that she leaves behind when she moves, but yet are told not much at the same time. We are mostly told rather than shown friends and family. Their personality is summarized by her in a few sentences, and then it boils down to what they are doing for/to her. I think that is probably understandable in a blog entry, but in a book, her feeling abandoned is an important theme of the story. Yet being told about her amazingly awesome her close friends are for a page or two and then they disappear so long I started forgetting/mixing them up until they appear again to help her out. It is a fracture in the narrative.

At the same time, she is quickly judgmental, dismissing her neighbors when she moves to a new city as too ordinary and all possible friends in DC as profoundly conservative or crazy (she does eventually take back the neighbors judgement, calling it one of the dumbest moves of her life).

For me, that makes it difficult to build a lot of empathy for her as I was reading the book as it presents her as a character who seems so self-centered as she wrings her hands about how she's frustrated and sad and alone, but then her friends seem to do her giant, selfless favors and provide access to elite connections and opportunities. She even describes herself at one point as "I am the stray who C Street has taken in", and when hearing a real tragic situation, feels ashamed for "whining about my utterly pathetic bubblegum BS" but then returns to it a few pages later. I kept wondering how long this quarter life crisis was going to go on- and she was having it in her late 20s/early 30s.

It wasn't until I thought about how I just read *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* that I began thinking of her in another perspective- someone who keeps really going to the extreme ends of the scale of an extrovert needing the energy of others to feed from- which certainly seems to explain why she fades so much in being alone and is not very introspective. Yet, she seems to also have an awkwardness like an introvert where she just wants to stay inside from the world. Making that connection helped me see this book at an interesting level.

The only way she seems to be able to give to others is through food, once she begins- which is already 1/3 of the book in. In Alyssa's case, you follow along to see how cooking and food becomes an outlet for her to take the edge off, and is way for her to provide for those she cares about. She doesn't spend much time talking about the flavors of food as much as the process and care of cooking, and the enjoyment she sees when her friends are taken care of by the food. Food tells a story, or evokes emotions for her. Because of this, even when she is alone, she can find energy through food. This seems to be the prime intent of the book, and a fine subject to explore. The way she writes it though, there's just a lot more of her than writing about food.

She is a maddening mess of totally un-relatable and relatable.

In visiting a lot of dodgy dive-y cheap hole in the walls, she writes "Our bills are always under thirty bucks; I am always too scared to use the bathroom", but also admits that he opens her eyes to secret gems. After ducking out of a NY food industry party and changing out of her Louboutins, she walks through the streets of the Village "looking for fresh air and maybe a falafel". For the first time she attempts a home-cooked meal, she writes a list in a fuchsia Sharpie, spends \$200 and takes multiple selfies to text to Chef, and describes the drive with feeling "pretty cool pretending to be a home cook, with my important grocery list and Made In Brooklyn bag. The car windows are down, the National is playing, and my long, layered hair is pinned up just right. I look good in foodie."

I can't help but sometimes roll my eyes as she writes that her wishlist changed from Lanvin flats (\$500-

\$900) to pizza stones and spoontulas or mentions she is walking into an event where her first Herve Leger bandage dress. But then I'm lured back into continuing to read as I laugh at how goofy and self depreciating she can be as she admits into walking into a glass door, undershooting the distance between a car and a wall, or thinking about Madonna as she targets her upper arm muscles while whisking. She also talks about cheese many times.

Basically, how much you will enjoy of this book depends on your ability to enjoy the obnoxious but also fun, emotional somewhat drunk evening with Alyssa.

Beth says

Apron Anxiety: My Messy Affairs In and Out of the Kitchen is exactly what it sets out to be: a memoir from a 30-something blogger who was inspired to cook and bake as a means of empowering herself when her personal relationship went down the tubes.

It's a little awkward for me to read a memoir of someone about my age, both in terms of "why can't I relate to this person who is my peer" and also "I'm 31 and I apparently have done nothing with my life". But once I got past both of those, I found it to be an enjoyable airplane/quick read. Yes, Alyssa is self-absorbed, shallow, and apparently wealthier than I'll ever be, but she doesn't promote the book as anything other than snark and fluff, which it is.

The book reads quickly and entertainingly, although shifts tense and is definitely in the narcissistic born-of-a-blog style (ala Julie and Julia). Alyssa and I have virtually nothing in common, but she is as honest as, I suppose, she can be given her biased first-person perspective. And I like that she doesn't gloss over the fact that she had learning and growing to do in her twenties and thirties.

Although Alyssa came to food unconventionally, it's clear that she found comfort and empowerment in preparing it, as so many of us foodies do. Although, now I hesitate to use the word, considering the negative connotation she associates with it (apparently, in New York, snobster gastronomers in the "food scene" who are rude use the term...and here I thought it just meant "someone who enjoys culinary adventures"). It wasn't a deep read, or an eye-opening one, just the casual story of one gal's relationship and food messes and how she became (sort of) her own person.

I recommend this book for fans of blogger success stories, coming-of-age true life stories, young person memoirs, an interesting perspective on East Coast life, and fans of self-aware comedy writing. Also, if you want a quick and easy read.

Ricki Treleaven says

I also read a memoir over the weekend: *Apron Anxiety* by Alyssa Shelasky. This probably seems like an unlikely beach read, but I loved it. Shelasky's memoir basically details her love affair with a famous reality TV chef she calls Chef in the book. She leaves her enviable job in New York to follow her chef and her heart to Washington, D.C. where Chef and his investors have started a restaurant and other projects. Shelasky is

not a foodie (a word she doesn't like), and she quickly seems lost and unhappy in D.C. But this girl has the chutzpah to conquer her fears in the kitchen and starts a wildly popular blog, Apron Anxiety. Ivy League educated, the girl can write. I love her voice; she seems very genuine. Alyssa reminds me of Carrie Bradshaw with a potty mouth. Some of her language and shenanigans made me wince, but I couldn't help but like her. She has such a big heart, and she takes the time to get to know those around her.

Each chapter ends with an applicable recipe or two. All of the recipes sound fantastic, and I look forward to trying each and every one of them. The first one I tried: Neiman Marcus Chocolate Chip Cookies. Yep, that one...the one that has several urban myths attached to it. I could almost swear that I heard the heavenly chorus when I saw the recipe. Her Rainy Day Rigatoni played an important role in her book, and I'll try that one next, maybe over the weekend.

Although Alyssa's love affair with Chef didn't last, I still highly recommend it. I was so pulling for them...I am their biggest cheerleader. I think they're made for each other and love each other very much. Love like theirs is rare, and I really hope they can eventually work out their differences. Go back to your chef, Alyssa, and I'll give you five stars! ;P

Heidi says

This was a publisher's advance copy of Alyssa Shelasky's memoir and I read this bad boy in an afternoon. Alyssa has lived quite a life, and brings up Sex and the City repeatedly just in case you don't already equate Chef with Mr. Big and her experiences with New York and L.A. glitterati with Carrie Bradshaw. (Alyssa doesn't end up marrying Spike Mendohlson, but he is the first chef she 'namedrops' throughout the book.)

That said, it reads like an engaging blog and the recipes she mentions in her life experiences are listed after every chapter. (I made the 'Rainy Day Rigatoni' for dinner last night from items in my pantry and it was delicious.)

Alyssa is a bit self-absorbed, but if you can overlook that elephant in the room, you just may have an afternoon's diversion on your hands. If you enjoy cooking, name-dropping and want a book you won't worry about getting wet while you lay in the sand, this may be the one for you.

Karen says

I had a mixed reaction to this book but I am glad I read it. This part memoir - part cookbook is basically the story of Alyssa Shelasky who was engaged to celebrity chef Spike Mendelsohn - who she refers to as just "Chef"- Carrie Bradshaw's "Mr. Big" as a foodie. The relationship ended up going sour and I have to say I was told the book did not paint Chef in a flattering light, but I didn't find that the case at all. If anything, Alyssa comes off as pretty insecure and apparently completely clueless as to the life she was signing up for by being with a chef/restaurant owner. The long hours are somehow a complete shock to her. Huh? She completely abandons her life in NY to move to DC for him and at that point loses herself entirely. She "finds" herself again through cooking - learning to and then blogging about it on "Apron Anxiety." She is now a food writer and the New York editor for Grub Street at New York magazine and is also still blogging. One of my main criticisms is her constant name-dropping - we get it, you worked for Us Weekly and People magazine for awhile but please, it makes her come across as vapid and shallow. She does surround herself with a lot of interesting "real" women so she doesn't really need to do the celebrity thing. And she refers to a

writer friend of hers - Christopher Wagner - whose apartment she sublets in LA and who apparently wrote for a TV show she was a huge fan of. For the life of me I could not figure out who this was - was this a fake name, was it real, and what the heck was the show? Internet searched proved fruitless and it drove me crazy! If anyone out there has a clue to the mystery - please! - help me out. The recipes that accompany each chapter do look really good and I plan to try some out. I'm also going to Spike's restaurant in DC The Eatery soon and will now enjoy my dinner with a side of "scoop."

Rosemarie says

Customer review from the Amazon Vine™ Program (What's this?)

Whine whine whine, that is all this gal seems to do. Poor me is her mantra in the first few chapters. Really do I want to hear about all your problems?

I had a very unsettling childhood but I don't write a book and complain about it. I must say it does pick up a bit after all the complaining is out of her system.

She manages to find a boyfriend that she never names but if you are resourceful you will find he is Chef Spike Mendelsohn from TV fame. She picks up and actually quits her job at People Magazine, moves from New York city to Washington DC to be with said boyfriend. He romances her and they go to Greece and she fall in love with him.

That does not last very long. There is trouble in the relationship since he is busy. He pays little attention to her as he opens a new business and he really cannot find time to spend with her and she is upset.

She thinks, what have I done? I left everything behind, my friends and family, and now I am alone.

She finally comes to find herself, at least a little, she finds a new outlet and that is food.

She start blogging it made her feel good, I am not sure that helps, they break up and she starts dating again and keeps leaving her partners.

She writes a book and becomes fairly famous, if I left anything out it may be because I really did not enjoy reading this book.

I am not to thrilled about gals who feel they have to name drop to feel whole or to brag about their boring life.

One thing was nice. You can find several recipes (but not her own) that she splatters around the book and some actually look quit nice, I will have to try some after the summer. Today it is 97 degrees so I will pass for now, something most of you should do with this book.

Melissa says

Maybe I am a bitter old lady in a cat sweater, but for the first 50 pages of this book I wanted to gag or punch something or both. It starts out as an autobiographical story about a young lady from the East Coast who has perfect parents, perfect friends and perfect food in her life.

Next she meets a chef, falls in love and learns to cook because she is alone in a new city without any of her amazing friends. I wanted to rejoice in her learning to cook, but part of me was even more annoyed. My annoyance was with her desire to always be following, falling in love or falling away from some guy. Here was a beautiful, talented woman with a group of amazing friends who spent the majority of the book

lamenting about her failed relationship with a quasi douche chef. I felt like he was a waste of her time and it was a waste of my time to read about their on again-off again relationship.

Now for the good parts: Alyssa Shelasky truly is talented in the kitchen and her recipes are both simple to prepare and delicious. I would recommend this book to anyone. The recipes are perfect for the person who is looking for some new ideas to the person who doesn't know how to boil water.

Overall this book made me think that I was at slightly long happy hour with a friend who was lovely but unaware of her good fortune or abilities.

Peebee says

Not poorly written, but I do think that Spike might have possibly found the only person more annoying and self-absorbed than himself to love, so I'm not surprised it didn't work out. I still don't understand how not particularly attractive women can bring that much crazy to their lives and still have an array of gorgeous guys lining up for more.

Leona says

I didn't think I would enjoy the book as much as I did. I actually purchased it only because it's this month's book club read and the library didn't have any copies.

I can't say that I cared for the author or for "the chef"; both were a bit too self absorbed for my tastes. But, underneath it all was a rather complex story about life, love, and learning to feel comfortable in one's own skin. Alyssa Shelasky has a real talent for writing. The story was so entertaining I found it hard to put down. I would have read it in less than a day, but housework and cleaning got in the way.

I don't consider myself a foodie, but I do enjoy cooking and eating quality food. Over the years, I've gotten away from the "joy" of cooking, and have found it more a chore. Thanks to this book, I've now been inspired to go back to my kitchen and start creating again.

An added bonus are the recipes. I can't wait to try them.

Aryn says

I won this book from Goodreads Giveaways, and thought it looked at least a little interesting - that is, until I started reading the other reviews of the book. Dear Gods, I was almost afraid to pick this book up, assuming I was going to hate it. For the first two, two and a half, chapters, I did - hate it, that is.

For one, I felt as though she tried to make her childhood out to be this overly unique, bohemian, experience, to hear the way she talks about it, you'd think she'd been raised by Travelers. Hate to break it to ya, her childhood wasn't *that* unique; it wasn't *that* bohemian. In fact, her childhood reminded me a lot of my own: privileged, with hippie overtones. She says at one point that the reason she took her shirt off for everyone in high school was because of her upbringing, and I sort of take offense at that. Comfort with nudity, comfort with sexuality is no excuse to, well, be a slut.

For two, the "slut" comes out rampant in the second chapter. She works for US Weekly and meets celebrities and name drops every four words. I don't care that you know Derek Jeter and were invited to a Robert Pattinson premiere, I just couldn't give a **flying fuck**. Also, just because someone's a free spirit doesn't mean that it's okay to sleep with everyone under the sun, while you're in relationships.

She just really, really, really, rubbed me the wrong way in the first few chapters.

Surprisingly, it took a 180 degree turn when she started dating the celebrity chef that is most likely the love of her life and soul mate, though completely impractical. The love story is written well. The lovers are very real. They mesh well, even when they fight. It's a very true telling of a crazy sort of love. Even when everything blows up, again and again, the relationship is clearly a real one.

I have a lot more trouble saying what I liked about a book rather than what I didn't. And I did like quite a bit, I mean, it rallied enough to earn three stars, after the first two chapters I was expecting 1 star.

Maybe I simply liked the rest of the book because she gets a little thrown from her holier than thou horse. She actually becomes relatable as she tried to save a clearly dying relationship. Her broken down, discovery of herself says so much more about her than any name she dropped previously. She may be a woman in the need of a good shake, but she is a woman who is on a journey to truly find herself.

Her journey through food is simply endearing. However, the recipes in the book were a bit on the disappointing side of the world.

Beverly says

FTC Disclosure: I received an advance copy of this book from the Amazon Review program in exchange for an honest review.

I'm not really sure what I was expecting from this book. I think I was looking for something deeper. However, it was an ok read and would probably be a good summer beach read. The writing flowed smoothly with a light-hearted beat. However, I often found myself wondering why I should care about the story. Perhaps if I had known who the author and her fiancée were before reading the book, I might have made a connection with the story. If I had not agreed to review the book, I might not have moved it to my Did Not Finish shelf.

What I liked about the book: It was light, easy read. The author also shares many of the recipes she talks about.

What I didn't like about the book: The story has a rather spoiled and shallow ring to it. I guess it's really wasn't my cup of tea.
