



# Only in Naples: Lessons in Food and Famiglia from My Italian Mother-in-Law

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## **Only in Naples: Lessons in Food and Famiglia from My Italian Mother-in-Law** Katherine Wilson

In the tradition of M. F. K. Fisher and Peter Mayle, this enchantingly warm and witty memoir follows American-born Katherine Wilson on her adventures abroad, where a three-month rite of passage in Naples turns into a permanent embrace of this boisterous city on the Mediterranean. It is all thanks to a surprising romance, a new passion for food, and a spirited woman who will become her mother-in-law—and teach her to laugh, to seize joy, and to love.

## **Only in Naples: Lessons in Food and Famiglia from My Italian Mother-in-Law Details**

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Author : Katherine Wilson

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## From Reader Review Only in Naples: Lessons in Food and Famiglia from My Italian Mother-in-Law for online ebook

### Diane S ? says

A mixed reaction from me. I grew up and was very close friends with an Italian family who lived next door to me in Chicago, in fact my friend Vicki married my cousin. Anyway that is what attracted me to this memoir. Normally memoirs about privilege individuals are not my favorite thing, but I was curious and it sounded fun.

Some it was, loved the cultural and cooking discussions or insights, but some areas I felt were undeveloped or lightly touched on and some comments I felt were in very poor taste.

Loved the included recipes at the end, and the writing was good but..... well just wanted more in some areas and a little less in others.

ARC from Netgalley.

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### Bob Schnell says

Advanced reading copy review Due to be published April 19,2016

Although I found it very hard to identify with the author's background and almost unbelievable naivete, I found myself enjoying her tales of a self-imposed stranger in a strange land. Katherine Wilson comes from a monied family (Wilson sporting goods)and the American South. In her family it is traditional to spend a "semester" during/after college immersed in one foreign city's culture. She chose Naples. Almost immediately upon arriving she falls in with a family, the Avallones, who lead her into a Neapolitan rabbit hole of traditions and customs all revolving around food. Perhaps not the best thing for someone with a history of eating disorders.

Her story consists of many short chapters, most devoted to an ingredient or dish, its history in Naples or the Avallone family and the author's personal experience with it. Between laughing and salivating you'll find yourself wishing her experiences could have been yours, or at least your taste buds'. In my ARC there are a few recipes in the back, perhaps the finished product will have more. I read this right before Thanksgiving which may have actually enhanced the experience. Recommended for those who enjoy tales of Americans abroad and food glorious food.

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### Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Katherine Wilson, rich, WASP, overweight and over-sensitive, travels to Naples, Italy for a post-college internship and to Experience the World. She is quickly introduced to the Avallone family, which conveniently has a son Katherine's age. She and Salvatore get lined up, they go hang out with his family for the evening, and Katherine begins to learn how Italians (specifically the Napoli variety) think far differently than Americans, and yet how we're all alike in other ways.

This was a pleasant read for the most part, as Katherine relates various episodes from her life in Italy and her growing relationship with Salva. Her mother-in-law-to-be is in fact an amazing person. The author's voice is often self-deprecating and sometimes the stories were a bit too "warts and all" for my comfort. (These are real people and her family! Wasn't she a little worried that some of them would take offense?) Her comparisons and analysis of the different cultures are sometimes on the superficial side, and overall the episodes from her life didn't entirely coalesce into a whole in the way I would have liked, but the stories were interesting and amusing enough to keep me going.

I was fascinated by the practice of octopus-pounding to make it tender and edible, which is a thing I first noticed just a few weeks ago in reading *The Moon-Spinners*. There was the funniest family argument about a tough octopus salad:

We all taste the octopus.

*“È duro ’sto polipo.”*

It is Nino who has broken the silence. He speaks with his mouth full, exaggerating the movement of trying to cut through the chewy octopus with his overworked molars. Have I understood correctly? Has he just said that the octopus is tough, no good?

*“È buonissimo! È buonissimo!”* I start my performance immediately. It’s fabulous! It’s fabulous! Let’s pretend Nino didn’t say that!

I am completely ignored.

Salvatore seconds his father’s statement. *“Ha ragione Papà.”* Daddy’s right.

After an excruciating silence, Pia declares, “Toto, this octopus you caught is really tough.” Not the octopus that we cooked. The octopus that *you caught*. Fightin’ words.

“Lella, did you perhaps forget to beat it?” Toto asks Raffaella nonchalantly. Since he is certain that his octopus was not by nature tough, the only question he has for his sister is where she went wrong. Raffaella was supposed to mash the octopus with a hammer before performing the dunking torture, Toto explains with authority, even though I suspect that he has never cooked an octopus.

The recipes at the end were intriguing, but have too many exotic ingredients and take too long to prepare and cook, for me to be seriously interested in trying them myself.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for the free arc of this book!

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## Lynne says

This was a heartwarming story about Italian culture told mostly through food. There is a lot of love and kindness in this book. While reading it I kept wishing for recipes and at the end, there were recipes! Very similar to *A Sweet Life in Paris* by David Lebowitz, only a female perspective in Italy.

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## PorshaJo says

I really wanted to like this one. From descriptions and title I thought this was going to be a bit more food related. Yes, there is food but not quite what I was expecting. This is really the memoir of Katherine Wilson. She comes from a very wealthy family and that came across in the first few pages of the book - that was my first uh oh. The book is about her internship at the U.S. Consulate in Naples, that she got through family connections. She tells the story of her time in Naples and how she met her husband and fell in love. Now I understand she is in Italy. But she constantly throws in Italian words and phrases and then, sometimes, gives the English equivalent. It became very grating to me because it was constant and it seemed pompous. I found myself skimming a bit because it was distracting when I would see that font (Italian).

I'm a fan of memoirs and enjoy reading them. I'm sure many will enjoy the story of her time in Italy and meeting her husband. But this one was not for me.

I received a copy of this from NetGalley for an honest review.

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## Susan Johnson says

This was a delightful story of a woman who moved to Naples to do an internship at the American consulate after college. She has a contact in Naples, calls them and their son arrives to pick her up for dinner. She falls in love with the son but really more with his mother, Raffaella. I think the love affair with her husband would never happen if she didn't love his mother so much.

It talks about immersing herself in Italian culture and learning the language, In Naples it's not just the language but the hand gestures that go with it. She also learns the ins and outs of the culture which is very different, not only from America but other parts of Italy. It is a fun, good natured romp through the twists and turns of Naples. She basically lives with her boyfriend and family so gets to understand all the little nuances.

I love the family's daughter gets married and gets an apartment two floors down from her mother. Raffaella makes a lasagna, puts it on the elevator and sends it down to her daughter. It made me laugh out loud. The author learns all underwear must be washed by hand and jobs are just something to do so you can enjoy your time off. It's a really nice peek into another way of life. The big gift is the recipes at the end of the book. I gained 5 pounds just reading them although the octopus one is outside my comfort zone.

It's really fun read and I highly recommend it.

Thanks to Net Galley.

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## Esil says

It was hard for me not to like Only in Naples, but I don't expect it will be everyone's cup of tea and in some ways it was a bit puzzling. Only in Naples is a memoir written by Katherine Wilson, who grew up in the upper classes of Washington (she is a Wilson of the tennis ball Wilsons). She went to Naples after graduating from Princeton to do an unpaid internship at the American consulate, and never left. She met a boy, fell in love with him and his family, and enthusiastically immersed herself in life in Naples and Italy. Her memoir

recounts her adventures adapting to Naples and her new found family. She focuses a lot on food and on her attempts to understand the social conventions of her new found family. Her enthusiasm for her new found home is hard to resist -- especially the food she describes -- and her tales of hapless cultural clashes are generally quite charming. But mostly I couldn't help liking this book for a very idiosyncratic reason; I have been traveling in the area of Naples as I've been reading Only in Naples, and I appreciated the cultural context and observations Wilson provides -- especially about food and social interactions. If I hadn't read it in this context, I may have found aspects of Wilson's memoir a bit grating. Her life experience and her whole experience of Naples are very privileged, which she doesn't really seem to acknowledge. Which brings me to the puzzling aspect of the book. From what I've read and seen, Naples is a city that has been plagued by chronic unemployment and poverty, and a fair amount of crime. It's a challenging city for people who live there and visit. It's not all negative, but it's certainly more complex than the city Wilson depicts. But somehow Wilson appears to float above much of the real Naples, or she certainly circumvents it in what she recounts in her memoir. Instead, she focuses on fairly lighthearted aspects of her at times bumpy integration into southern Italy. Again, I liked Only in Naples because I read it in the right context. But there's something a bit unreal about the world Wilson depicts and I wouldn't use it as a realistic measuring stick for truly understanding life in Naples, even for tourists and expats. In parallel, I am also reading Elena Ferrante's My Brilliant Friend which I suspect is giving me a much more real taste of life in Naples. Thank you to the publisher and Netgalley for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

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### **Toni says**

I enjoyed this delightfully charming book. I love Italy, food and family. Katherine Wilson made her story come to life and I felt like I was part of this wonderful loving family.

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### **Felicity says**

One of my favourite books this year! A joy to read.

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### **Bettie? says**

BOTW

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07dkk0c>

Description: *Katherine Wilson tells her story of travelling to Naples and discovering love, food and family in a uniquely Neapolitan way.*

*Fresh out of college in 1996, Katherine arrives in Naples from America to intern at the United States Consulate. "There is a chaotic, vibrant energy about Naples that forces you to let go and give in," writes Katherine, who meets handsome, studious Salvatore and finds herself immediately enveloped by his elegant mother, Raffaella, and the rest of the Avallone family.*

*From that moment, Katherine's education begins. Never eat the crust of a pizza first, always stand up and fight for yourself and your loved ones, and consider mealtimes sacred - food must be prepared fresh and consumed in compagnia.*

*Immersed in Neapolitan culture, traditions, and cuisine, slowly and unexpectedly falling for Salvatore, and longing for Raffaella's company and guidance, Katherine discovers how to prepare meals that sing - from hearty, thick ragu to comforting rigatoni alla Genovese, to name but two.*

*Through courtship, culture clashes, Sunday services, marriage, and motherhood, Katherine comes to appreciate carnale, the quintessentially Neapolitan sense of comfort and confidence in one's own skin. Raffaella and her famiglia are also experts at sdrammatizzare, knowing how to suck the tragedy from something and spit it out with a great big smile.*

*Part travel tale, part love letter, Only in Naples is a sumptuous story that is a feast for the senses.*

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## **Laura says**

*From BBC Radio 4 - Book of the Week:*

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*Fenella Woolgar ... Reader*

*A Pier production for BBC Radio 4.*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07dkk0c>

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## **♥ Sue says**

Katherine Wilson falls in love with Naples and you will too.

For those currently craving a story steeped in light-hearted humor, romance and with calorie upon calorie

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described in its pages, "Only in Naples" is the book for you.

We are intimately introduced to Katherine's journey of love and the acceptance by an Italian family in Naples that changed her life. This family offers her their hearts, love, tradition, and family life and consider her as one of their own.

It is a signature piece that celebrates February and Valentine's Day every day of the year and every day of her life.

This venture teaches the reader what it is like to be taken up with the swirling, fascinating life of Naples. There is no going back once Katherine takes that first step on her journey. Naples plays a sneak attack on her heart and on the reader's heart also. Who would not want to be in her place?

Katherine Wilson has found the secret of happiness and shares it with us. Her book is thus a joyful manual about how to enjoy, life, love, culture and food in Naples and anywhere. By living in Naples she learns not just pasta plating but how to lead a successful life.

She closes her book with a few special recipes to whet our appetites such as ragu and Insalata di Polipo [octopus] which are borrowed from her mother-in-law's talented kitchen.

Thank you, Net Galley

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## Angela M says

I don't often read memoirs as many times it seems to me that they are just too self serving. So why did I read this one by a privileged woman who goes to Italy after college because spending time abroad was what her WASP family always did ? Mainly it was because my Goodreads friend Sue gave it a wonderful review that piqued my interest. It also appealed to me because of my Italian heritage , the fact that my maternal grandparents were from a small town near Naples and because I thought I might be able to relate . I was not disappointed in the least. This is a book about family , food , customs , love of life and in many ways a tribute to the author's mother-in-law.

The food as anyone who has been to Italy or associated in any way with an Italian family knows - it's all about the food . How to eat pizza - I never have nor will I ever eat the crust first. Katherine Wilson talks about her issue with being over weight and her binge eating disorder, how she ate wonderful food upon her arrival in Italy and lost 20 pounds. Can you imagine? My kind of diet!

The Christmas Eve dinner and family gathering reminded me of those celebrations of my childhood at my Italian grandparents' house where we gathered with aunts and uncles and cousins and just ate the night away. Only ours were not as formal as Raffaella's. We didn't use china or crystal. My mother had eight siblings and together with spouses and children we were quite a crowd so it had to be paper plates .

It was amusing in parts as Katherine learns that you really shouldn't take your underwear to the dry cleaners . I loved that it was her misunderstanding of the language that caused her to call Salvatore every day and thus begin this wonderful love story . I was reminded of how beautiful the Italian language is as she translates certain words and phrases . Having studied it so many years ago in high school and not speaking it for so many years, it made me want to learn it again.

While I felt somewhat removed from the privileged life these people lived , I really liked them all , especially

Raffaella. A light , enjoyable read which makes me really want to go back to Italy.

Thank you Random House Publishing House - Random House and NetGalley.

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### **Liz Estrada says**

Okay, I REALLY wanted to love this book, but the writer just turned me off from the get go. A spoiled, super rich, easily offended American woman goes to Naples and here I was hoping she would interact with the "real" Neopolitan families but she just hangs out out with a rich one. Due to her rich grandfather, head of the Wilson conglomerate, she has the privilege of traveling, interning at the American consulate for no pay and just having a good time with no money worries. Though I did like the Italian mother-in-law and the non chauvinistic Neopolitan son (how rare is that!) this book fell short. Yes, there are some very funny moments when she does capture the Neopolitan flair and quirky joie de vivre, but overall it bugged me.

Having visited Naples 3 times and having a grandmother from Calabria, I was hoping for more everyday tales of the working class people of Naples. In my view, the best chapter was on San Gennaro, the only time she goes off to see how the true everyday working people really celebrate a religious festival (which, ironically enough the upper crust of Naples frowns upon).

I also enjoyed how well she described Neopolitans opinions on America and Americans in general, from their reaction to the Clinton - Lewinsky "scandal", to how they dress and especially what crappy canned, supermarket-junk food they eat! Remember, these Mediterraneans take their slow food VERY seriously!!! No 20 minute lunches to go here!!! That is close to blasphemy!

Not to mention the hilarious chapter on the total bafflement of Neopolitans (and all Mediterranean countries, for that matter) about America's utter fascination with the dreaded air conditioner. For me, that was the best and funniest part of the book, probably because I was raised in Spain (another quirky place, so different from the American WASP culture) that I could relate to that.

I guess I would have loved this book more if I could have identified with the author.

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### **Kati Berman says**

Only in Naples

I got this book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. I don't usually read memoirs, but I am so glad I read this one. Katherine Wilson travels to Naples Italy, for an internship at the American consulate. She soon meets the Avallone family, and Salvatore, their son. She spends a lot of time with the family and is quickly immersed in Neapolitan culture. She literally falls in love with Rafaella, Salvatore's mother even before she falls in love with Salvatore himself. The book is a lot about Italian food, how to make it, how to enjoy it, family relations and Italian, more specifically, Neapolitan culture. Katherine's writing is full of humor, I laughed out loud several times as she points out differences in American and Italian culture. Not only about food, but going to the hospital, lab tests, shopping, etc. This is a delightful book of how two cultures differ and at the same time similar. I recommend this book to anyone.

Thank you NetGalley, Random House and the author, Katherine Wilson to give me a chance to preview this book.

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