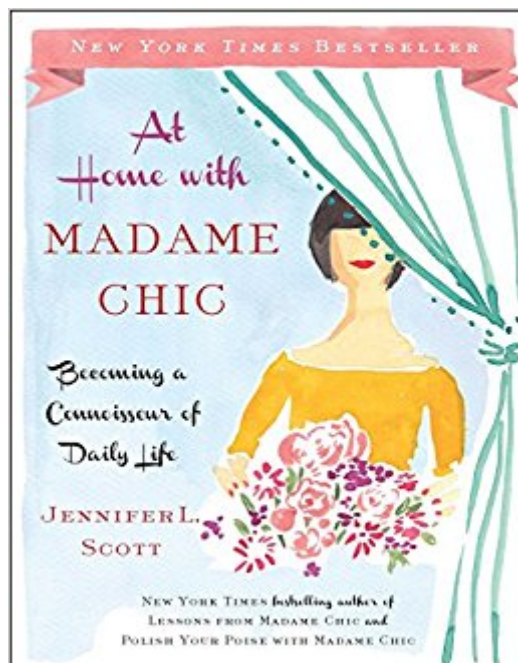




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At Home With Madame Chic: Becoming A Connoisseur Of Daily Life



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

"A guide for women who yearn to channel Audrey Tautou. . . . Personable, anecdote-filled, and studded with lifestyle tips . . . its vivacity and sincerity have struck a chord among women who would like a French role model of their own, but don't have a year to spend apprenticing with one in Paris." (The New York Times)"Part tribute to the effortlessly glamorous Parisian way of life, and part tutorial . . . on how to emulate the French je ne sais quoi." (Daily Mail (UK))"Downright intriguing. . . . You'll close the book feeling inspired." (The Plain Dealer)"The writing here, a combination of elegance and breeziness, seems to reflect Madame Chic's personal philosophy that life is to be lived fully and elegantly." (Smoky Mountain News)"Winningly combines sincerity and self-deprecation . . . sweet-natured and well-intentioned . . . full of advice." (Kirkus Reviews)"Scott's message of living passionately, enjoying the little things in life and truly living are great mantras to guide one's life." (Portland Book Review)

Jennifer L. Scott is the New York Times bestselling author of *Lessons from Madame Chic*, *At Home with Madame Chic*, and *Polish Your Poise with Madame Chic* and the writer and editor of *The Daily Connoisseur* (DailyConnoisseur.com). She lives in Southern California with her family. Visit JenniferLScott.com.

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 quantity, 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 Vous 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 there 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 challenge-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 from 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 down

These 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."

Ms. Scott is doing her best to bring back civilized living one charming book or blog post at a time. *At Home With Madame Chic*, her latest publication, encourages readers to celebrate the ordinary and elevate the mundane. This mindfulness to everyday living is inspiring, and reading through the book makes you want to do a little better when you are doing the dishes (use scented dish soap!), making dinner (bring out the good napkins!), and folding the laundry (triple fold towels in neat stacks!). For motivation and inspiration, this book is a great source. However, the book is terribly unbalanced. Divided into two sections, the first deals with your home's physical condition and the second deals with the daily routine. While section two is fleshed out and rich with content, section one is shockingly short, with advice that can be boiled into a single bullet point: clean up your mess. I would have thought Ms. Scott, who has lots of interesting insights into other aspects of a chic life, would have had more to say about décor, organization, chic living with children, and the joys of gardening. But the short section on the physical home comes down to "clutter is so not chic." For those looking forward to a French/American cultural comparison, this is not the book for you. There is almost no mention of the original Madame Chic, Ms. Scott's host mother during her semester abroad in France and the inspiration behind the Madame Chic series, and no discussion of the European vs. American lifestyle. Instead, this book examines Ms. Scott's own life as a stay-at-home mother of two small children. She describes in loving detail the daily routines and rituals of her family's life, and it is charming and very pretty and, I suspect, a lot of fun. For young mothers struggling to cope with the grind of life with toddlers, this book will be very comforting. For those with older children who are coming out of the toddler years and into a more civilized era of parenting, Ms. Scott provides good tips and ideas for bringing your home back to a state of grace. Even for those with no children or empty nesters, there are rituals and little attitude adjustments suggested to gently remind all readers that the everyday can be extraordinary.

Although this book was well written and interesting, I found it had too much of the young Mother in it for me. As Madame Chic had only grown up children I somehow expected the book to give me more

information on how to live a beautiful life as a mature person and not focus quite so much on being a Mother

This would be a great book to give to someone who is setting up home for the first time. Having a couple of decades of adult life under my belt, I felt like I had already incorporated many of Scott's suggestions into my life quite naturally. Having said that, it is an enjoyable read, but don't expect to be blown away. There is probably a lot in this book you already know which makes it a comfortable read. I would have found this book more useful in my 20s. However, I bought the book because I had just read *Lessons from Madame Chic: 20 Stylish Secrets I learned While I Lived in Paris* and really enjoyed it - which I think is more enjoyable for people of all ages.

This author changed my life. Her first book is my favorite but this one is still worth a read! I love the concept of a life spent less worrying about things and more about enjoying the people you are with and taking pride in your appearance and home. She talks a lot about being a mom, which doesn't apply but the majority of the book is how to make your home your haven.

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