



Immoveable Feast: A Paris Christmas

John Baxter

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A witty cultural and culinary education, *Immoveable Feast* is the charming, funny, and improbable tale of how a man who was raised on white bread—and didn't speak a word of French—unexpectedly ended up with the sacred duty of preparing the annual Christmas dinner for a venerable Parisian family.

Ernest Hemingway called Paris "a moveable feast"—a city ready to embrace you at any time in life. For Los Angeles-based film critic John Baxter, that moment came when he fell in love with a French woman and impulsively moved to Paris to marry her. As a test of his love, his skeptical in-laws charged him with cooking the next Christmas banquet—for eighteen people in their ancestral country home. Baxter's memoir of his yearlong quest takes readers along his misadventures and delicious triumphs as he visits the farthest corners of France in search of the country's best recipes and ingredients. Irresistible and fascinating, *Immoveable Feast* is a warmhearted tale of good food, romance, family, and the Christmas spirit, Parisian style.

Immoveable Feast: A Paris Christmas Details

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Author : John Baxter

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From Reader Review Immoveable Feast: A Paris Christmas for online ebook

Heather says

Onto the through line of a Babette's Feast-like Christmas dinner he is cooking for his French wife's family, the author grafts side trips recounting his induction into French culture. Immoveable Feast is an anecdotal voyage into Baxter's life and love of food. Just don't read it when you're hungry.

Anita says

A predictable story: ****spoilers**** a man meets a French woman, falls in love, meets the terrifying French family who don't really speak English etc. Maybe it's familiar for me because I've lived a similar story. But what is really fascinating is the evident love of food that the author has - exquisite and nostalgic descriptions of French foods that are just unreachable in Australia. If you've ever explored south-west France you'll immediately miss the wine, fresh oysters and markets. An easy read that's somewhat amusing, but more so annoying (just cook me dinner already!)

Marg says

Review coming in December!

Short summary - really enjoyed it! Made me want Christmas in France as part of a French family with a fantastic cook! Not as a guest....or the cook!

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One day I was listening to The Book Show on our ABC and they interviewed an Australian author who had spent many years living in Paris after shorter stints in the US and Britain. They were talking about his book The Most Beautiful Walk in the World: a Pedestrian in Paris and given my infatuation with all things Paris recently I knew I wanted to read it. Unfortunately, my library didn't have it but they did have this book! Whilst I still want to read that one this was a worthy substitute!

John Baxter grew up in country Australia and dined on the bland food that was staple of the past. Whilst now Australian cuisine is varied, multicultural and based on fresh ingredients, it wasn't always the case. Baxter compares the Australia of his past and share how he learned to cook, how he impressed dates by being able to cook after he left Australia and compares and contrasts both the different dining experiences of the various countries he has lived in around the world and the way that Christmas is celebrated in Australia and France.

Head to to read my whole review.

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## Terri Bonow says

I definitely wanted to be invited to a traditional family dinner in France at Christmas time.

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## Debbie Robson says

It is a common assumption that writing with a beautiful flow that is easy to read, is easy to write. Well that's not strictly true. It's generally, in my opinion, the result of one of two things. Either the simplicity, readability and elegance are achieved by diligence on the part of the author - rereading, refining over and over, often working hard to combine different elements smoothly in one paragraph. Or in the case of the few - it's down to the sheer skill of the writer who is very gifted in being clear, precise and in the case of John Baxter funny as well. He has quite simply, from what I can gather of his long career, become very good at easy to read and enjoyable writing that you can't imagine him slaving over.

This book is the story, with lots of back stories (including the very first Christmas that Baxter enjoyed with his wife Mary Dominique's family) of preparing and cooking the enormous family dinner.

The first chapter is the story of the very first Christmas with his French wife's family and how he regaled them with a story about George Johnston tasting a lot of French wines in 1947. In chapter two he details how he is unable to make his mother's Christmas pudding in London and also a Christmas dinner back in Australia with Marie Dominique. Back home he discovers that his father still has some of his wine in the garage including a 1962 bottle of Penfolds Grange Hermitage:

"It should breathe a bit," I said, reaching for the corkscrew.

The wine was sublime, an explosion on the palate, with, as the Japanese say, a tail that went right down the throat. Each sip recalled something said by the seventeenth century poet George Herbert, but adopted as a motto by Gerald and Sara Murphy, friends of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and the inspiration for Dick and Nicole Driver in *Tender is the Night*: "Living well is the best revenge."

And here's the funny thing: it went particularly well with Christmas pudding."

Through the rest of the book we find out a bit of Baxter's history, including how he learned to cook in the early 1960s, that his first wife Joyce was American, how he met Marie Do, as well as all the ingredients that are required for a French Christmas dinner. There are various shopping expeditions, stories about France and the French and generally what it is like to enjoy A Paris Christmas. This is, of course, a very easy to read and enjoyable book.

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## Sue says

Last year we made vacation plans to go to Italy to visit our son who is studying theology in Rome. So, I said to my husband "why not go back to Paris first before going to Rome and revisit where we lived for almost two years?" Of course he agreed! Our home was in Neuilly and I was happy to see that mentioned in this fun book! (Read the part about oysters and you will see Neuilly mentioned!). While there, we naturally walked all over Paris. And a trip to Paris is not the same without a stop at Shakespeare's Book Store where I found John Baxter's book. The title on my book reads "A Paris Christmas" - not sure if this is the original title or the other one listed on Goodreads is the updated title? Either way it was just such a FUN book to read! While living there I had the opportunity to take cooking classes by a French woman where I learned SO much - and I could so relate to what was going on here with the story!! Preparing a meal for your in laws is daunting enough but when you are an American and your spouse and in laws are French!! John had a major challenge

ahead of him cooking a French Christmas dinner for his in laws!! The pressure was on! Does he succeed? Read the book and find out! I loved revisiting places in Paris that he wrote about in this book too. A fun holiday read!!!

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### **Val says**

John Baxter is a good story teller. So says his future wife's uncle about midway through this memoir of Christmas feasts. He is that. This particular story concentrates on the French and their unique way of celebrating Christmas through food. Privately, with family and not at a restaurant. So much of the book concerns the author's hunt for the ingredients of a particular Christmas feast that he is cooking. But the book is more than that. It's also part biography, part travelogue, but mostly charming.

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### **Helen says**

John Baxter describes his first Christmas with his new wife's family in France and subsequent dinners he prepared for them. As an Aussie he took on French ways and French cuisine and became a Frenchman with touches of Australia. Along the way we hear about his journey, the kinds of food, how it is eaten (God forbid that you ever just snack on cheese!!) and revered.

This lighthearted book was okay, but maybe a bit pretentious, even a bit gross? Who would prepare a roast piglet for Christmas dinner having given it a name (Pascal)?

Barely a 3 rating. 2.8 would be a better assessment.

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### **Marina Castellano says**

In the book Immoveable Feast: A Paris Christmas is about a man who fell in love with a girl from Paris and moved to Paris with her and got married. It's a story about how he made it through his first Christmas with his in-laws. He is challenged to cook Christmas dinner for eighteen people. This book gives insight to French culture, and his original culture. (He is originally from Australia) as he is cooking dinner for his new family he is learning about how the French celebrate Christmas, he teaches his new family about Christmas. This book has a lot of insight on the French Christmas and culture. It talks a lot about the food and how his first Christmas in Paris went. Baxter figured out how to turn a trip to the grocery store into an adventure. Throughout the book he talks about past Christmases in Australia and the U.S. there is a quote in the book that I found interesting: "To the French, sin—provided it is conceived with imagination and carried off with flair—is like the dust on an old bottle of Burgundy, the streaks of gray in the hair of a loved one, the gleam of long, loving use on the mahogany of an ancient cabinet. It's evidence of endurance, of survival, of life." In this quote he is trying to describe how the French feel about sins, and he describes it as being part of life. Overall I didn't enjoy this book very much but I found it very interesting to hear about the different ways that different cultures celebrate Christmas.

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### **Andie says**

A nice little book about Baxter's integration into his wife's French family and what he goes through each year to cook s memorable Christmas dinner.

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## **Nancy says**

January 4, 2010

This was my favorite holiday book of the year, a Christmas present from my son. John Baxter (who I never even heard of...) is funny and true as he tells the story of preparing Christmas dinner (and many memories of Christmases past)for his wife's family. I loved the food; I loved the writing and what is not to like about a man who cooks, espically a man who names his Christmas pig!

A couple of my favorite quotes:

"To the French, sin - provided it is conceived with imagination and carried off with flair - is like the dust on an old bottle of burgundy, the streaks of gray in the hair of a loved one, the gleam of long, loving use on the mahogany of an ancient cabinet. It's evidence of endurance, of survival, of life."

"Proust was right. Any house or garden or town existed only as the sum of the feelings experienced there. It was remembering history and maintaining tradition that kept the material world alive."

"Every meal is a world of its own, from which we emerge, however subtly, changed."

Reading this book may become one of my personal holiday traditions.

December 29, 2014

It took me years, but I finally got around to reading this again. And I liked it as much as the first time. I have a shelf of Christmas books, but this is my favorite.

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## **Courtney says**

The perfect Christmas time book--full of juicy stories and pork drippings. Australian John Baxter goes to remote corners of France to find the perfect ingredients for the perfect Christmas dinner for his french in-laws in their country home. His quest is fun to tag along for, and the details about the food and wine will make you want to cook your own masterpiece (or eat someone else's). The eccentricities of food, France and family add to the fun of this quick and delicious read.

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## **Laurie says**

Less charming than expected, but still a lightly enjoyable read.

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## **Jdbaron says**

A surprisingly substance-free book that left me wondering why I ever picked it up. I generally find something redeemable in all food writing, but this book feels as if Mr. Baxter was offered the opportunity to write something, was fishing around for an easy subject to cover, happened to be cooking a Christmas dinner for his family, and decided to simply put down on paper the various stages and information about each part of the meal and the holiday. A totally insignificant work that felt shallow and self-serving: the literary equivalent of a pavlova - light and sweet with little actual substance. Frankly, his efforts to impress upon the reader how very French an Aussie can become after years of living in France is really quite obnoxious and rather boring. Overall, I was tremendously underwhelmed.

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## **Kelly says**

This book was okay. I kept thinking to myself, isn't this supposed to be epic? I've heard so much about it. It took me longer than it should have to realize that this wasn't A Moveable Feast. HUGE source of confusion for me and many people who saw me reading it. Nonetheless, I did read the whole thing and didn't quit partway through. It was a decent story, but really nothing to supremely recommend it.

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