



## Sizzle

*Lee McClain*

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## **Sizzle** Lee McClain

Linda Delgado has the best nose in all of Arizona — for cooking, that is. She may be only fourteen, but Linda loves making fresh Mexican food with her aunt Elba and blogging about food with her best friend, Julia.

But after Aunt Elba suffers a ministroke, Linda is catapulted across the country and into a whole new life. In Pittsburgh, living with bossy Aunt Pat and her seven kids, Linda feels completely out of place. Aunt Pat wants Linda's help with Angel, a young foster child in the family who speaks only Spanish, but he seems impossible. And Linda's cousin Chloe treats her like a total intruder. Worst of all, Aunt Pat is a local celebrity with her own TV show, *Cooking from Cans* — and she won't let Linda in the kitchen. Linda might go loco if she doesn't get some fresh food — like now.

Finally Linda gets her chance to sizzle — with a cooking project at school. It's an added bonus that cute-guy-with-a-secret Dino Moretti (who even smells delicious) is in her group. But when jealous Chloe joins the group, Linda's new life heats up fast. In the end, it's up to Linda to decide what kind of cook — and person — she truly wants to be.

## **Sizzle Details**

Date : Published October 1st 2011 by Two Lions  
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## From Reader Review Sizzle for online ebook

### Ms. Yingling says

Linda has a good life with her Aunt Elba, who runs a small diner in Arizona, but her aunt's health is bad enough to send Linda off to live with her Aunt Pat in Pittsburgh. Pat also cooking, but instead of the flavorful, fresh Mexican food that Linda likes to cook, Pat favors carb-heavy casseroles from cans, recipes for which she shares on her local cooking show, *Cooking From Cans*. This is in part because there are a lot of children in the family, including foster child Angel, who is having a hard time but takes to Linda because of their shared cultural heritage. Linda misses Arizona and cooking, and tries to "help" Pat out by teaching her that Linda's way of cooking is better, which imperils the show, which is a much needed source of income. She also needs to learn to get along with the other girls in the family, even though she has a crush on the same boy that one of her new sisters does.

Strengths: Very nice treatment of fitting in at school and with a new family, good cooking details, and a sweet budding romance. This is definitely one to add to the list of middle grade cooking novels!

Weaknesses: What happened to Linda's parents is never addressed and I kept waiting for it. Also, there is a web site listed for Pat's show, but it doesn't really exist. For some reason, this irks me, because some books do have real web sites.

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### Robin Herrera says

A sweet, family-focused story. There are a lot of characters, but they're all surprisingly well-drawn. I tended to get infuriated with Linda's foster family, and Linda herself as well - but the mark of a good book, in my opinion, is that it elicits a strong reaction from its readers. (I did yell at the book a couple of times, particularly when Linda was forced to attend a dance in a crappy dress, then left to carry in refreshments by herself, and then had to compete against her foster sister, who'd brought junk food refreshments solely to teach her a lesson. DID YOU HAVE TO BE SO MEAN, JEN?)

There's an interesting narrative device used in the book - Linda joins a facebook-meets-cooking site called FabFoodz.com. At first I didn't really like its inclusion, but as the novel went on and FabFoodz.com was incorporated into the actual plot, I came around and even looked forward to seeing what it would tell me next.

One thing I really appreciated, too, was that the novel didn't end with Linda convincing her new family to cook with fresh ingredients. Linda had to come around as well and learn that canned meals could hold sentimental value for some people (green bean casserole is used for that lesson here, and I also believe this is why a lot of people use canned cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving dinners).

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### Jennifer says

Summary:

Linda's life is nearly perfect. She lives in Arizona with her aunt, working in a family restaurant, and cooking delicious food. She is comfortable in the kitchen and allows her emotions to come out through the preparation of fresh, good food. Unfortunately, Linda's aunt is sick and has made arrangements for Linda to

move to Pittsburgh with her Aunt Pat and a very large family. Aunt Pat is the star of a local TV show called "Cooking from Cans" and fancies herself as the queen of the kitchen, which clashes with Linda's love of cooking. Linda attempts to do everything she can to find her new place within the hectic new life she has been thrust into, including sneaking off to cook elsewhere. Unfortunately, Linda accidentally threatens Aunt Pat's TV show and everything just seems to be falling apart. How will Linda help her new family, realize that she isn't going to get out of this new life, and survive her new school?

My thoughts:

Overall this is a fairly predictable plot that has been done several times within tween literature. It's typical teen tries to fit into a new environment thing. What really makes this book special is the food. Kids that have any interest in cooking will "eat" this book up. The process of making food, spices involved in various recipes, and the several new tastes that Linda experiences are richly described. There is enough in here that an experimental chef may be interested in attempting to cook dinner. The little blog posts with "what are you cooking" type things were cute. I also liked the general argument that fresh food tends to be better food.

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### **Sara says**

Sizzle by Lee McClair follows Linda who is forced to move from her aunts home in New Mexico where she cooks spicy Mexican food on a daily basis to Pittsburgh with her Aunt Pat (the Queen of Cans) and her very large family. Linda must learn to deal with a new school, a new family and somehow try to make her love of cooking work with an Aunt that doesn't use fresh food.

I loved reading about Linda, a Hispanic girl living as a foster child and trying to figure out how to navigate a different world. The descriptions of the food that she makes are mouth watering. I finished this book in an afternoon, unable to put it down.

Appropriateness: There is no adult content in this book. There is a bit of romance and boyfriend talk (enough that it would probably turn off boys). I would recommend this book to readers 9-13. It's a good book to talk about what makes a family and how compromise can work when trying to work through differences.

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### **Adrienne says**

I like food fiction, so I enjoyed the food aspects of the book. One concern that I have is the multicultural aspect and whether or not it's accurate. Linda is Latina, her best friend is American Indian (living on the "rez" to boot), and Dino is Italian--and the only thing we really see about them is what they eat--which is stereotypical to their ethnic group. And I don't know, maybe it's accurate, but maybe it's not, and I don't know what the author's qualifications for writing multicultural fiction are. I don't know if it's really a problem, but I also don't see why there couldn't be anything that took the characters beyond the stereotypes. The plot is all right, I guess. Overall, the book was okay but not something I find myself eager to recommend to anyone.

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### **Karissa says**

Young adult - or juvenile fiction as this read for me - with food is sometimes a hit or miss for me. I'm not a

cook so anything with recipes is consistently lost on me. But I enjoy reading about people that have a love for cooking and food in general.

Linda Delgado lives in Arizona with her aunt and works in her Mexican restaurant. She is 14, has a nose for ingredients, and a love of cooking. When her aunt Elba has a serious panic attack she evolves into more health issues, Linda makes the move to Pittsburgh to live with another aunt. Not only does she have to leave sunny Arizona, her best friend, her school, the restaurant and Elba, but now she lives in a full house with an aunt known for Cooking with Cans. Which means exactly that. Everything she cooks comes from cans. Nothing really fresh.

Aunt Pat and her husband, an author, have one biological daughter, Chloe, and six foster children living with them. The youngest, Angel, is a hellion. He refuses to speak English so Linda is the only one who can really communicate with him in Spanish. Linda offers to help cook, add some fresh ingredients to make meals a little more bearable (for her) but is instantly shut down. The kitchen is aunt Pat's domain and she will NOT be threatened.

Linda gets her frustrations out on a foodie social media type service called fabfoodz.com. She spends a lot of time pooping on the canned recipes. Which is understandable but dude. Leave the green bean casserole alone.

The main character is 14 and the author does a good job reflecting her age. She's not too young to totally ignore the advances of a certain Italian, but the writing is young enough (and clean) for younger audiences. And, even though I've lived in Texas all of my life, I've never tried an empanada. This book totally had me wanting to try them out.

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### **Amanda says**

This is a cute tween/YA book about a fourteen-year-old "foodie" thrust into a canned-chef nightmare. It has some fluffy romance, and deals lightly multicultural and family issues, but unfortunately fewer recipes than I hoped there would be. I know that this book is meant for younger teens, but at under 200 pages, I also wished that the author had gone into more detail on the stories of some of the side characters. Overall, a good read for a middle school audience, whether or not they are interested in food themselves. Maybe it will get them into cooking, even if is only of the semi-homemade kind.

\*In compliance with FTC guidelines, I disclose that I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.\*

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### **Toni says**

Great book for 7-9th graders

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### **Nancy says**

Great opportunity to pair a cooking activity with a novel for a Girls' Book Discussion! Explores family issues and belonging.

## Lindsey says

Interesting premise, less interesting characters

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## Emily says

Why I picked it up: It's food fiction! I love fiction where food plays a series role and like it even more when recipes are included.

Fourteen-year old Linda lives in Arizona with her Aunt Elba and the two run an authentic Mexican restaurant with all foods made from scratch with fresh ingredients. Linda loves to cook and has a very sensitive and refined sense of smell. When Aunt Elba gets sick, Linda must go live with her Aunt Pat, who she has never met. Pat has a local show called "Cooking from Cans" and Linda is distraught over the lack of fresh ingredients, and Aunt Pat's tight control over the kitchen.

It wasn't Earth shattering, but it was enjoyable. Some things seemed too extreme and outdated to be realistic, like Aunt Pat not wanting a single fresh ingredient on her table in a book published in 2011. I did like the depiction of a house full of adopted and foster children all from different races. Blog posts from Linda's food blog between chapters give the basics of a few recipes.

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## John Clark says

Fourteen year old Linda Delgado has lived with her aunt Elba for as long as she can remember. Her father is a mystery, her mom deceased. They get by, but barely, thanks to the Mexican restaurant Elba has run for years. When her aunt's health goes bad, Linda is sent to stay with her other aunt Pat in Pittsburgh. Not only is Linda losing everything that's familiar (Arizona, cooking, her school and her best friend Julia), but she goes from just a household comprised of her and Elba to a chaotic one with two parents and seven kids, six of whom are either adopted or foster kids.

Chloe, the only biological child, isn't happy about having to share her room and her family with a girl her age, and in the beginning, the tension between them is pretty high, especially since both girls like Dino Moretti, a boy in their class. Linda's biggest frustration is Aunt Pat's refusal to let her cook anything at all. This is mainly because Pat is host of a local cable TV show where everything she cooks, with the exception of things like hamburger and stew beef, comes from cans. This horrifies Linda and she deals with it by making fun of it on her food blog.

When the blog gets noticed, Linda finds herself in hot water. How she makes amends to Pat, works things out with Chloe and what happens to her love of cooking and her crush on Dino make this a fun read for tweens, especially those who love cooking or have foster family connections.

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## Heather says

I think that this is typically found in the Young Adult section, but it was more like a tween novel for me.

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This story had potential but, for me, failed because of one crucial flaw- the voice of Linda was nowhere young enough to be a 14-year-old. Her character is a fresh-food lover who worked in a restaurant and was a food blogger. That was fine, but she was too self-aware for me to be a true teenager. I liked many elements of the story: a girl displaced from her home, learning to get along with "siblings", learning how to make it at a new school, and a first chance at romance. The mother character of Pat was confusing to me, who in their right mind would be so hell-bent on eating primarily out of cans? How can that be considered healthy or wise? And who is so mean that they won't let their children develop their interests and talents by working and cooking in the kitchen? Sounds like a recipe for a parenting disaster!

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### **Mary Sanchez says**

Linda Degado is a foodie at fourteen-years-old. She has grown up cooking from scratch with fresh ingredients in her aunt's authentic Mexican restaurant in Arizona. When Aunt Elba gets sick, Linda must now move across the country and live with her Aunt Pat, who has a local Pittsburgh TV show called "Cooking from Cans" and many foster children, including Angel, who only speaks Spanish which Linda can translate, but she can't deal with her cousin, Chloe, who is reluctant to share her room, let alone her crush, Dino. Things start to sizzle when Linda tries to find a way to cook what she craves in a cooking project at school.

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### **Elizabeth C says**

Sizzle by Lee McClain is a nonfiction novel of drama and cooking. Linda and Aunt Elba live in Arizona and own a little diner. But, Aunt Elba had a mini stroke which is a warning for a stroke. They had to shut down the diner because of Aunt Elba's condition. Linda was unhappy with this situation and so was Aunt Elba but it was the right thing to do. So Linda had to live in Philadelphia with her Aunt Pat who was the host of the show "Cooking from Cans". Aunt Elba had to move with her parents who were old and ungrateful for everything. Linda loved cooking so much, but with moving to Philadelphia, she couldn't cook with any fresh food because of Pat. Will Linda get her victory and cook with Aunt Pat?

There is one main theme to this novel, don't judge a book by its cover. Linda always judged Pat because of her cooking decisions, which was a mistake. But, Linda has not cooked with canned food, like Pat, because she owned a diner. Also, Pat has to cook for eight children, her husband and herself. But, Linda learns her lesson.

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