



L'Appart: The Delights and Disasters of Making My Paris Home

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Bestselling author and world-renowned chef David Lebovitz continues to mine the rich subject of his evolving ex-Pat life in Paris, using his perplexing experiences in apartment renovation as a launching point for stories about French culture, food, and what it means to revamp one's life. Includes dozens of new recipes.

When David Lebovitz began the project of updating his apartment in his adopted home city, he never imagined he would encounter so much inexplicable red tape while contending with the inconsistent European work ethic and hours. Lebovitz maintains his distinctive sense of humor with the help of his partner Romain, peppering this renovation story with recipes from his Paris kitchen. In the midst of it all, he reveals the adventure that accompanies carving out a place for yourself in a foreign country—under baffling conditions—while never losing sight of the magic that inspired him to move to the City of Light many years ago, and to truly make his home there.

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From Reader Review L'Appart: The Delights and Disasters of Making My Paris Home for online ebook

Danielle says

I have one of David's previous books, "The Sweet Life" but I haven't gotten around to reading it. So this is my first book that's been written by him. I am a total sucker for all things French and especially Parisian, so of course I was thrilled to read a memoir set in Paris.

Overall, I thought the book was okay. L'Appart is all about the trials and tribulations of buying and renovating a Paris apartment when you are an American. Of course I, like countless others, would gladly move to Paris but this book has me thinking otherwise. Most of the book focuses on David having to deal with a shady contractor and the endless workings on his apartment. Sometimes it got hard for me to want to read the endless ways things went wrong. I know it must have been awful for him but it really doesn't make for fun reading when nothing goes right. And it doesn't matter whether it's in Paris, France or in some small town in the US, renovations rarely go smoothly. I was kind of frustrated that David let the lazy work go on for as long as he did. I ended up skimming some pages after awhile.

I did like some of the recipes that are at the end of almost every chapter. And even though it got to be too much somewhat, I did like seeing what it takes to buy an apartment in Paris. So it wasn't complete l'amour for me but I didn't hate it either.

Book received through the Amazon Vine Program

Melissa says

Lebovitz's roller-coaster tale about purchasing and then renovating an apartment in Paris does not inspire me AT ALL to ever buy property in a foreign country. The US is bad enough. It unfortunately also made this a rather repetitive book and the recipes Lebovitz included at the end of almost every chapter didn't always feel connected to the chapter (and complicated, these are not for inexperienced cooks).

Holly says

More David Lebovitz on life in Paris. *L'Appart* concerns exactly what the title suggests - his experiences in buying and renovating a Paris apartment. It's a years-long process that he occasionally regrets embarking on, but it's told with humor and interesting details and portraits of real estate agents, builders, and contractors. He is completely taken advantage of by all of these parties, and the building contractors are so awful - so lazy and hostile, even - that I was feeling actual physical anxiety by the later chapters. *C'est incroyable!* I am glad that this was not read by the author, because I don't know how he could have relived his trauma - yes, I'd call it trauma! - by rereading the book for an audio production. Instead, reader Matthew Halstead strikes just the right tones of fatigue, worry, incredulity, and at the end, anger, all without displaying rancor.

I enjoyed this more than *The Sweet Life in Paris* because this memoir didn't try as hard to be amusing or to cover everything about French life; it felt less forced, and the subject matter was more focused (recipes notwithstanding, and the dishes usually had something to do with the prose).

Deanna says

Not sure if I'm giving this 3 stars because I want it to be at least 3 stars, or if it actually belongs there. Ok, I'll say it does. It doesn't belong in my collection of 2 star reads. But I was disappointed.

I enjoy his blog writing and enjoyed his earlier memoir well enough. This one lacked a sense of the personal.

It's perhaps unfair to compare it to Frances Mayes' Tuscany memoirs, which are rich in personal reflection and inner life while depicting lush territory and agonizing ex-pat-making-a-home challenges. Different writers, perhaps different aims.

But I would have been a lot more engaged in the angst and successes of the Parisian home-making journey if it hadn't felt superficial. While I sympathized with the recounting of the all the woes, I didn't empathize even though I wanted to. He just didn't feel real on these pages. The problems were real enough, but he and his partner felt flat, as though he didn't want to reveal their story, only talk about what happened to them.

It didn't help that I have a sense of him from his other writing. Here, I mostly felt tired from the recounting. I wish an editor had encouraged a deeper path with this, because I would love to read a do-over of this book. The story is there, it just didn't come through for me.

I will read future books and continue to enjoy his blog. This one just didn't quite hit home.

Mister Moose says

I'm sorry to say so but this is a terribly dull book, and I'm frankly amazed that a good editor didn't collar the writer and get him to tell a better and less willingly self-involved story.

Maggie says

I really liked David Lebovitz's first book set in Paris so I was looking forward to reading this advanced copy. Unfortunately I did not enjoy this book and found it very forced.

Lebovitz recounts his adventures in buying an apartment in Paris. He starts off by telling us that looking for an apartment in Paris is different than looking for an apartment in the U.S. Then he tells us buying an apartment in Paris is different from buying an apartment in the U.S. We hear the same about buying flooring, stoves, dish drainers etc. For more than 10 chapters it is a constant whine.

Then he starts in on the French language and how difficult it is to ask for things when you don't have a full grasp of the language. This is when I felt he stretched the story to make it more funny or interesting but it comes across as a big whine and very 'ugly American'.

He has a French boyfriend who I would imagine would have helped him out with the language issue.

To be honest I only read a little over half of this book because when his struggle with the language made buying a sink difficult because the word for dish drainer is similar to the word for a woman's halter top; he commented and I quote: "The only connection I could see between the two was they both had racks". I was done and DNF'd it. The one star I gave the book is for the recipes after every couple of chapters.

Maya says

Love his writing and his recipes and was so excited for this book, but reading for chapters on end about his largely self-induced renovation nightmares made me want to tear my hair out. Not for me.

Kathy Heare Watts says

I won an uncorrected proof advanced reading copy of this book during a Goodreads giveaway. I am under no obligation to leave a review or rating and do so voluntarily. So that others may also enjoy this book, I am paying it forward by donating it to my local library.

Nora|KnyguDama says

K? reiškia kraustymasis, nauj? nam? apyvokos daikt? paieškos, interjero k?rimas, nam? atmosferos auginimas tikrai žinau. Lygiai taip pat žinau k? reiškia ieškoti ger? darbinink?, meistr? geban?i? laiku ir pagal tavo skon? atlikti pavestus darbus. Galiu galv? guldyti, jog didžioji dalis iš savo pa?i? patirties žinote apie k? aš kalbu. Be r?pes?io, nerimo ir nerv? joks kraustymasis ar remontas visoj pasaulio istorijoj tikrai neapsi?jo. O dabar dar šiek tiek pasunkinkime užduot?. ?sivaizduokit, jog ?sikurti ir pasidaryti ger? remont? jums reikia kitoje šalyje. ?ia j?s kalbos gerai nežinot, mat statyb? terminologija tikrai ne kiekvienam vadov?lyje yra, tautos kult?ra ir tempai skiriasi nuo ?prasto j?s? gyvenimo, galima apgaul?, vagyst?, nekokybiškumas tyko už kiekvieno kampo. Kiek ilgai tvirtum?te? Aš, tikriausiai, neilgai... Ta?iau David Lebovitz ištv?r? visus vargus, sunkumus ar netgi absurdiškus remonto nuklydimus, mat jo svajon? gyventi ir tur?ti nuosav? but? Paryžiuje buvo didesn?.

Žinomas virtuv?s šefas, keli? knyg? autorius dievina Pranc?zija. Jo specialyb? - konditeris, o Pranc?zija juk vis? skanumyn? gimtin?! Kelis metus David gyveno išnuomotame bute, ta?iau pribrendo laikas nuosavam. Visgi met? gyvenim? San Franciske, darb? prestižiniame restorane ir atvyko ? Paryži? kurti maisto šedevr? ir rašyti apie tai knyg?. Ta?iau David paraš? ne tik recept? knyg?. ? "Apartament?" jis sud?jo visus savo komiškus vargus renkantis, o v?liau remontuojant nuosav? but?. Vis? pirma, Paryžiuje n?ra vienos, vientisos svetain?s ar kito šaltinio kur b?t? galima perži?r?ti vis? mieste parduodam? but? s?raš?. Turi papasakoti savo l?kes?ius agentui, o jau jis si?lo variantus. D?kui Dievui, tai David pavyko. At?jus laikui prad?ti remonto darbus ir užvir? visa koš?... Lebovitz labai nuosekliai, pasitelkdamas taikl? humor? papasakojo visus taut? skirtumus, pranc?z? darb? ypatybes ir visa tai kas j? var? ? nevilti. Vis? pirma: kalbos nemok?jimas. Vos viena raid? ne taip ištarta ir žodži? prasm? tampa visiškai kitokia. Tik pagalvokit ko ?manoma prisidirbti ko nors ne taip paprašius meistro... Nelygiai nupjautos k?dži? kojos, rozet?s kvailiausiose vietose, langai taip pat ne tie... O kur dar neaišk?s mokes?iai neaišku už k?. Aš jau seniai b??iau galv? pametusi, jei man reik?t? tvarkytis su tuo, su kuo reikal? tur?jo autorius kurdamas savo namus.

"Apartamentas" - labai smagi knyga. O tie kas turi panašios patirties supras, užjaus ir vistiek juoksis iš autoriaus ir kuriozini? situacij? ? kurias jis pateko. Skaitant labai jau?iasi David Lebovitz meil? Pranc?zijai. Ta meil? man primin? ilgai santuokoje išbuvusi? por? jausmus: daug dalyk? erzina, pabosta, kartais net nervina, ta?iau pykt labai negali - myli ir taškas. Prie vis? patarim? kaip s?kmingai (nežinia ar tai išvis ?manoma) ?sirengti namus Paryžiuje, knygoje apstu ir ?domi? fakt? apie paryžie?i? kult?r?. Pavyzdžiui: didžiausias nemandagumo ženklas turguje - pa?iam rankomis rinktis ir leisti vaisius ar daržoves. Atrodo

mums tai ?prasta, joks pardav?jas d?l to nepyksta. Na, o ten ir pavarytas šalin gali b?ti... Taip pat, kiekvien? skyri? apjungia koks nors patiekalas, kurio recept? pabaigoje randame. Kuomet David su savo partneriu lank?si IKEA parduotuv?je, eil?je pralauk? keturias valandas, pavargo, susipyko ir v?l susitaik? - skanavo firminius IKEA m?sos kukulius. Taigi net j? ir j? padažo receptas knygoje yra! (Vyras pamat? t? recept?, tai jau vakarien? m?s? namuose kaip ir aiški... :D) Knyga tikrai patiks dievinantiems Paryži?, maist?, nebijantiems daug kitos kalbos žodži? tekste. Tie kas nor?s veiksmo, nuotyki?, kažkoki? intrig?li? to ?ia neras. Tai ramus, bet juokingas pasakojimas apie žmogaus kov? su taut? skirtumais, bei savo kantryb?s taur?s tikrinim?.

Michelle says

As charming as it is informative, L'appart offers a chef's eye view of the beauty and bureaucratic madness that is France.

After moving from San Francisco to Paris, Lebovitz spent a decade living in a tiny top-floor flat with a magnificent view of the City of Light. When he finally decided to buy his own place, he had no idea what he was in for. In this fresh, funny memoir, sprinkled with insider knowledge about Paris life (sales only happen once a year, for example, and baguettes always come wrapped in tiny paper "because excess is ground upon in France"), Lebovitz chronicles his attempt to buy and remodel a Paris apartment amidst miles of red tape and misunderstandings. Each chapter ends with a recipe, which, for the culinarily untalented among us, may prove as daunting as dealing with the Parisian real estate agents and electricians. Even if you can't imagine pulling off a pain perdu caramelise, you'll be happy to learn that pain perdu got its name because it "takes lost (Peru) bread and turns it around, making it something marvelous."

Leibovitz's love of his adopted city, as well as his passion for the bounty of the Parisian marche, comes through loud and clear. An utter delight.

Lucy Burdette says

delightful read for Paris lovers and foodies and anyone crazy enough to attempt renovations in France!

Randal White says

Will blow away your House Hunters International fantasy! Lebovitz is an American chef and cookbook author who moved to Paris to advance his career. I have read his previous books, and he is a talented and engaging author. This particular book is about his search for, purchase of, and renovation of a home in Paris. And what a great story it is! I found myself surprised at the difficulty in even locating a property for sale in Paris (House Hunters International makes it look so easy and fun on TV!). Upon finally finding the property, the author experienced the infamous Paris bureaucracy in the purchase of it. And then, just when you think it should all be smooth sailing, the real trouble begins in the renovation stage! I cannot believe what Lebovitz went through. His stamina and perseverance are amazing. I am sure that I would have gave up many times, escaping back to the safety of the United States. Kudos to him for his overcoming of all the obstacles thrown at him. I found the book to be fascinating, and could not put it down. I literally devoured it in two evenings. The author is very engaging, writes extremely well, and manages to keep the reader "pulling for" him. I highly recommend this book, even if it does lay to rest my "House Hunters International" fantasy of moving

to France!

Angela says

There's good material here, I think. But this needed a MUCH tighter edit. There's a LOT of repetition of phrases, and even of little anecdotes. And while I understand that Lebovitz is a noted recipe author, the recipes tacked onto the chapters didn't flow AT ALL with the story. If you're going to include recipes, talk about them in the chapters. And be consistent: either all chapters have recipes or all don't. The book really doesn't flow because of the inconsistency.

Thanks to the publisher and to NetGalley for the ARC.

Beverly Swerling says

Obviously my friends and family know I adore memoir in general and chef/food/cookery memoir maybe most of all. I got two such for Christmas. (Will review the second shortly.)

The author of L'Appart is David Lebovitz whose blog, Living the Sweet Life in Paris, is one of the best food sites on the net, and I am a frequent visitor and a faithful reader of his newsletters. Add to that the fact that I too was an American expat for many years, and I've bought and remodeled property in a foreign language, not once but three times, and you'll know I was predisposed to love this book.

I almost did.

Bottom line, I didn't love it, but I liked it a lot.

David, or Daveed as his Paris friends (and enemies) have it, moved to Paris a decade before the misadventure he describes in these pages: buying an apartment in Paris, and having it remodeled to suit the needs of an American (a dryer and a large refrigerator and a decent shower being must-haves). Just finding and acquiring the property--he settled on the up-and-coming but not yet fashionable eleventh arrondissement--took a couple of years, complicated by their being no such thing as multiple listing services, nor real estate agents with any interest in hustle. But at last he acquired a large two level space and set about hiring a contractor.

I was with him 100 percent up to that point.

What seems hard to believe given that he'd been doing things the French way for some time, and had a French partner (a long time relationship but not one where they shared a roof), is that he hired the first guy who was recommended by a friend and began paying him upfront - definitely not how one operates in France, or with contractors anywhere else, come to that. But that's what he did.

There followed a long and so-awful-it's-funny series of disasters, detailed here in Lebovitz's easy-going and disarmingly frank writing style. Spiced up with his knowledge of food and cooking/baking, evocation of Paris markets, and a recipe at the end of each chapter. It all ends happily, though apparently at great expense.

I read the book in an afternoon (snowing and cold and huddling under a duvet reading about someone else's troubles was exactly what I needed) and enjoyed it enough to give it four stars. If this kind of thing is to your

taste (as it is mine) you'll probably enjoy it as well. But I felt cheated by the lack of pictures -- a glaring omission since his excellent photography is one of the reasons his blog is so terrific -- and a little more creative effort to entwine his food and food philosophy with the saga would have gotten me to go for five. That latter complaint may be a bum rap. Lebovitz is about straightforward and down-to-earth baking and cooking so expecting a more cerebral approach to that aspect is probably my hang-up not his. But the pictures...

I suspect the publisher is the reason for their absence; including photography considerably increases the cost of making a book. But they sprang for endpapers (also an expensive extra in publishing) and he's got a wide following which probably wouldn't be put off by an extra couple of bucks on the price. Maybe it's something to do with the labyrinthine legal system in France. Or Lebovitz's unwillingness to give up still more of his privacy. In any case, it seems to me a bad decision. But read the book and decide for yourself.

Mary says

This was described to me as "the book that will ruin your House Hunters International Fantasies", and boy, did it ever! Lebovitz does a great job taking you through the process of procuring-- and creating-- his Paris home, which is alternatively delightful and, well... a little boring. I love foodie and travel memoirs, but this one was just too much home reno to be a home run for me. Still, I found his writing engaging and his Parisian food and lifestyle/culture bits totally immersive and fun. If you're a Francophile with home reno fever, this is the book for you. Thanks to Blogging for Books for the review copy!
