



# The Restaurant Critic's Wife

By Elizabeth LaBan

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***People* magazine included *The Restaurant Critic's Wife* on their Great New Fiction list and hailed it as “thoroughly entertaining.”**

Lila Soto has a master’s degree that’s gathering dust, a work-obsessed husband, two kids, and lots of questions about how exactly she ended up here.

In their new city of Philadelphia, Lila’s husband, Sam, takes his job as a restaurant critic a little too seriously. To protect his professional credibility, he’s determined to remain anonymous. Soon his preoccupation with anonymity takes over their lives as he tries to limit the family’s contact with anyone who might have ties to the foodie world. Meanwhile, Lila craves adult conversation and some relief from the constraints of her homemaker role. With her patience wearing thin, she begins to question everything: her decision to get pregnant again, her break from her career, her marriage—even if leaving her ex-boyfriend was the right thing to do. As Sam becomes more and more fixated on keeping his identity secret, Lila begins to wonder if her own identity has completely disappeared—and what it will take to get it back.

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## The Restaurant Critic's Wife By Elizabeth LaBan Bibliography

- Rank: #557815 in Books
- Published on: 2016-01-05
- Released on: 2016-01-05
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x 1.00" w x 5.50" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 313 pages

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## Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Lila never saw herself as a stay-at-home mom. She liked her unencumbered life and high-intensity, high-profile job as crisis manager for a major hotel chain. Then she met food writer Sam Soto. Before too long, she has two very small children and is living in a row house in Philadelphia, where Sam has taken a job as a restaurant reviewer for a local newspaper. But she misses work, and Sam is going to extremes in his efforts to preserve his anonymity. He doesn't like her getting too close to the other moms in the neighborhood, less they have any ties to the food industry, and he adopts ever-more-elaborate disguises to wear in the restaurants he visits. Frustrated, Lila has her own ways of regaining control; for example, she goes behind Sam's back to accept some work assignments as a favor to her ex-boss. Though Sam's obsessiveness is not quite convincing, readers will like Laban's humor and breezy style, and many will relate to Lila's struggle to balance the demands of husband, kids, and job. —Mary Ellen Quinn

## Review

"A tender, charming, and deliciously diverting story about love, marriage, and how your restaurant-review sausage gets made. *The Restaurant Critic's Wife* is compulsively readable and richly detailed, a guilt-free treat that will have you devouring every word." —Jennifer Weiner, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Good In Bed*, *Best Friends Forever*, and *Who Do You Love*

"Elizabeth LaBan's novel *The Restaurant Critic's Wife* stirs in love and intrigue making for a savory delight that pairs perfectly with your armchair. Prepare to be charmed!" —Elin Hilderbrand, author of *The Rumor*

"A heartfelt and relatable look at a woman navigating the difficulties of marriage and motherhood—while struggling to maintain a sense of self. Written with charm, honesty, and an insider's eye into a usually hidden slice of the restaurant world, it's a winning recipe." —Sarah Pekkanen, internationally bestselling author of *Things You Won't Say*

"In her debut novel for adults, Elizabeth LaBan cooks up a delectable buffet about motherhood, friendship, ambition, and romance (albeit one in need of a little more spice). She captures the essence of life with small children (smitten with a side of hysteria) and weaves a relatable, charming love story with the flair of an expert baker turning out a flawless lattice crust. LaBan's four-star story has the satisfying effect of a delicious meal shared with friends you can't wait to see again." —Elisabeth Egan, author of *A Window Opens*

"Two things engage me when it comes to fiction—characters I want to spend more time with, and details, the juicier the better, from a world I'm curious about but not likely to ever experience. Elizabeth LaBan's novel *The Restaurant Critic's Wife* has both...The best part? Ms. LaBan really is a restaurant critic's wife. Her husband writes for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*—which means that the wonderful details in the book both ring true and occasionally are." —*New York Times*, *Motherlode*

"Author LaBan (*The Tragedy Paper*), who is married to a restaurant critic, excellently makes the joys and difficulties of young motherhood feel real on the page. Readers who are in the thick of raising a young family will enjoy, as will foodies looking for insight into the restaurant world." —*Library Journal*

"The narrative flows effortlessly, and the dialogue is engaging and evocative. Lila and Sam's love and

devotion, despite expected bumps along the way, provides a sensitive look at rediscovering yourself and your marriage.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Thoroughly entertaining.” —*People*

“LaBan’s writing...is like a dish of smooth custard—straightforward and a treat to take in. The detailed meal descriptions are likely to spark some hunger pangs, and the spicy and sympathetic Lila makes a perfect meal companion.” —Washington Independent Review of Books

“Elizabeth LaBan's new novel tells a lively, often hilarious, story of one woman's struggle to deal with her semifamous husband's career and its side-effects...[Her] characters are fascinating, and the premise of her story is unique and guaranteed to keep readers flipping the pages...A light, fun read that would be perfect for book clubs.” —*Wichita Falls Times Record News*

#### *InStyle* Book Club Pick

“[In *The Restaurant Critic’s Wife*], we get an accurate portrayal of the pressures of restaurant reviewing. To outsiders, it must seem like the greatest job on earth. In reality, as Lila points out in several dining scenes, it is a grueling task to assemble tasters who understand they can't order what they want to eat, and your host will be anything but social.” —*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“*The Restaurant Critic's Wife* pulls back the veil on the declining art of ‘educating the reader versus badmouthing the restaurant.’” —*Louisville Courier-Journal*

#### About the Author

Elizabeth LaBan is the author of *The Tragedy Paper*, which has been translated into eleven languages, and *The Grandparents Handbook*, which has been translated into seven languages. She lives in Philadelphia with her restaurant-critic husband and two children.

## Users Review

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