



Life Is Meals: A Food Lover's Book of Days

James Salter, Kay Salter

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From the PEN/Faulkner Award-winning author James Salter and his wife, Kay, amateur chefs and perfect hosts, here is a charming, beautifully illustrated tour de table: a food lover's companion that, with an entry for each day of the year, takes us from a Twelfth Night cake in January to a champagne dinner on New Year's Eve. *Life Is Meals* is rich with culinary wisdom, history, recipes, literary pleasures, and the authors' own memories of successes and catastrophes. For instance: The menu on the *Titanic* on the fatal night? Reflections on dining from Queen Victoria, JFK, Winnie-the-Pooh, Garrison Keillor, and many others? The seductiveness of a velvety Brie or the perfect martini? How to decide whom to invite to a dinner party? and whom not to? John Irving's family recipe for meatballs; Balzac's love of coffee? The greatest dinner ever given at the White House? Where in Paris Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter had French onion soup at 4:00 a.m.? How to cope with acts of God and man-made disasters in the kitchen? Sophisticated as well as practical, opinionated, and indispensable, *Life Is Meals* is a tribute to the glory of food and drink, and the joy of sharing them with others. "The meal is the emblem of civilization," the Salters observe. "What would one know of life as it should be lived, or nights as they should be spent, apart from meals?"

Life Is Meals: A Food Lover's Book of Days Details

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Carrie says

This is a great concept and collection authored by the esteemed writers James Salter and his wife Kay (Eldredge). It originated conceptually from their own "dinner book" of keeping track of meals they prepared and hosted in their Aspen home. That evolved from simple meal lists and tweaked recipes to include anecdotes, reflections on the guests, commentary on the occasion and all manner of personal record to become quite a family keepsake. That in itself is a great idea - if I entertained more or rubbed elbows with famous people regularly. This edition is more generic, though it includes some stories unique to their family (the birth of their son and rubbing his lips with wine, friends who reciprocated recipes, travel food, etc) but here each day includes a short entry on the history of a food, a famous dinner party, literary or historical figure, a tried and true recipe or etiquette tip. Not a cover to cover read, but a great resource/gift/entertainment for a bookish foodie fan.

Catrien Deys says

Just great fun and some info that was really new to me.

Carol says

With an entry for each day of the year, I will be reading this daily style, savoring each entry like a good meal. I sent this book to a friend that loves to cook and who takes joy in the process in hopes that we both can share some conversation this coming year over the love of food.

I will not post everyday but may share thoughts on what I'm reading now and then.

January 1st speaks to how much of our lives celebrations revolve around food.

"It is a habitual ceremony"

When I first decided to lose weight many years ago I bemoaned the fact that you had to eat unlike giving up other bad habits. I lost the joy of celebratory food. This reminds me well that many of the best days in life are those meals that signify an event be it wedding, christening, holiday and even the repast of death.

January 2nd talks about The Jules Verne restaurant and The Eiffel Tower. What a special place to share a meal. Lucky those who have...

May 29, 2014

Though I have continued to read this it hasn't proved to be quite the book I thought it would be. I was looking for a more personal narrative of food related stories. The book is entertaining. It is what it is and for what it is, it is fine. I will not be adding to this review.

Alison says

Interesting read, though some of their "facts" are incorrect.

Karla says

I love the premise of "Life is Meals" but for me, it fell short. I found that I marked several pages to reference back to but overall it was written so historically and especially European history with a strong emphasis on France and French history, that I skimmed those parts. The Salter's are living a very interesting life and are world travelers, meeting interesting people and eating interesting food. I am an everyday cook and I think this book is for true gourmet chefs. The Salter's fall into this category - and what hosts they must be!

Ionut says

I know James Salter for his other books that center around strong male and female characters (The Hunters, All that is, etc). He once wrote in a piece for Esquire magazine called "Younger Women, Older Men" that: "man's dream and ambition is to have women, as a cat's is to catch birds, but this is something that must be restrained". A lot of his previous work can be captured with that phrase. This book is completely different and that is one of the reasons I found it interesting. It is authored by James and his wife Kay and it is a collection of recipes, anecdotes, funny moments that took place at the parties they hosted, and historical pieces centered around meals and food.

James and Kay met when he was in his 50s and she was in her 30s and that event is captured in this book "The man across the table from me was everything. I was young and still too inexperienced to be a decent conversationalist. We talked about Europe which he knew intimately - Rome, Paris, London, Barcelona - a world I had seen bits of on a student tour and I longed to know. It was the first of thousands - at home, abroad, in elegant restaurants and unforgettable dives. A lifetime of meals. He's always said that conversation - and so much of it takes place at the table - is the essence of a shared life. I learned to talk".

James and Kay lived at a time when women were often enough typecast into certain types of jobs. At the same time it was a period that shaped american cooking and american understanding of certain foods and drinks. So it's no wonder that some of the most important pioneers of that period such as Julia Child, Irma Rombauer, MFK Fisher were women and made their way into this book. Overall, the book is a light and interesting read and I will keep it as a reference for certain recipes.

Lori says

Though this would've been the perfect "snack" book -- pick it up and have a bite now and then -- I treated it like Thanksgiving, gorging myself.

I learned a ton of random food and drink trivia, marked some recipes to try and really, really wished James

and Kay were in my inner circle. Their attitude toward food -- hell, toward life -- is exactly the philosophy I'm embracing these days.

I plan to liberally quote, cook and loan.

Laura says

It was the illustrator of *Life is Meals* that led me to the book. I'm a big fan of the watercolor work of Fabrice Moireau, who's illustrated several gorgeous sketchbooks of major cities, various regions of France, and other exotic locations. In this book, Moireau seems to have had his hands tied a bit. The illustrations are small---little, precise cameos scattered through the text. Still, I love anything Moireau does and this book is no exception. I had not read James Salter before and I'm very glad to have been introduced to his crisp, clear writing. I started reading this book in the normal way, page after page. I now dip into it from time to time, to see what Salter has to say on any given day. (Today's entry is on the illustrious chef Auguste Escoffier.) This is a delightful book-- always informative, often witty, well written, and beautifully, if sparsely and quietly, illustrated.

Audrey says

due back at library before I could finish it.

Noah says

Considering that I will happily eat leftovers out of my hand over the sink if nobody's watching, I'm probably not this book's target audience, but I really enjoyed it. The whole book is a love letter to a life spent richly experiencing food and it's charming throughout, with individual entries ranging from ancient history to useful advice to personal memories. Highly recommended.

Tuck says

james salter is a brilliant novelist, and this book of days (of food) is a selection he and his wife kay salter have collected and written of the many years of married life, in aspen and long island, and paris, cooking, eating, dinner parties given and attended, romantic meals in restaurantes etc. but frankly the "facts" are fuzzy and the recipes are mostly taken from others and not so unique. the illustrations though are super, and the book was designed and made by callaway, so the physical book is a treasure, and fabrice moireau is a genius who can say more in a teeny tiny portrait of a french breadshop than salters can in chapters on bread. so 5 stars for the book. 2 or so for the contents. if one is interested in more substantial and accurate foodie books see larry osborne *The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World* and steingarten *It Must've Been Something I Ate: The Return of the Man Who Ate Everything* and buford *Heat: An Amateur's Adventures as Kitchen Slave, Line Cook, Pasta-Maker, and Apprentice to a Dante-Quoting Butcher in Tuscany* and leave j salter to his fictions *All That Is*

Bodine Dekkers says

just highly enjoyed this book :)

Melissa says

Interesting book with short vignettes for each day of the year about food, meals, and different people. I learned so much from this book!

Eva Gogola says

I wish I could give this book a hundred and five stars. Cover to cover, it was one of my favorite books. First, you can't go wrong with the subject: food. The authors are married, adorably in love and very knowledgeable about meals. The book reads in short spurts, one or two passages for each day of the year. Some days cover history, others recipes and yet other personal anecdotes. Every day, every month, is a delight to read. It made me interested in wine for the first time in my life. The book also contains a thorough index and lovely illustrations.

This is a book that I would definitely want to have in my personal library. The only downside to this book is that I was constantly hungry. Even so, I found myself more inspired to explore, make and share food.

Stephanie says

One of my favorite food books ever. The authors take disparate subjects around food and weave them all together into one magical whole that inspires and connects.
