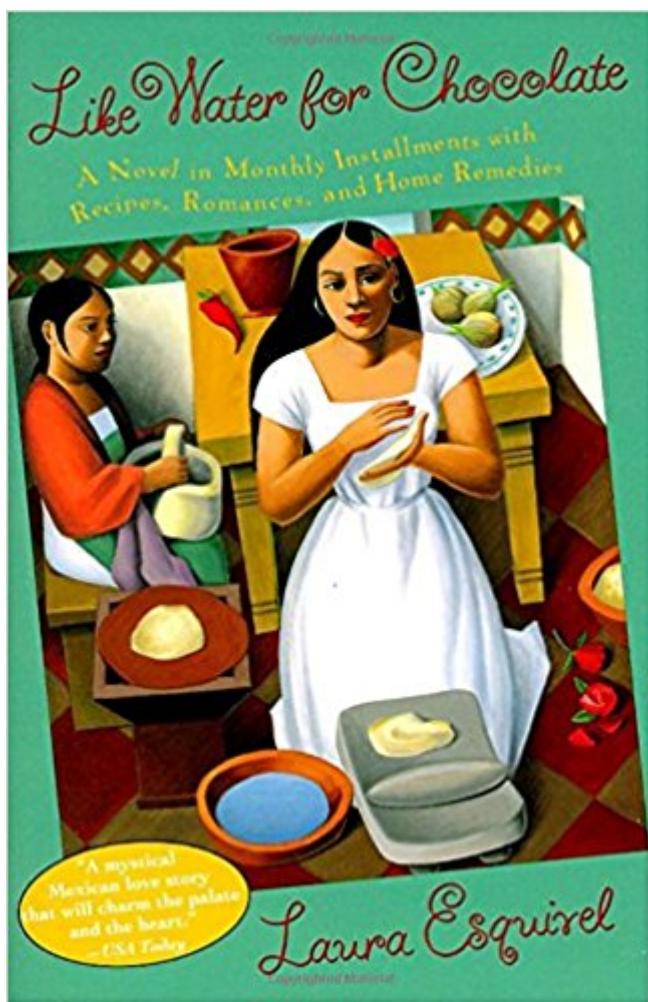


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# Like Water For Chocolate: A Novel In Monthly Installments With Recipes, Romances, And Home Remedies



## **Synopsis**

The bestselling phenomenon and inspiration for the award-winning film. Earthy, magical, and utterly charming, this tale of family life in turn-of-the-century Mexico blends poignant romance and bittersweet wit. This classic love story takes place on the De la Garza ranch, as the tyrannical owner, Mama Elena, chops onions at the kitchen table in her final days of pregnancy. While still in her mother's womb, her daughter to be weeps so violently she causes an early labor, and little Tita slips out amid the spices and fixings for noodle soup. This early encounter with food soon becomes a way of life, and Tita grows up to be a master chef, using cooking to express herself and sharing recipes with readers along the way.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Each chapter of screenwriter Esquivel's utterly charming interpretation of life in turn-of-the-century Mexico begins with a recipe--not surprisingly, since so much of the action of this exquisite first novel (a bestseller in Mexico) centers around the kitchen, the heart and soul of a traditional Mexican family. The youngest daughter of a well-born rancher, Tita has always known her destiny: to remain single and care for her aging mother. When she falls in love, her mother quickly scotches the liaison and tyrannically dictates that Tita's sister Rosaura must marry the luckless suitor, Pedro, in her place. But Tita has one weapon left--her cooking. Esquivel mischievously appropriates the techniques of magical realism to make Tita's contact with food sensual, instinctual and often explosive. Forced to make the cake for her sister's wedding, Tita pours her emotions into the task; each guest who samples a piece bursts into tears. Esquivel does a splendid job of describing the

frustration, love and hope expressed through the most domestic and feminine of arts, family cooking, suggesting by implication the limited options available to Mexican women of this period. Tita's unrequited love for Pedro survives the Mexican Revolution the births of Rosaura and Pedro's children, even a proposal of marriage from an eligible doctor. In a poignant conclusion, Tita manages to break the bonds of tradition, if not for herself, then for future generations. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Take one part Whitney Otto's *How To Make an American Quilt* (McKay, 1991), add a smidgen of magical realism a la Garcia Marquez, follow up with several quixotic characters, garnish with love, and you'll have *Like Water for Chocolate*, a thoroughly enjoyable and quirky first novel by Mexican screenwriter Esquivel. Main character Tita is the youngest of three daughters born to Mama Elena, virago extraordinaire and owner of the de la Garza ranch. Tita falls in love with Pedro, but Mama Elena will not allow them to marry, since family tradition dictates that the youngest daughter remain at home to care for her mother. Instead, Mama Elena orchestrates the marriage of Pedro and her eldest daughter Rosaura and forces Tita to prepare the wedding dinner. What ensues is a poignant, funny story of love, life, and food which proves that all three are entwined and interdependent. Recommended for most collections.- Peggie Partello, Keene State Coll., N.H. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My book club read this book Mexico as we "read our way around the world." We were not disappointed! This was my first introduction to magical realism, and I was in love from the first page. Don't expect the characters or story to be extremely developed. This is one of those books that you might find yourself speeding through and then wildly contemplating once it's over. While the story isn't pointedly about Mexican history or culture, we learned about those aspects in perfect little doses through the writing style and story line. My group was interested and entertained. I enjoyed the book so much that I bought myself a copy after I read the library's copy.

*Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel is an enthralling novel that entices the reader with sexual desire and recipes that arouse the senses. It concentrates on the completely female De La Garza family, particularly on the youngest daughter and protagonist Tita, and the antagonist her tyrannical mother, on their family farm in Mexico during the Revolution. Tita was born and practically raised in the kitchen by the cook Nacha, which began her passion for cooking and allowed her to

share her emotions through her cooking. Trapped in the De La Garza's strict family tradition that the youngest daughter must care for her mother until the day she dies, Tita is condemned to take care of Mama Elena and remain unmarried. This becomes problematic when Tita falls in love with Pedro but is not allowed to marry him. As if denying Pedro's request for Tita's hand in marriage is not enough, Mama Elena takes it a whole other step by allowing Rosaura to marry Pedro. However Pedro only agrees to marry Rosaura in order to remain close to his true love, Tita. The rest of the book revolves around Tita and Pedro's complicated, forbidden relationship, Tita's constant trials from her mother, and the mouth-watering dishes prepared by Tita that show her emotions. Her life remains full of resentment and until a series of deaths, misfortunes, and fate finally unites Pedro and her again. Esquivel structures her story into 12 chapters, with each one representing a month and each centered on a different recipe that is made step-by-step throughout the chapter. The author uses Tita's knowledge of life based on the kitchen and her ability to communicate various emotions through her cooking to intertwine the recipes into the storyline, which sets it apart from any other love story. Esquivel metaphorically ties Tita's emotions to all of the food she creates, showing how the simple act of cooking can convey love, sensuality, lust, and many other emotions. Esquivel intrigues a profound sexual desire in many of the characters solely through the food that Tita cooks. The recipes in each chapter add a unique aspect to the novel because of the way that they show the characters' depth and change as their lives move forward. Tita's food transforms depending on her mood and also affects the people who consume it in many ways, including causing everyone at her sister's wedding to throw up from her tears in the cake. The repetitive metaphor of passion and emotion through food throughout the book keeps the book interesting, especially for someone who enjoys cooking. Despite the fact that this book is not a hard read and does not have exceptionally challenging language, the creative fashion that Esquivel writes provokes the reader's senses and keeps the reader engaged. Esquivel develops the characters in a relatable way because of their realistic faults and problems, allowing the reader to be able to relate. Although the simple language in some ways positively contributed to the story, the basic vocabulary weakened the effects of some scenes. The writing also lacked complex syntax and literary devices for the majority of the novel. At times in the novel it seemed as though Esquivel focused more on details than providing rich, intricate language and literary devices to the reader. The for the most part basic vocabulary and a lack of depth create a delivery of one-dimensional characters. The novel also epitomizes the rudimentary love story where the girl always ends up with her first, true love. There are also times where the book takes random turns leaving the reader confused and unaware of

what is fantasy and what is reality. In turn this causes the magical realism aspects of the novel to seem slightly awkward at times. Although this novel lacks the language and depth to be one of the great love stories, its profound originality forms a great blend of agonizing romance and arouses all kinds of emotions and senses. By Cameron Thompson

Admittedly, I have a big gushy soft spot for magic-realism. Books like "100 Years of Solitude" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and "House of the Spirits" by Isabel Allende really spark that little fire in my heart. I thought this book would be another little treasure to add to this list, but alas... There are a few issues to blame for this. First of all, Esquivel's writing is just average, which cannot be blamed on a loss of finesse during English translation. The prose is lacking poetry, the fantastical scenes seem forced and scripted, and the characters are one-dimensional, even stereotypical. Not even the protagonist, Tita, is very likeable - she comes across as slow, submissive, and naive. When she is forced to cook for the wedding of her immature and needy love, Pedro, to her terrible and nasty sister, she goes crazy and has to be sent away to the care of Dr. Brown, who nurtures her back to health. Dr. Brown genuinely cares for Tita and even asks her hand in marriage. Of course Tita can't seem to get over childish Pedro, and ends up returning to her subservient life with her evil mother and sister. Which leads me to the next issue - the feminist praise for this book is has me a bit perplexed. The message seems to be that, as a female, I am to escape martyrdom by killing all evil female adversaries with my cooking, thus freeing myself from their tyranny (like Tita). Or, conversely, I should ride off naked on a horse while humping the man who is capturing me, then proceed to become a soldier (or better yet - a General!) and travel the world living a bloody and violent life (like Tita's sister). There is something appealing about both of these options - sweet sweet revenge, or complete badass rebel. By the end of the story I was excited for Tita - she had defeated her foes, ascended up the ranks of her household, and seemed to be maturing. At one point I even exclaimed "She's going to marry Dr. Brown!" and rejoiced for her triumph. But alas... the most brutal disappointment, she chooses Pedro. Seriously? The magical scenes did float my boat a bit, with their sexy eroticism and imaginative far-fetched weirdness. Many of the scenes were rich in detail and the tastes and aromas of the culture and the land. Perhaps some of my positive sentiment is overflow from my love of other, better, magical realism books. The recipes were an interesting addition, and I'd love to cook one or two of them. Overall, if you are new to this genre, I do not recommend starting with this book.

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