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A journalist and activist, Canela believes passion is essential to life; but lately passion seems to be in short supply. It has disappeared from her relationship with her fiancé, who is more interested in controlling her than encouraging her. It's absent from her work, where censorship and politics keep important stories from being published. And while her family is full of outspoken individuals, the only one Canela can truly call passionate is her cousin and best friend Luna, who just took her own life.

Canela can't recover from Luna's death. She is haunted by her ghost and feels acute pain for the dreams that went unrealized. Canela breaks off her engagement and uses her now un-necessary honeymoon ticket, to escape to Paris. Impulsively, she sublets a small apartment and enrolls at Le Coq Rouge, Paris's most prestigious culinary institute.

Cooking school is a sensual and spiritual reawakening that brings back Canela's hunger for life. With a series of new friends and lovers, she learns to once again savor the world around her. Finally able to cope with Luna's death, Canela returns home to her family, and to the kind of life she thought she had lost forever.

Hungry Woman in Paris Details

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From Reader Review *Hungry Woman in Paris* for online ebook

Paulette says

I loved the main character Canela - a Mexican-American writer from L.A. She broke off her engagement with her fiance - a surgeon - and used the honeymoon ticket to Paris to "escape". Planning only a brief visit she meets up with a college friend Rosemary. They both stay in the Honeymoon suite at the hotel. Rosemary convinces Canela to stay in Paris with her in her tiny apartment. Canela wanted to stay in Paris longer and learned if she entered a prestigious cooking school - Le Coq Rouge - she could remain in Paris for at least a year. Her adventure begins making new friends, trying new things plus learning to cook!

In the epilogue, the author wrote, "Everything is about food and hunger, whether it is hunger for the body or hunger for the soul."

"I have plenty of beautiful memories and life-inspiring moments to nourish my soul for many lifetimes... I hope this was delicious."

YES, IT WAS DELICIOUS!

But WARNING... sexually explicit at times!

Michelle says

I actually found this book to be a rather poignant example of a woman experiencing the upheaval of emotion and personal crisis that losing loved ones, literally and figuratively, can cause. The author touches on so many subjects, from cultural inequality to cuisine, with a large amount of honesty and self-introspection. It may be an overly-done subject type of late, with the heroine fleeing to an exotic location and delving into food and sex, but really, this is an archetype of so many imaginations and realities, it does have a place.

Ruth says

I think Lopez needs to stick to writing screenplays. Her writing was disjointed and it drove me crazy how she kept changing tenses. I appreciate that Canela was probably a little manic depressive but it was just annoying. Lopez herself said in her forward that her editor or friend shaped the book into something of a book. That should have told her something. I just couldn't identify with Canela or maybe her character was just very one dimensional. A sex crazed one dimensional idiot. I think the only part I enjoyed were the food descriptions.

Jennifer says

This book is ridiculous. It's not well written, and I'm not really enjoying the context...other than the main character is attending culinary school, which is a big draw for me. I think I'll finish it to get through to the end of her studies at le Coq Rouge (a la le Cordin Bleu), but I'll skip the parts that involve her having sex

with random men at swingers clubs. This author is so random. Holes, holes everywhere.

I couldn't bring myself to finish this piece of crap. I would not recommend this to anyone...ever.

Tara says

I loved "Real Women Have Curves" so I was excited to find a novel from the same writer. I'm also a sucker for books that even mention cooking! What a let-down! This book was poorly written (tenses anyone?) and uncomfortable to read. The premise reads like every chick-lit book right now - unhappy girl, strained relationship with her family, broken engagement, leaves on a journey, blah blah blah. The characters are flat and cliché - two friends from cooking school are named Basil and Sage, the American jerk of the class is named Dick. I wasn't ready for the numerous and explicit sex scenes. I don't mind a little sex in a book, but I really don't need to hear about it. Not only that, but the situations that brought about the sex scenes were kind of against what I would call moral. (Call me a prude, but a foursome on the dance floor of a swingers club is **not** something I want to read or hear about, thank you.)

I'll give the author credit for some of Canela's (also a food name, ugh) thoughts about coming into her own and not doing the things that her family has outlined for her. That's the thing I loved about her movie and the thing that I most enjoyed about this book. Canela certainly forged her own path and, for that, Lopez should be praised. Unfortunately, you have to find your way through a lot of weeds to get there.

Kathy (Bermudaonion) says

Canela is unhappy. She and her fiancée have just broken off their engagement because they couldn't agree on the menu for their reception and her favorite cousin has just committed suicide. Canela remembers that she has the tickets for her honeymoon in Paris and decides to go there on her own. After her time in the Honeymoon Suite runs out, she stays with a friend. Her friend explains to her that she can only stay in France for 3 months without a carte de séjour. Canela decides to enroll in culinary school since they'll help her get her carte de séjour. Canela's friend returns to the U. S. when her mother becomes ill, so Canela finds herself alone in a foreign city. While she doesn't flourish at cooking school she manages to graduate and learns a lot about herself and life along the way.

A Hungry Woman in Paris by Josefina López is the story of Canela's struggle to find her place in the world. She has to decide if she will succumb to the role that is expected of her or choose to be true to herself and her passions. Since Josefina has been an immigrant in two different societies (the U. S. and France) she does a fantastic job of describing what it's like when you don't feel like you fit in. Since we lived in France for two years, I really enjoyed the descriptions of Paris and the carte de séjour stories. I think the ending of the book sums it up very well:

"Everything is about food and hunger, whether it is hunger for the body or hunger for the soul. As long as I am alive I will always be hungry for revolution, for justice and truth, but I am no longer hungry for my soul the way I used to be. I have plenty of beautiful memories and life-inspiring moments to nourish my soul for many lifetimes. . . I hope this was delicious."

There are some graphic sexual scenes in this book that some readers may find offensive.

Josefina López is an award-winning playwright, screenwriter and poet. She is the co-author of the movie *Real Women Have Curves*. This is her first novel, and she has another one in the works.

Mike Padilla says

I picked this book up because I heard the author speak on a panel at a book fair, and I was impressed by her energy and passion, especially when talking about women taking charge of their own sexuality in life and in books. Much of that energy and passion comes through in this novel as well. Many of the things that others have stated that they didn't like about the book I was OK with or even liked. The explicitness of the sex, for instance, I found refreshing. The "low morals" of the character that so many people have referred on this site I didn't even blink at, so no problem there. And yes, the writing can be rather clunky, but that underlying passion for life made me overlook it. Where I had my biggest problem was with the voice of the narrator. She is supposed to be a 30-year-old, successful journalist; someone who we think would be highly educated and able to express herself intelligently, thoughtfully. While there were certainly lots of insightful moments in the book, I more often than not felt a bit like I was listening to the voice of a 16-year-old. Her voice just wasn't adult enough to match who we are told she is; her descriptions, especially for a journalist, were often imprecise; and her reactions to things often had a sort of juvenile foot-stamping that I wouldn't associate with someone of that age and experience. This was the primary distraction for me, but overall I thought this was an enjoyable read and would certainly give a chance to whatever she writes next.

Andrea says

I was excited to read this book, because Lopez wrote the screenplay for *Real Women Have Curves*. The protagonist Canela has moments of brilliance - she works tirelessly to fight injustice via activism and her journalism career, and she poignantly describes her experience as the child of undocumented workers in CA. BUT she completely destroys her credibility as a feminist/activist with the ways she describes her sexual exploits. At points it sickened me - the book is about her sensual awakening, via food and sex, and I'm all for it. But she describes these experiences with violent, crass language that sounds like a misogynistic 16-year-old bragging to his pals in the locker room. The parts I most enjoyed were the descriptions of the food, her relationship with her mother, and the anecdotes about her family's experience in CA (which parallels the experiences of Paris' immigrants with whom she comes into contact).

Dorrit says

Too much sex, not enough substance. Overall Josephina Lopez came across as a little whiny and not engaged enough in her own life to really make for interesting reading. If I'd wanted to read mostly about sex I'd have read a romance novel and, undoubtedly, gotten better sex scenes. Since I didn't, I'd have preferred much less sex and a lot more insight. The central question of the book seems to be "why didn't the protagonist want to marry the apparently perfect man?" She never answers it very satisfactorily, nor is her exploration of the question interesting enough to make the substance of the journey stand on its own even without an answer. Don't waste your time.

Julia says

I was dissappointed because I LOVE Real Woman Have Curves. This was aimless and a lot of the chapters basically read like soft core porn. Maybe if I expected less, this would have been a better read, but as it was, I left it on the airplane for another unsuspecting reader.

Belinda says

When you're starving -- for food, for companionship, for validation, for sex, for a relationship -- does that extreme hunger give you permission to toss aside any and all rules and just go for it?

And when does an author cross the line from effectively conveying those deep needs to downright vulgarity in detail?

You will need to keep those questions in mind when reading this book. Ms. Lopez gives us Canela, a 29-year-old in crisis who flees to Paris to escape a fiance, her grief, her judgmental family and her own timelines for being an adult. Canela's experiences as an undocumented Mexican immigrant make her particularly sensitive to the cultural issues of Paris in 2007-08, which she dives into headlong and inhibition-free while she signs on for cooking classes at (a vaguely disguised) Le Cordon Bleu.

She pursues men, sex, food, wine and emotion with her self-proclaimed feministic zeal, which is simply a weak excuse for promiscuity and over-indulgence, as well as the opportunity to shirk off responsibility to people who love her. Feminism it seems is the focus on one's self and libido regardless of the long-term consequences.

While Lopez is an award-winning screenwriter, she is at a complete loss in the novel genre. Her rhetoric is clunky, simplistic, vain, and self-indulgent. Character development is a hopscotch around the book, and what you do glean about Canela is not particularly sympathetic or inspiring.

Save yourself some time. Go re-read "Fear of Flying" by Erica Jong before reading this. At least Jong's a decent writer.

Jessica says

Was there no editor? Did no one outside of the "Wow, good job w/RWHC, you're a Chicana superstar" circle bother to read this and tell her...NO. I should like this book. I should LOVE this book, in fact. But the writing is just not there. I'll leave at that for the moment and return w/a better explanation of why this was just TRAGIC in my eyes.

Joanna Mieso says

As a gourmand and a Francophile, I was attracted to this book immediately - it is an easy read and the story flows well. (and yes, there are some recipes in here.)

There are two tangential plots - this book sort of combined Fear of Flying with Like Water for Chocolate, with a dash of Eat, Pray, Love.

The main character Canela has broken off her engagement, her favorite cousin has committed suicide, and she goes off to visit a friend in Paris. I'll stop there but will tell you I enjoyed her forays at culinary school - some very funny episodes, particularly her description of competitive classmates' anal behavior.

This book has it all, love, comedy, sex, philosophy, politics - just when you think you know where the story is going, ding, ding, ding! Some other subplot jolts you and you're left wondering, now where did THAT come from??

I would have given this four stars but I found the ending slightly unsatisfactory.

Sibyl says

A delicious, sexy, revelatory read. It is interesting that during my time with Ms. Lopez' book I went to see Julie and Julia, becoming completely immersed in Parisian cooking from all directions. How does Canela, the narrator, and my experiences resonate? Cooking was a chore foisted upon me from the age of 11 when I became the 'woman of the house'. Canela's mother shoed her out of the kitchen and disparaged Canela's efforts to help. How Canela comes to register at the thinly veiled Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris for a year brings out a deep envy in me. My experience with cooking never led to anything so romantic as hers.

I loved Ms. Lopez' book for its earthy take on her growing sexuality. At my mature age I now can appreciate, even envy, her experiences both with cooking and with the various men she took up with. Her experience of being a lone Mexican American woman in Paris fascinated me. I identify with that cultural experience, now finding myself in a community where I am seeking out those very people. She speaks of being an immigrant and being undocumented until she was in her teens. I am encountering undocumented immigrants here, too.

As for knowing the proper technique for chopping vegetables, deboning fowl, caramelizing onions, learning good herb combinations? I am learning these skills even at this very moment. And for the first time, enjoying the learning curve.

Laura says

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Excellent chic literature!

5 stars for amazon.com

This book is a journey for one female named Canela who goes thru a crisis, similar to a man's mid life crisis. She has a falling out with her Editor, argues with her fiancé', and tries to escape the haunting death of her cousin, Luna. Throughout the book, you get a glimpse of her illegal immigration status in the United States and how she disagreed with her mother on what she should do with her life. Canela has a very low self esteem and it affects her family life. Her mother would belittle her for making mistakes in the kitchen and Canela carried this shadow over her head for a really long time. In a sense, she runs away from it all to Paris, were she and her fiancé, Armando would have went for their honeymoon.

When Canela meets up with a friend in Paris, she finds out about a cooking school, Le Coq Rouge. In the beginning, she signs up for it just to kill time, to sort out what she wants to do with her life. In the long run, she needs this experience so that she can grow to be individual, instead of doing what everybody thinks she should do. While at the school, she has explicit sexual escapades with a man from the cooking school, Henry. He introduces her to a crazy world of swingers and she quickly realizes this is not for her. In between, there are a couple of other men that she has a tryst with. In the end, she realizes this was just what she needed to make her realize that she didn't need anybody and that she could be content by being alone.

As she graduates from the cooking school, this act lifts her self-esteem level and makes her have more confidence in herself. It wasn't just cooking, but being appreciated for doing a job well done. The turning point is when Henry cooks her a celebratory dish, and nobody had ever done that for her. As she returns to the United States, she realizes she had grown from the experience.

I really enjoyed this book and liked the glossary of terms in the back with Spanish and French words. It came in handy. Although her sexual escapades were really explicit, this novel is more geared for a mature reader.
