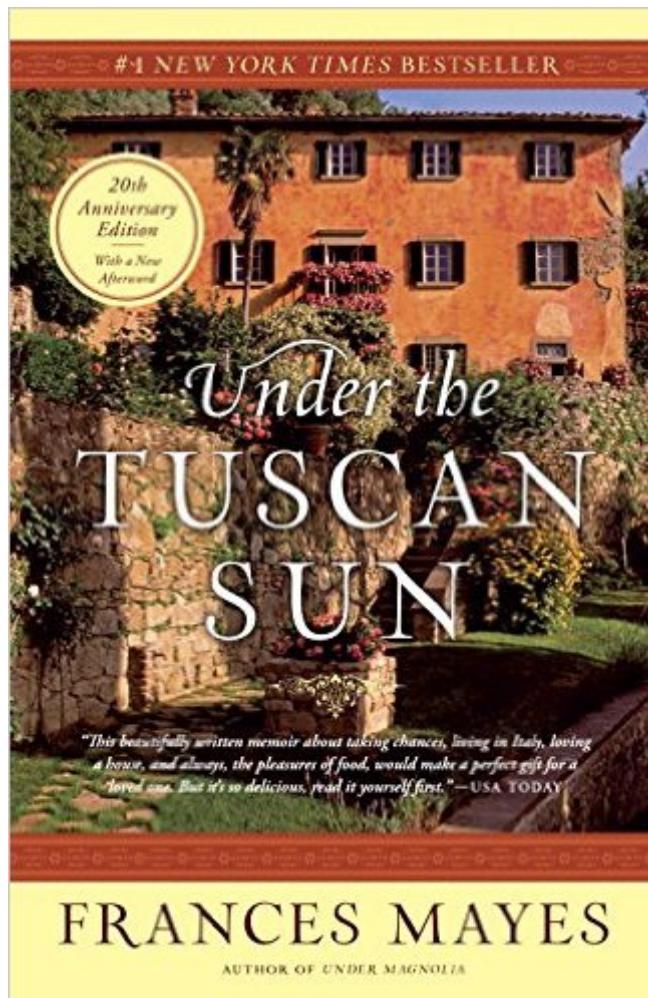


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Under The Tuscan Sun: At Home In Italy



Synopsis

20th Anniversary Edition with a New Afterword Â Twenty years ago, Frances Mayes--widely published poet, gourmet cook, and travel writer--introduced readers to a wondrous new world when she bought and restored an abandoned villa called Bramasole in the spectacular Tuscan countryside. Under the TuscanÂ inspired generations to embark on their own journeys--whether that be flying to a foreign country in search of themselves, savoring one of the book's dozens of delicious seasonal recipes, or simply being transported by Mayes's signature evocative, sensory language. Now, with a new afterword from the Bard of Tuscany herself, the 20th anniversary edition of Under the Tuscan Sun brings us up-to-date with the book's most beloved characters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As someone who is used to taking frequent Mediterranean vacations but was marooned stateside this past summer, I thanked my lucky stars for happening upon this book. It was just the escape I needed. As I got deeper into it, I felt myself becoming more and more enamored with Tuscany, Bramasole and its cast of characters. Mayes hits her stride with rich, textured detail of her environment after the first 50 pages or so. Before that, she gets a little too bogged down in renovation process. I really felt that I was there, right down to hearing the crickets singing in the hot summer sun. Unlike so many others who reviewed this book, I was not offended at all by her descriptions of the Tuscan locals or the lifestyle. She was very complimentary and respectful of everyone she wrote about. One thing that could have been left out - the references to Mayes childhood that screamed "I'm wealthy!" The recipe chapters were an added bonus and inspired me

to get cooking. Try the mushroom lasagna with bechamel sauce in the later food chapter - it's divine. The bottom line - if you're looking for a wry, humorous account of life as an expatriate, a la Peter Mayle, this book won't do it for you. But if you want to immerse yourself in a richly written tribute to the rolling hills of a gorgeous, faraway land, Tuscan Sun is not to be missed.

Although this book has appeal for a very broad audience (thus its success), she's not writing for anyone -- or any particular genre. If you are looking for a practical travel guide, you will be disappointed. If you are looking for a renovation guide, ditto. If you are looking for a story about her love for Ed, you won't get it. If you want it as a cookbook, you will be bored by everything else. However, if you pick up the book as none of those things above, simply as one woman's collection of memories -- a portrait of her summers with a focus on the land and its pleasures -- you will be enraptured. You will not regret this book if you expect it to be full of little gems of information. Instead of tedious details, look at her close description of everything she does as poetry. Immerse yourself in her unique and rich language, and the book will warm your soul.

You enjoy it while it lasts, get a little heartburn about half way through, and you feel a little funny after you're done. And you know that it's all just empty calories...I was debating whether or not I should do a cycling tour of Tuscany when I spotted this book. I took it as a sign from above, so I immediately purchased it in hopes of being inspired to do the tour. Well... I WAS inspired, but not as much as I would've hoped. Much like others have said, the first third of this book is quite sweet and captivating. It does a great job of drawing a sparse, beautifully concise mental picture of the Tuscan countryside. I really enjoyed her literary 'frugality'. However, the only frugality she exhibits appears to be in her prose... As the book drags on, it becomes more and more the transcribed diary of a spoiled little rich girl who has trouble keeping the reins on her pocketbook. I found the references to shoe-shopping addictions to be particularly shallow. And after the umpteenth complaint about cost overruns on the house renovations - followed by inexplicable spending sprees - I began to hear the phrase, "Awwww, the poor wittle baby" going through my head more and more. If everything's so darn expensive, why do you keep buying, and buying, and buying? But I must admit that there is the odd sprinkle of profundity throughout the text. Every twenty pages or so, there was something - perhaps only one sentence - that would strike a chord within me, and would make me put the book down, look out the window, and remark to myself, "So, so true." In particular, her description of travel and its effect on the traveller was especially meaningful to me. It put into words what I've felt in the past, many times, but was unable to explain. Overall, this book is charming, frustrating,

occasionally profound, but mostly vacant. A perfect book to read while sitting in a hammock - or the tub - when you have absolutely no desire to stretch your intellectual capacity.

It seems sad and strange that this book should be a best seller. The author writes mainly about her material acquisitions--the villa, the linens, the pottery, the furniture. Her contacts with Italians are of the depth of my contacts with my plumber, real estate agent, or checkout clerk. She makes up for this by "imagining" the lives of people she sees--a condescending exercise that violates the integrity of these people's lives. Even the main characters, the author, her husband, her daughter, are described as roles--poet, gourmet cook, department chair, mill owner's daughter--rather than as people with emotions, quirks, sorrows and joys. "Insights" into Italy are from "book larnin'," not from experience. For an entertaining account of remodeling an Italian villa, "Valley in Italy" by Lisa St. Aubin De Teran is very entertaining. For insights into Italians and life in Italy, "Italian Neighbors" and "An Italian Education" by Tim Parks are great.

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