



At Home with Madame Chic: Becoming a Connoisseur of Daily Life

By Jennifer L. Scott

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Approach life at home the Madame Chic way: a beautiful, illustrated toolbox of tips and ideas for organizing, entertaining, and savoring a stylish life.

When she arrived at Madame Chic's Parisian apartment as a foreign exchange student, Jennifer Scott was a casual California girl who thought sweatpants were appropriate street attire. Madame Chic took Jennifer under her wing and tutored her in the secrets of how the French elevate the little things in life to the art of living.

Years later, Jennifer was back in California with a husband, two young daughters, a dog, and her first home. Every day she confronted mundane duties like folding laundry and unloading the dishwasher, and she began to think about Madame Chic's home—how the breakfast table was set beautifully the night before, the music that always played in the background, the calm of Madame and Monsieur Chic's ritual cocktail hour together. Jennifer wanted that life. She decided to see what would happen if she didn't perform her chores impatiently or mindlessly, if, instead, she could live like Madame Chic.

At Home with Madame Chic reveals the secrets to having a happy, fulfilling, and passionate life at home. Jennifer explains the morning send-off need not be chaotic, it's possible to look stylish with minimal time and effort, a little forethought makes it possible to serve a home-cooked dinner every night, and details like music and scented candles can set the tone for the whole family's evening. Organized by the pleasures that can be found throughout the day, this charming, helpful book is full of ideas, playlists, recipes, beauty routines, and advice that can turn an irritating day into an enjoyable experience.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A guide for women who yearn to channel Audrey Tautou. . . . Personable, anecdote-filled, and studded with lifestyle tips . . . its vivacity and sincerity have struck a chord among women who would like a French role model of their own, but don't have a year to spend apprenticing with one in Paris." (*The New York Times*)

"Part tribute to the effortlessly glamorous Parisian way of life, and part tutorial . . . on how to emulate the French *je ne sais quoi*." (*Daily Mail (UK)*)

"Downright intriguing. . . . You'll close the book feeling inspired." (*The Plain Dealer*)

"The writing here, a combination of elegance and breeziness, seems to reflect Madame Chic's personal philosophy that life is to be lived fully and elegantly." (*Smoky Mountain News*)

"Winningly combines sincerity and self-deprecation . . . sweet-natured and well-intentioned . . . full of advice." (*Kirkus Reviews*)

"Scott's message of living passionately, enjoying the little things in life and truly living are great mantras to guide one's life." (*Portland Book Review*)

About the Author

Jennifer L. Scott is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Lessons from Madame Chic*, *At Home with Madame Chic*, and *Polish Your Poise with Madame Chic* and the writer and editor of *The Daily Connoisseur* (DailyConnoisseur.com). She lives in Southern California with her family. Visit JenniferLScott.com.

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At Home with Madame Chic

INTRODUCTION



What Is Chic?

What is chic? Chic is a feeling. It's a state of mind. It is a way to live and a way to be. We've all seen chic people. Nicely dressed, they seem to have a strong understanding of what their true style is. But it's so much more than their clothing, isn't it? Chic people have an air of mystery about them. They seem content with something, but what that is . . . we can't put our finger on it. Their chicness appears effortless, as though the graceful way they get through the day comes naturally to them.

When looking at these chic people, you might wonder if they have a cluttered living room, or if they scramble to figure out what to have for dinner at six p.m. every evening. You wonder if they detest emptying the dishwasher as much as you do. Heck, look at that manicure. Do these chic people even do the dishes?

Well, some of them probably don't. But what about the rest of us? Being chic has nothing to do with money. Not all chic people are rich, and not all rich people are chic. You may have observed this with reality television. You might see a wealthy woman with the perfect haircut, dressed in the latest designer clothes. She has a big house, a sports car, and that magic wand, fame. But her negative attitude, insecurities, and bad manners combine to make her, as they say, a hot mess. This type of person does not possess that *chic je ne sais quoi*. She has a lot of inner work to do.

Being chic is not about the size of your bank account. It has nothing to do with where you live. It has nothing to do with the job you have or the person you're married to. It has nothing to do with the car you drive or the labels on your clothes. Chic is a state of being. And it is something that anyone can cultivate. Yes, anyone.

You can be chic. You can have a beautiful, productive, and passionate life. You can flow gracefully through your day and look good while doing it. You can find happiness in your life, even if everything isn't exactly how you pictured it would be. If you are used to a chaotic, unorganized, and so-not-chic life, don't fret. That doesn't have to be your reality.



In my first book, *Lessons from Madame Chic: 20 Stylish Secrets I Learned While Living in Paris*, I introduced Madame Chic and her fabulous Parisian family. The secrets of fine living I learned from *Famille Chic* planted the seeds of inspiration in my life and opened up a whole new world for me. After those blissful, carefree days as a student in Paris, I moved back to America and eventually found myself with my own home and family to look after. I wanted to espouse the elegant way of living I learned in Paris and become my own version of Madame Chic. But back home in California, everyday life was no longer idyllic; it was messy. What would Madame Chic say if she could see my bedroom, our living room, or the backseat of my car? Without my mentor to guide me, I had to rely on myself to get to the core of what it means to live well when you have a family, a home, and a busy life. And let me tell you, it wasn't chic.

You may think that being chic has nothing to do with the most insignificant and mundane moments of the day. Moments like preparing your meals, emptying the dishwasher, and paying bills. But the secret is: those moments aren't insignificant. *Au contraire*. They are very significant. That's right—if you can change your attitude about making the pasta sauce, choosing your clothes for the day, folding the laundry, setting the table, or dealing with the incoming mail, you can completely change your life. I'm going to show you how you can derive pleasure from these seemingly mundane tasks, how you can turn all that frustrated and chaotic energy into satisfied, pleasurable energy. After you form an initial organization plan and a routine that becomes second nature, your home will run more smoothly, and you will learn to enjoy and enhance your routine. This peace will follow you wherever you go for the rest of the day, no matter how far you venture from home.

Your home is a microcosm of the real world. The more you practice living well at home, the more natural it will feel to carry this practice out into the real world, and the closer you'll be to becoming your own Madame Chic. If you have a home life that runs smoothly, you too will have that air of effortlessness about you. You'll spend less negative energy worrying about where you put your keys, or what you're going to have for dinner, or how on earth you're going to clean up the mess in the living room.

Your attitude will shift. There will be something about you—something mysterious that other people can't quite figure out. That *je ne sais quoi* quality is chic.

✖ What Is Je ne Sais Quoi? ✖

Je ne sais quoi: that “certain something.” This is a phrase we’ve all heard. It describes people who just have “it.” But what is “it”? And how can we get it? Is je ne sais quoi being skinny? Is it having perfect highlights in your hair? Can you buy je ne sais quoi? What if I buy this season’s hottest clothes? Does that give me je ne sais quoi? The answer to all of these questions is non. That’s because je ne sais quoi is intangible. It is not something on the outside; it is something within. In *A Return to Love*, Marianne Williamson describes charisma as “a sparkle in people that money can’t buy. It’s an invisible energy with visible effects.” That charisma she’s talking about is a part of je ne sais quoi. It’s that sparkle—that magnetism—that fuels one’s air of mystery.

Here is another secret no one tells you: that je ne sais quoi comes from inner peace. It is having inner peace while you are drying the pots and pans. It is having inner peace while you choose your outfit for the day or while you walk the dog. It is having inner peace when you are in the midst of a difficult conversation, meeting a deadline in the office, lugging the groceries up the stairs, or even sitting in traffic at five p.m. Chic people have that je ne sais quoi, and that “certain something” is inner peace.

Having inner peace should always be our goal. Then we can get through our day no matter what happens around us. Once we have it, small things, such as a careless comment from a coworker or a flat tire, will not completely ruin our day. Inner peace will keep us present and put things into perspective. People will wonder how you manage to navigate through life so gracefully. They will wonder about that “certain something” about you that they can’t quite put their finger on. Your inner peace will be intriguing and will draw people to you.

But how on earth does one cultivate inner peace when the pasta is boiling over, the baby is teething, the toddler is having a tantrum, and the dog just peed on the curtains? Really, you have no other choice but chic. You can wallow in anger and despair, but where does that really get you in the end? Or you can remain calm. You can breathe. You can deal with one thing at a time and not let anything, no matter how loud or pressing, fill you with anxiety. If this seems impossible, let’s examine another phrase often used to describe chic people.

✖ What Is Bien dans Sa Peau? ✖

Bien dans sa peau translates as “comfortable in her skin.” People who are bien dans leur peau do not have inner turmoil and constant neuroses ruling their lives. They are not always worrying if they’ve said or done the right thing. They aren’t constantly trying to please people and be everything to everybody. They are comfortable being who they are. They enjoy themselves. They value themselves. This too is inner peace.

Instead of opening your closet and going through a neurotic dialogue about how you need to lose fifteen pounds before you look good in any of your clothes, you are bien dans ta peau. You know you are beautiful right now, so you pick a beautiful outfit and wear it. If you are bien dans ta peau, doing the dishes is not annoying and beneath you. It is important and valuable work. You enjoy the process. If you are bien dans ta peau, your financial life is important, so you pay your bills on time and file away the receipts (and you don’t rack yourself with financial worries during the process). If you are bien dans ta peau, you can remain calm when you have a disagreement with your spouse. If je ne sais quoi is inner peace, then bien dans sa peau is putting inner peace first. Now we can finally define that elusive quality of chic. But how do you get it? To start you need two things: curiosity and enthusiasm. And then you need to become a connoisseur of your own life.

✖ What Is a Connoisseur? ✖

The dictionary defines a connoisseur as an “expert judge in matters of taste.” One can be a connoisseur of music, for example, or wine. I like to think of myself as a connoisseur of life. I first heard the phrase in a lesser-known Agatha Christie short story collection called *The Mysterious Mr. Quin*. The main character, Mr. Satterthwaite, is described as a connoisseur. He cultivates fine taste in everything from his food to his clothing. He is also an ardent observer of others and gets a kick out of determining what makes people tick. This was where I got the inspiration to name my blog *The Daily Connoisseur*. If one can become an aficionado in all things wine and appreciate and savor the different varieties, for example, why not apply that philosophy to everything we do in a day?

Being a Madame Chic goes hand in hand with becoming a connoisseur of your own life. Having passion and appreciation for the ordinary. Getting a kick out of everything you do. It is looking at everyday life like a sporting challenge and doing whatever it takes to make it work for you. Enthusiasm is the key that unlocks the chic in everyday life. We will become connoisseurs of our home life. We will apply this sporting attitude, this curiosity, this verve to rising in the morning, going to bed at night, and to everything that happens in between.

✖ Are You for Real? ✖

On your quest to become your own Madame Chic, you decide to do some research. You pick up some books about style and beauty. You read these books and try to tie your scarf a certain way or eat a certain thing for breakfast or buy the wardrobe investment pieces. You might get a makeover and color your hair and find the right shade of lipstick to complement your scarf. All of this can be fun. And, yes, you might look darn good. But are you completely satisfied? Are you chic?

Okay, then maybe you need to get your home life in order. There’s no point in looking chic if your home is a complete disaster. You read design books and decide on your own interior design aesthetic. You go shopping and update your furniture. You paint the walls. You will look chic and live in a chic home. But something is missing. Now your beautiful, newly decorated home is getting trashed by the kids every afternoon and you start to feel helpless. Your husband is annoying you because he just doesn’t get why it’s important that the throw pillows stay on the sofa. You feel overwhelmed because you have to figure out what’s for dinner, and at the end of the day you are so tired that you don’t even want to think about cleaning up your now not-so-chic house. Or self.

You feel completely lost in a sea of hopelessness. One afternoon you have a half hour off, so you go buy a new lipstick or a pair of shoes, hoping that it will make you feel better. It temporarily feels good, but the buzz doesn’t last for long. You feel so unfulfilled at home. You see your friends on Facebook with their high-powered careers and exciting dating lives, and then you think about the messy home all around you. You didn’t sign up for this. Cleaning all day long? Constantly negotiating with your kids? Arguing with your husband? You wish you could transplant yourself to Paris, just for an afternoon, where you could be someone else. You could be that chic woman sitting at a café, serenely enjoying life.

But right now that isn’t a reality. You start to feel angry. You’ve done everything they said it would take! You have given yourself a makeover. You have the hottest handbag. You have perfect highlights in your hair. You bought those new throw pillows for your sofa that promised to add a pop of color to your living room. So what’s the problem? Why don’t you feel chic?

Then you start to think maybe the problem stems from the inside. So you pick up a lot of self-help books. The advice in these books blows you away. You start to read about being present, about not being a people pleaser, about not taking things personally. You start to learn about meditation, inner peace, gratitude, and the law of attraction. You are attracted to all of it. When you are reading the books, it all makes so much sense. But then you put the books down and it all goes out of your head. How can you keep the faith when you are trying to get your kids to help with cleanup time and they're not listening to you (again!)? How can you remain in the present moment when you would rather be anywhere but in your laundry room folding towels? You know you should practice gratitude daily, but sometimes it feels hard, especially when you feel like your family is bursting out of your tiny house and you can't afford to move to a bigger place.

Gosh, there's so much to work on. You start to wonder how things like lip gloss and scarves are even relevant when you are trying to cultivate inner peace. Is style even important? You're not going to be a people pleaser anymore, right? So why do you need to dress up to impress people? You know you need to get rid of your clutter (you read a feng shui book) but how can you begin to tackle that problem without being stopped by a feeling of dread? Is it possible to get through a day without detesting a large percentage of the things you have to do?

If you haven't already guessed, I am writing about myself. These are the questions I posed to myself on so many occasions. But I am also hazarding a bet that you can relate to much of what I say. The style books give you lots of ideas on beauty and fashion. The home books tell you how to get your house organized and decorate. The self-help books give you advice on how to meditate and clear your inner turmoil. But how on earth does the stay-at-home mom of three children or the woman with nine-hour workdays and a long commute incorporate these ideas into her real, messy, everyday life? How does she make these concepts work for her? How does she work on herself from the inside, look beautiful on the outside, and navigate through the long day ahead of cleaning, working, parenting, and cooking without losing herself in the process? How can she not only "get through it," but thrive in it?

This book will bridge the gap for you. Seemingly superficial topics, such as choosing your clothes for the day, will be discussed, along with deeper topics like inner peace and mindfulness. Meditation will be discussed right along with clutter-busting tips. Because it all goes together. This is life, and we must not only live it but celebrate it. All of it. It's okay to get excited about trying a new cake recipe and bringing out your best tablecloth. It's okay to care how you look every day and to adorn yourself beautifully. Because all of this is a celebration of life. The more aware we become, the more inner peace we cultivate, the more present we are, the more we are able to enjoy every moment of life. We begin to live life how we were meant to live: with celebration, love, and devotion behind everything we do. Finding the divine in every aspect of our day starts at home. So, yes, tips on getting your family to sit down for dinner can exist on the same page with exercises to cultivate inner peace, because, you see, it all goes hand in hand.

✖ **Madame Chic Reincarnated** ✔

When I lived with Madame Chic in Paris, I was always impressed with how she looked so put together every day. Nothing about her appearance seemed high maintenance. Her style was inherent, from her dark-brown Parisian bob to her A-line skirts to her low-heeled pumps. There were no off days when she ran around the house in sweatpants with unkempt hair. Every day for her was a meditation in beauty—from the way she put together an outfit to the way she cooked dinner. I got the impression that she had always been that way. Who knows whether that was true, but she was so comfortable in her own skin and in her own routine that her elegance appeared effortless.

As we know, Madame Chic was a master at cultivating her air of mystery. She just did what she did without

explaining it (and looked pretty darn happy while doing it!). And as a naïve college student living with her, I wasn't exactly paying attention to how she ran her home so stylishly. Back then I was more interested in what Parisian hot spots my friends and I would hit up next. So you can see why, a decade later, I would be jogging my memory trying to figure out how she did all of it.

I remembered that she woke up before the entire family to prepare breakfast. She did the washing on the same days each week and had cleaning systems she rarely deviated from. I know she enjoyed shopping for fresh food and looked at these daily excursions as incorporating exercise into her life. I know she never left the kitchen messy and always completed a task once she started it. But how did she motivate herself to do all of this? She never appeared to be bitter about the work she did at home. She genuinely seemed to enjoy it.

But where would my experience as a young mother in California be different from Madame Chic's? Not everything that worked for her would work for me and vice versa. For example, the real Madame Chic would probably dismiss my talk about meditation and feng shui (although Madame Bohemienne probably wouldn't). Plus, even with my newly injected Parisian formalities, I am still a California girl at heart. How could I translate what I loved so much about my European experience to my American lifestyle?

You will learn much more about my sometimes bumpy journey to living well as a stay-at-home and work-at-home mom through the anecdotes in this book. I discovered that the stylish aspects of being chic only scratch the surface of what it means to thrive. I discovered that anyone, even overwhelmed stay-at-home mothers, could live well. Chic comes from within, continues at home, then goes with you throughout your day, touching those people you meet and blessing your life in the most amazing ways.

This book is divided into two sections: *Chez Vous* and *Les Routines de la Journée*. In *Chez Vous* we explore how to get your home in order and how to love it again. This first section presents a completely different approach to organizing and decluttering; it injects pleasure and peace into the process. It tackles mind blocks, attitudes, and underlying reasons why our homes are not in order.

The second part of the book, *Les Routines de la Journée*, is divided into three sections: the pleasures of the morning, the pleasures of the afternoon, and the pleasures of the evening. Here we get into the details that compose everyone's day—the details that no one talks about but that actually hold great meaning and significance. It covers everything from how we wake up in the morning to how we organize breakfast the night before. These details can turn your day from irritating to enjoyable.

There are a lot of tips in this book. You might use all of the tips, or you might only use some of them. I don't do everything mentioned here on a daily basis, but when I'm having a difficult moment in my day, I use the ideas in this book like a toolbox. Everyday life can be messy and, yes, it can be hard. But you are not alone, and you don't have to suffer through it. You can actually enjoy it. All of it. All of life's glorious messiness—the isness of every single experience.

So are you ready to go on this journey? Let's get into it and enjoy every moment. As Mr. Satterthwaite would say, "Shall we?"

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mae Saari:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be upgrade about what going on or data even knowledge

to make these individuals keep up with the era that is always change and make progress. Some of you maybe may update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know which you should start with. This At Home with Madame Chic: Becoming a Connoisseur of Daily Life is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

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