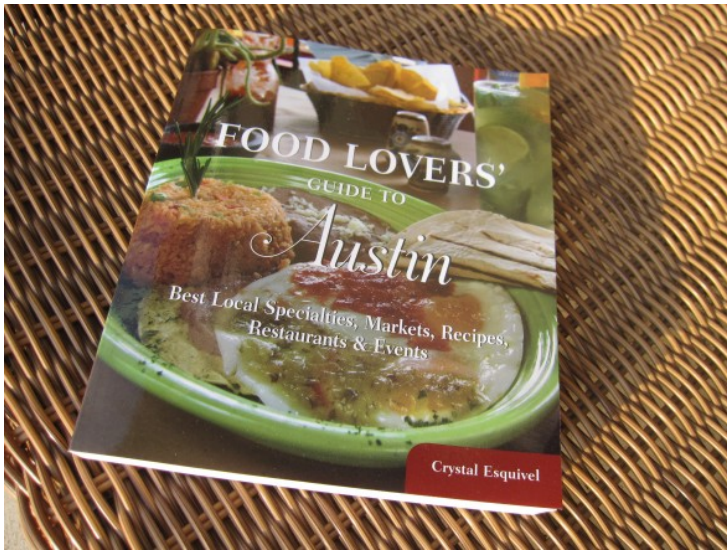


## Local Book Spotlight: Food Lovers' Guide to Austin (& Giveaway)



Several months ago, I was lucky to meet local food lover and blogger, Crystal Esquivel. She mentioned she had been working on the Food Lovers' Guide to Austin as the author! I was excited to hear more about her book, what it was like to be in the process of getting published, and of course, when I could dive into the masterpiece that I knew would be embraced by our food lover-filled community and city. I learned that the book would be published by Globe Pequot Press, and that it would be released in the Spring. This sparked my idea to incorporate the book launch into my blog's 2nd birthday milestone, which just happened in March (read to the end to learn more).

I liken getting published to running a marathon (without the competition). It's not something anyone can claim and it takes lots of work to get there. I imagine the intense preparation has similar pressures with an aggressive timeline, while maintaining foresight into the day when the writer feels a complete sense of accomplishment. Now that this fabulous handy-sized gastronomic resource is on virtual and physical shelves (launched April 12!) and ready for us to dig in, I think it, and its author Crystal, are absolutely worth celebrating and congratulating!

Since I don't know much about the publishing process, Crystal was so kind to answer some questions so we could learn about the journey that led her to the book launch! I'd also like to point out that I am truly inspired by Crystal's dedication, and her character. I can tell she is proud to share her work with Austinites and visitors, but her modesty is so admirable. Take, for example, her simple book release announcement blog post, and her willingness to share so much in the Q&A below was so kind- thank you, Crystal! Her passion for food and for the Austin food community is undeniable and I am thrilled that I can feature her on TheRebeccammediations as we learn about how her passion turned into a book we can all use to eat our way through delicious Austin.

\*A special, special, special thank you to Crystal and Allyson Coughlin from Globe Pequot Press for gifting me with advance copies. Read to the end of the post for a special giveaway in honor of my blog's 2nd birthday!

### 1. (Rebecca) What is your name, age, where are you from?

(Crystal) Crystal Esquivel, age 33. I grew up in New Mexico, and moved to a tiny town in West Texas when I was a sophomore in high school. I met my husband there (we were high school sweethearts), then we attended Southwest Texas State (or Texas State, as it's now called) in San Marcos. I got a Bachelors degree in Nutrition & Foods, and went on to become a Registered Dietitian. Justin's degree is in Communication Design, and he's now a freelance art director/graphic designer.

### 2. (R) What brought you to Austin?

(C) We were in San Marcos for school, and found ourselves driving to Austin on many weekends to try out restaurants. We decided to move to an apartment on South Congress (just behind the Continental Club) so we could be in the middle of it all. We've loved Austin ever since!

**3. (R) What book have you just released?**

(C) The Food Lovers' Guide to Austin! This is one in a series of "Food Lovers' Guides" that have been published by Globe Pequot Press; there's one for Brooklyn, for Massachusetts... and there are a few in progress this year for Kansas City, Montreal, and Maine. It's a guidebook to some of the best restaurants, specialty food shops, food events, and cooking classes in the city.

**4. (R) Who is the intended audience?**

(C) Originally, I thought the audience would be visitors to Austin; tourists and UT visitors and the like. As I was writing it, I realized it would also be valuable to Austinites who maybe aren't out and about as much, trying new restaurants, and exploring new neighborhoods. I'd say the book is for anyone who loves food and Austin, and would like to have some ideas on new things to try around town.

**5. (R) Is this your first published book?**

It is! I've written a few blurbs for the A.V. Club Austin, and I've written my personal blog, poco-cocoa for six years, but this is my first in-print book.

**6. (R) What inspired you to write the book?**

Actually, a friend of mine contacted me and said that someone she knew was looking for an Austin food writer for a project, and she quickly gave them my information. She thought I'd be perfect for the job, though I wasn't even sure what the job was! I contacted the publisher and gave them some writing samples (along with a link to my blog), and heard back from the editor immediately. She said my writing style and expertise was exactly what they were looking for, and it wasn't long before we were talking contracts and deadlines. I was so happy to have this opportunity, because my writing style has always been positive and upbeat, which is exactly what was needed for this book.

**7. (R) How long did the project take from inception to printing/distribution?**

(C) Let's see... I was contacted about the book in late June 2010, signed the contract in mid-July, had a manuscript deadline of October 15, final edits due by mid-January, and the book was published April 12, 2011. I knew coming into this that it would be a very tight deadline, but decided it was worth a shot anyway.

**8. (R) What was the most fun part of writing the book?**

(C) Eating, of course! I got to try so many new restaurants and meet so many great owners, chefs and staff. I gained a few pounds writing this book!

**9. (R) What was the biggest challenge(s)?**

(C) Definitely the timeframe. I had 3 - 4 months to research and write about over 250 restaurants. I did this while working another full-time job, so a typical day was: breakfast at a restaurant, work until lunch, lunch at a restaurant, work until 5:30pm, stop at a bakery, dinner at a restaurant, then home to stay up late and write. I missed eating at home, I missed sleeping, I missed my old favorite restaurants (which I just couldn't fit into my research-eating schedule), and I missed having time to just hang out! It was a very difficult few months, but afterward, I feel like I accomplished something great.

Also challenging was accepting that as soon as the book went to print, it would be dated. Already there are restaurants that have closed, festivals that have moved, and great new spots that have opened that aren't reflected in the book. I just had to let it go and realize that the book is a great snapshot of this year in Austin, and still offers a lot of good information for finding great eats around

town.

**10. (R) Do you have a favorite page and why?**

(C) Well, the dedication page and acknowledgements pages are dearest to me, of course. But within the book itself, I love the map pages - I think the cartographer did a great job making a usable map for each chapter.

**11. (R) Who took the picture on the cover?**

(C) The photo came from the publisher - we originally talked about using one of my photographs for the cover, but we were all too pressed for time to make it happen. They asked my input on what I thought the cover should look like, and when they showed me this, I was thrilled.

**12. (R) Where will the book be distributed and where can we buy it??**

(C) It's available at all major bookstores, including Book People (Note from Rebecca: local!), Barnes & Noble, and Borders, as well as online retailers like Amazon.com. My publisher is also working on getting it on the shelves at other local shops and markets.

**13. (R) I love the "Keeping Up with Local Food News" section, of course, because it features local bloggers, and the restaurant recipes sprinkled throughout the book. What other special features and tips can you find in the book?**

There's also a section on food events in the area, and short blurbs about dress code in Austin (or lack thereof) and cocktail culture. I find the indexes in the back the most helpful - you can find restaurants by cuisine, by specialty food, or alphabetically, and there's a recipe index as well.

**14. (R) Do you have a favorite Austin restaurant (I know, it's a toughy)? If not, what are your go-to's?**

(C) Foreign & Domestic. I have never been disappointed there - it always feels like I'm going to Ned and Jodi's house for dinner. It's comfortable, but the menu is exciting; it's laid-back but the service is great; the food is gorgeous but not too frou-frou. (Have you been there for brunch? Holy moly.) Otherwise I'd have to ask, "what are you hungry for?" I love stopping by Tan My or El Primo, by Uchiko or East Side King, by Houndstooth or Hill-Berts. It just depends on what sounds good. :)

**15. (R) How will you keep up with the new restaurants that pop-up? Do you foresee additional volumes in the future now that you've gotten the hang of it down once?**

In general I keep up with food news via Mike Sutter's Forklore or Eater Austin, and I still plan to photograph good eats around town for my blog. This book has already been labeled "First Edition;" it's just a matter of time before I'm plugging away at the second edition.

**16. (R) Anything else you'd like to share about yourself or the book?**

(C) Just that I'm so thankful to the Austin food community for being so welcoming and wonderful. From chefs to bartenders to waitstaff to owners - we have a really creative and open community here, and I'm so proud to highlight them with this book! Thanks, Crystal!

To celebrate TheRebeccamendations' 2nd birthday (March 17th), I'd now like to present you, Dear Reader, with an opportunity to win a copy of the book! Post your favorite Austin restaurant as a comment to this post and the first 20 people to mention restaurants that are listed in the book (\*and qualify) will receive a copy, courtesy of Crystal and Globe Pequot Press!

\*TO QUALIFY:

MUST LIVE IN AUSTIN

MUST LEAVE A VALID EMAIL ADDRESS WITH YOUR COMMENT

MUST REPLY TO YOUR WINNER EMAIL WITHIN 2 DAYS OF THE DATE I SEND IT TO RECEIVE YOUR PRIZE.

YOU MAY LEAVE MORE THAN ONE COMMENT BUT LIMITED TO ONE PRIZE PER WINNER.

Ready, set...