

LitChat: Elizabeth LaBan, Author

The following is the #LitChat conversation held through Twitter on February 29, 2016 with novelist Elizabeth LaBan. #LitChat was founded in 2009 and is moderated by Carolyn Burns Bass (@LitChat). www.litchat.com.



Welcome to #LitChat on this beautiful Monday. With us today is novelist @ElizabethLaBan. Join us! pic.twitter.com/Gu2wmL8Tb4

 LITCHAT @LITCHAT · 2 HOURS AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I am so happy to be here! Thanks for inviting me! #LitChat

 2 HOURS AGO



LitChat
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While #LitChat is underway with moderated convo from 4-5pmET, please don't use the hashtag unless contributing to topic. Thanks.

 2 HOURS AGO



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The easiest way to participate in [#LitChat](#) is through [@Nurph](#). Just login at nurph.com/litchat, authorize and you're in the chat.

 2 HOURS
AGO



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[#LitChat](#) was founded in 2009 and is moderated by [@CarolyBurnsBass](#) ([@LitChat](#)). Visit our website at litchat.com.

 2 HOURS
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While everyone is gathering, please introduce yourself and let the convo begin. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

My book *The Restaurant Critic's Wife* was published by Lake Union Publishing in January and it has been a wild ride. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



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Today's guest [@ElizabethLaBan](#) is a journalist and author of *THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE*. Please welcome Elizabeth to [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Since I am married to a restaurant critic in real life many people are curious about what is real life and what is fiction. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Again, I am so happy to be here and I am very happy to answer any questions about real life versus fiction or anything else. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



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@LitChat

Right up front, @ElizabethLaBan. I am a food writer also, but I take freebies. No pride or anonymity here. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Anonymity is a huge part of the book - the restaurant critic does not want to be recognized. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

He makes his family crazy trying to maintain that! #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



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What I liked from outset of THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE was the zany ways the protag, Sam, went about his work. [@ElizabethLaBan](#) [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Thanks! He is certainly zany! Even wearing disguises sometimes - thought that rarely goes well for him. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

There is one scene where his fake mustache falls into a bowl of tomato soup. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

So we do want to know, are there any scenes in THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE that were taken from real life? [@ElizabethLaBan](#) [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

There are some - and some are totally made up! First I'll say that my husband has never gone dumpster diving. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

It is true, though, that when we drove our newborn son home from the hospital my husband wanted to stop at a new hoagie place. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

It made me crazy, the way it makes Lila crazy in the book, and also I was so happy he had thought to buy food. We were starving! #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

The dumpster diving incident was fun. Did that come out of the blue, or had you heard of other real critics doing such a thing? #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

It's funny because I think that is the one scene that is most asked about and I don't remember the moment I thought of it. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Sarah Hall
@sarahsunnyville


[@ElizabethLaBan](#) has your husband ever worked as a chef? #litchat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I think it came from a lot of brainstorming and it seemed just crazy enough that Sam would do it.
[#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


My husband has not worked as a chef, but he has a degree from a French cooking school and is a great cook. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I think he also has a great sense of how incredibly hard it is to be in a professional kitchen.
[#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


[@sarahsunnyville](#) Thanks for that question! [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Just following up my comment a few tweets back, my husband also once did his own version of Sam's macaroni and cheese test. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



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Join us in [#LitChat](#) for the next 45 mins with [@ElizabethLaBan](#), author of THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE. nurph.com/litchat

 2 HOURS
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Your protagonist, Lila, is a woman in flux. A new mother who leaves behind a great job to follow her husband. Tell us more of her. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

He used Campbell's soup - at the time our daughter was two and she loved their cream of chicken soup. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Lila is an interesting person - she wants love but she is afraid of being tied down. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

She spends much of her early adult life avoiding true commitment. She works for a hotel and resort co. and travels all the time. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

But then she meets Sam and falls in love and can't really help wanting to be with him. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


The reason she leaves her job is because she has a flair for drawing attention to herself and getting into the news. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Love does that. It draws people together and causes them to create new margins enclosing both people. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

When they move to Philadelphia for Sam's new job - his dream job - he asks her to take a step back and try to stay out of the news. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

The only way to do that is to ask her to not work for a while - but she misses it and is lonely. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


Do you think Sam is being fair with Lila by asking her to step away from her career? @ElizabethLaBan #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


Yes that's true and much of what the book is about - the new world and life they create together.
[#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


[@LitChat](#) I think it is the only way Sam can think of to handle his new situation. He feels like he has one shot at it... [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Once he's out there he can never undo that - and Lila is a pistol - she almost can't help herself as far as drawing attention goes. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



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@LitChat

Lila is naturally charismatic. People like her are always attention magnets, whether they want it or not. [@ElizabethLaBan](#) [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Also, they have two tiny kids so in some ways it makes sense even to Lila in theory - it's just the reality of it that is hard. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


That's a nice thing to say and I agree - people like her. Also, when she's in her element she can really get things done. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


But she isn't perfect - and she drives Sam as crazy as he drives her (at least almost!). [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Then add the element of the children. One of the biggest stresses in a marriage are the children. Is that true of Sam and Lila? [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@LitChat](#) Yes it is - and the other interesting point there is that even though Lila is great at taking care of crises at work... [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

She is not particularly good at taking care of her kids - they throw her off balance and she feels like a failure. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

That, and the fact that Sam is so focused on his job, make life in the Soto house a challenge at times. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

The off-balance part struck me. Many woman don't adjust well to full-time motherhood, but it's not because they aren't maternal. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

@LitChat I agree - thought Lila does doubt her own maternal instincts. But Lila is used to being in charge... #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

And it's hard to be in charge with little kids in the house - you never know what they're going to do. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Ha! No one's ever in "charge" of toddlers! @ElizabethLaBan #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

@LitChat That is true! #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

And Hazel is very spunky and really gives Lila a run for her money! [#LitChat](#)



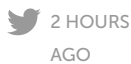
LitChat
@LitChat

Women like Lila need challenges that involve more than just potty training tips and shortcuts to good preschools. [@ElizabethLaBan](#) [#LitChat](#)



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

That's what Lila thinks at first - and also feels that her block is full of content, stay-at-home moms... [#LitChat](#)



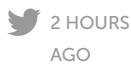
Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

She doesn't think she belongs but of course everyone is more complicated than they first appear... [#LitChat](#)



Joye Johnson
@johnson_joye

[@LitChat](#) Women are fed the idea that full-time parenting is the key to fulfillment. But parenting is only a few years of your life. [#litchat](#)



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

And she learns the other moms on the block are not so one-dimensional. [#LitChat](#)





Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@johnson_joye](#) I know! At first when you have a newborn it seems like that's how they will be forever. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@johnson_joye](#) But now my first newborn is about to be 17! And that will be a whole new adjustment. I don't look forward to it. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

We tend to place ourselves within the filter when looking at others. Lila does this to her own disadvantage. [@ElizabethLaBan](#) #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@johnson_joye](#) One of my kids' principals always said it is so slow until they go to kindergarten and then the time flies! #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@LitChat](#) She does - she thinks she is inferior to the other moms on Colonial Court. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

It seems to her that they do everything perfectly, they never mess up and always have the kids fed and happy. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE draws upon the meme of a woman's career as second to her husband's, but with surprises. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
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Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

But she comes to see that isn't always the case. And I think it's a good lesson. There can be a lot of competition among mothers. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I can see how it appears that way - but I don't believe that, and I don't think Sam believes that either. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

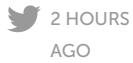
Ack. Competition among mothers--yes! It's huge. And it goes all the way through school, even to who your kids marries. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
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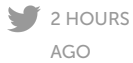
Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I know! It's tiring but I do sometimes get caught up in it - less so now that my kids are older but it is still there. #LitChat



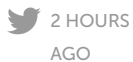
Joye Johnson
@johnson_joye

My mom had the hubby/kids life. I've seen her bewilderment at why she isn't quite happy. She's afraid to admit she needs more. #LitChat



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

@johnson_joye It is such a fine line - and the question of what is ultimately fulfilling is so hard to answer. #LitChat



LitChat
@LitChat

Did you know the entire arc of THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE when you began the first draft? @ElizabethLaBan #LitChat



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I am mostly home with my kids - and have been - but I am so lucky that I have been able to write, too. It is just really lucky. #LitChat





Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I really didn't know the whole arc - I started with snippets and scenes and built around them. It took a long time. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

In fact, I think that is one of the reasons it took so long - I sort of backed in to the story itself. I had a world and moments... [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

But I also wanted to tell a good story. Another reason it took a while was because I didn't want Lila and Sam to be me and Craig. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

I called myself a WAHM (work at home mom). If writing were not something that could be done at home, I would have imploded. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


Our story is boring - I mean, I have a lot of funny moments to tell about, but I am happy and pretty much right where I want to be. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I had to get to know Lila and Sam as people before I could really tell their story. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


Yes. RT @ElizabethLaBan I had to get to know Lila and Sam as people before I could really tell their story. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


Yes that is a good way to put it (WHAM) - Our lives would be very different if I went to an office all day. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Let's talk about process for a while. How long did it take to write your full first draft?
@ElizabethLaBan #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I generally think, if you have the time, a solid draft of a book can be written in a year. This one was a little different... #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

It was really in the works for YEARS - and had different side plots that changed and even got dropped over the years. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I can write fast - but sometimes I need time to let it sit to see the bigger picture and the real story. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I also have a few early readers including my husband which helps me shape the story and book. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
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Only 15 more mins in #LitChat with @ElizabethLaBan, author of THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE. nurph.com/litchat

 2 HOURS
AGO



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@LitChat


Do you have a writing ritual, a certain time of day or place where you are most creative and/or productive? #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I know many authors who do that - they write from say 10 to 2 every day. I have never been one of those writers. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I write when I am finished with everything else (laundry, shopping, the freelance editing I do), unless I have a deadline or.. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

if I am really into a book - then I just want to write all the time. But I was thinking today I am going to change that... #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I'm going to try the other way - writing for a certain amount of time each day - and seeing how that works. I'll let you know! #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


Wow. You are amazing, @ElizabethLaBan. By the time I finish with all of my ordinary work, I am spent. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Rhoda Baxter
@RhodaBaxter


#litchat @LitChat I write sitting in bed, with a hot bean bag at my feet, if it's cold.

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I am, too! That's why sometimes I don't write for days. But I always miss it eventually. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


If I don't do my creative first thing in the morning (with my first cup of coffee), I never get to it.
#LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

@RhodaBaxter Don't you get a stiff neck that way? #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

@LitChat I think I'll try that - maybe from 8:15 to 11:15 most days. #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

@RhodaBaxter My favorite writing position is with laptop in lap and legs outstretched (with a dog warming my feet). #LitChat

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@RhodaBaxter](#) The dog part sounds very nice! I do think everyone finds their best writing position. I sit at my dining room table. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Rhoda Baxter
@RhodaBaxter


[#litchat](#) [@ElizabethLaBan](#) Not really. I use a old breastfeeding pillow at my back and a pillow under the knees.

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@RhodaBaxter](#) That sounds comfortable - now that you explain it. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Rhoda Baxter
@RhodaBaxter

[@LitChat](#) Ooh. I'd love to have a dog. [#litchat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


That makes sense - I do write in the same place most of the time. But sometimes I'll walk into a lobby or coffee shop and think... [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


Oops... that [@SPressfield](#) RT [@LitChat](#) Writing guru is very adamant about specific writing habits. He believes they open creativity. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I could write a novel here... [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Rhoda Baxter
@RhodaBaxter


[#litchat](#) [@ElizabethLaBan](#) it is. It's also warm in winter months. Our kitchen table is covered in all kinds of nonsense, so bed is easier.

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
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What are you working on now that THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE is out in the world?
[@ElizabethLaBan](#) [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I'm working on another women's fiction book and another YA book - my first novel was a YA book called The Tragedy Paper. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
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What challenges do you find in writing the two different genres simultaneously? [@ElizabethLaBan](#)
[#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

[@RhodaBaxter](#) What sort of writing do you do? [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

I guess I tend to work on one or the other at a time - but once the worlds are established I can go back and forth. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

It is establishing the worlds and getting to know the people in those worlds that can get tricky. [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



LitChat
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Final question from me: What did you learn about yourself while writing THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S WIFE, [@ElizabethLaBan](#)? [#LitChat](#)

 2 HOURS
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


Once I'm really into a book, though, I tend to want to stick with it. [#LitChat](#)

 AN HOUR
AGO



Rhoda Baxter
@RhodaBaxter

[@ElizabethLaBan](#) [#litchat](#) romantic comedy/ women's fic. You?

 AN HOUR
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


Many things, I guess, the first being that I feel very lucky that my husband is much more reasonable than Sam. [#LitChat](#)

 AN HOUR
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


I also learned that I wish I could go back and enjoy my kids babyhood more - it went by fast and I was pretty stressed. #LitChat

 AN HOUR
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


And I also learned that in another life I would have liked to work at a hotel! #LitChat

 AN HOUR
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan


@RhodaBaxter I also write women's fiction and young adult, and some nonfiction. #LitChat

 AN HOUR
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat


We are out of time with @ElizabethLaBan today, but what a fun convo! Learn more about her at elizabethlaban.com. #LitChat

 AN HOUR
AGO



Elizabeth LaBan
@ElizabethLaBan

Thanks so much for having me! It was a lot of fun! #LitChat

 AN HOUR
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Let's give @ElizabethLaBan a HUGE round of THANKS for joining us today. {{{APPLAUSE}}}
#LitChat

 AN HOUR
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

Next week in #LitChat Sophie Perinot @Lit_Girl, author of historical fiction. Her latest novel is MÉDICIS DAUGHTER. #LitChat



AN HOUR
AGO



LitChat
@LitChat

tHANK YOU! And eat well, write well. RT @ElizabethLaBan Thanks so much for having me! It was a lot of fun! #LitChat



AN HOUR
AGO