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Dirty Linen?

**Review: *Cold Pizza for Breakfast: A Mem-wha??* by
Christine Lavin**

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[Cold Pizza for Breakfast: A Mem-wha??](#)

by Christine Lavin

Tell Me Press (2010); ISBN 978-0-9816453-6-0; 480 pp; \$21.95

Welcome to Christine's World — not a Wyeth painting, but a place where one of the original Bitchin' Babes becomes a Dishin' Babe, and the grit of life according to folk music meets the glamour of Dame Edna. Both worlds sparkle in Christine Lavin's humorous memoir of two decades as a musical performer, matchmaker, and midwife, bringing artists together and nurturing musical careers through her inspired pairings, songwriting workshops, and concerts.

Lavin operates on her own 3G network: Her particular genius is marked by a genuineness and generosity of spirit. In her roles as performer, producer, camp director, cookie baker, and knitting coach, Lavin appears to be most comfortable when she is sharing with a friend — whether it's sharing the spotlight (literally), a chocolate-chip cookie recipe, her enthusiasm for her favorite craft, or her latest Broadway obsession. And by "friend," she means anyone, because she delights in gathering up everyone she meets in one big party called Life, providing sustenance not only to musical relationships, but human ones, too.

A storyteller par excellence, Lavin can take the most trivial encounter and spin it into gold, exposing the heart of the matter with humor and grace. Her reminiscences — one story after another — bubble forth in an endless stream, beginning with a childhood fascination with the New York Jets and chance meeting with Joe Namath, continuing through her early musical partnership with Eric Lowen in their college years and her time studying with Dave Van Ronk as she established herself in the Fast Folk music scene, to her total enthrallment with Dame Edna and discovery of a group of fellow devotees of the American Songbook in Manhattan's rich cultural milieu. This is a tell-all in the best sense: Lavin tells about not just her encounters with People With Names, but her life as one of nine children growing up in New York State, her "Boom-Boom and Trixie" hijinks with her college roommate, the post-9/11 reactions that contributed to an average 20-lb. weight gain for each person at the local firehouse and also a concert that allowed the beginning of healing in the community, and how baton twirling came to be her signature act. Even the less inspiring moments of her life are candidly revealed with a hard-earned acceptance that comes from wisdom rather than self-criticism: There's a lesson in Lavin's clear-eyed view that challenge and risk coexist, and experience of failure is the greatest teacher on the road to success.

Lavin shows that being truly rich has little to do with money, and you'll be richer for spending a few hours in her company.

— *Susan Hartman (Baltimore, MD)*