

Foam

SURF DIARY VOL. 16: SUMMER'S OVER, BUT SURFING IS FOREVER

WANT TO LEARN TO SURF? OUR MUSIC EDITOR IS TESTING THE WATERS FOR YOU. RIGHT HERE, ALL SUMMER.

ARTICLES // [CRISTINA BLACK](#) // 08/31/11



RIP Summer 2011

I'm not gonna lie—I've been dreading this entry. The onset of September totally sucks! Despite the customary gorgeousness of the weather—here in the Northeast, that's something!—it gives you that gnawing feeling that summer is in its twilight way too soon. It's particularly bittersweet for me this year, the year I learned to surf.

But what a gift! Like most great experiences, a lot of it was the little things: serenading new friends on ukulele, sipping blueberry limeade by the taco truck, having my hilarious Dirty Dancing moment at Ruschmeyer's (see Vol. 11). And there were big things, waves specifically, some that rose right over my head as I rode them to shore, feeling elated knowing that I would do this again and again (see Vol. 12).

Mostly I'm just amazed. Amazed that I could feel exhilarated with seaweed on my head and snot dripping out of my nose, bruised knees and a nice mouthful of wave churning in my stomach. Or that getting pounded in the impact zone could make me feel the power of the universe in ways I never had before. Or at how happy I am floating along in the water, chatting up a storm and waiting for a wave. Maybe it was when I did my first turtle roll (see Vol. 12), or when I first learned to go down the line (see Vol. 7), or when I got my first taste of stoke way back in June (see Vol. 5), but somewhere along the way, I *got* it. I began to understand why surfers experience life on another level. Summer may be ending, but I assure you my relationship with surfing has just begun. In fact, I'm already planning the rest of my year around surfing trips, so like a TV drama at its season finale, I'm going to leave this diary open-ended.

But summer, oh summer! I don't want it to go!

Summer is really alive. It's an excuse for so many wonderful things, like ditching work to go surfing, for one. It's also an excuse to be slow and sweaty. It's an excuse to be sexy and wild, to have messy hair and make out with cute boys and dance. It's an excuse to waste time lazing by the water because the day is so long it appears to approach infinity but then does finally meet its end in a wash of purple and pink and orange. And blue. In summer, you can lose your way for a spell because you know that, too soon, the seasons will shift and shove you back into regular life. You'll re-enter polite society with a whole new set of secrets.

xo

-c.

8/30

Vol. 15: It's Corey's World, We're Just Surfing In It



Corey makes his way to the waves

As you probably gathered by now, my surf instructor Corey is the man. The unofficial mayor of Ditch Plains, he's an inexhaustible fireball who will, after a seven-lesson day, send me a late-night text like "7am! We will slay." Slay, by the way, means dominate, which means surf really well, which I learned from Corey but also by watching *Soul Surfer* while I was shut up in my apartment during Hurricane Irene. A word about surf lingo: I've been studying up on it since 2008, so I could write punny headlines and not sound like your grandma.

But I discovered this summer that Corey has *his own language* that includes words like *schwagglepuss* (lackluster surf), *pop tart* (a wave that looks nice enough but turns steep fast and flushes you), *room service* (when an awesome wave comes right to you), *hunting season* (when you have to go looking for good waves), *trounced* (when you get flushed repeatedly in the impact zone), *death trap* (when a wave comes out of nowhere and trounces you) and *krumped* (wiped out by a tricky wave).

I learned a lot from Corey this summer, and through my incessant journalistic question-asking (a.k.a. shooting the shizz) I have gathered enough research to learn exactly what Corey needs in a surf board. One day, he wished for a pillow, so he could rest while I rode a wave and paddled back out. Another time, he dreamed of a rearview mirror to spot waves, and a traffic signal to let

students know if they were a go or not. And on it went like this all summer. So since the theme of my summer was trying out new things (surfing, surf writing among these), I figured I'd try my hand at designing a signature surfboard for my esteemed instructor.

Dear readers, I bring you [THE COREY BOARD](#).

xo

-c.

8/21

Vol. 14: Collision Control

On Sunday at noon, the waves were “pop-tarty” (that’s Coreyspeak for when they stand up and get tricky fast). So each time I took off, I was way high up on the face and feared a giant pearl (not the pretty kind, either). Most of the time I was okay. But then it got crowded. The thing about Ditch Plains is it’s full of beginners, and not all of them have Coreys to make sure they’re surfing safely. I looked around and reminded myself what Fitzgerald wrote about bad drivers—that they’re just fine until they meet other bad drivers.

About 30 minutes in, I caught a nice big wave that sent me sailing deep on the inside, and when I was paddling back out, this kid came flying straight at me. By the time I realized he wasn’t going to turn, it was too late to paddle out of the way, so I did what Corey and Chris and everybody always tells me to do when things get out of control: I went under, way down, and stayed there for a minute, until I was sure the wave had passed. When I resurfaced, it was a big old mess. The kid was stunned and sputtering and trying to paddle away quickly, but our leashes were tangled, and we were right in the thick of the impact zone. He was just floating there doing nothing, so I took my leash off and freed it from his. Before I had a chance to reattach it, a set of monster waves came in, ripping my big old nine-foot board beachward, testing the strength of my grip and the integrity of my shoulder joint over and over. Corey paddled over to assess the situation. “Just so you know,” he said to the kid, “the *guy* is supposed to take his leash off.” Surf chivalry!

Even though everybody was fine, the incident changed the whole mood of the session. I kept choking on the take offs, fearing nosedives even more so now. “Confidence Cristina, confidence!” yelled Corey after I shied away from a beautiful shoulder ride. When I did catch waves, the paddle-outs became terrifying and tiring. The last time I made it back out, I layed my cheek on the board and let my arms fall limp into the water. “I’m dead,” I muttered. “Dead, dead surfer girl.”

“Poor Cristina,” said Corey, patting my back. I ended up paddling in.

xo

-c.

8/18

Vol. 13: The Test

The hardest thing about learning to surf, at least for me, isn't standing up, or turning, or even catching a wave. It's choosing waves. At this point, most days I feel like I can shred for hours if Corey tells me when and where to be. So after a few decent rides on Wednesday, we decided it was time for a little pop quiz. Corey would sit silent while I studied the horizon and tried to identify a proper wave.

I don't know if I did that great. I'd see a wave I thought was perfectly fine and Corey would say, "Mmmm, nope, not this one." He'd explain why ("too mushy" "too steep" "a closeout.") Then, I'd be sitting there like a bump on a pickle and he'd wait until the last possible second and shout, "Cristina! Room service!" By the way, "room service" is a Coreyism that means the wave is coming right to you.

After a few confused rides, it was time for a test. Corey had to split, but he suggested I stay out without him. That sounded like a great idea to me, until I caught one last wave and had to paddle back out on my own. I mean, I was fine, but the feeling of being totally alone out there was a little unsettling. Luckily, my new friend Chris (see Vol. 12) was finishing up a session with a mother-son team named Christine and Christopher—you can imagine how confusing the call-outs were getting—so he was helping me cheat a bit. "This one?" I'd yell to him. "Nope, not really," he'd say.

"How about now?" He shook his head.

"Now...? No??"

"You'll know it when you see it," said Chris, paddling away with his pupils. Then I was really alone. I waited anxiously for a wave to stand up and show it's pretty face. The first few I tried were disastrous. I wasn't confident that I'd chosen wisely, so I hesitated and got crunched. It was a little embarrassing, but, then again, so is almost everything about learning to surf!

I gave myself a talking-to. *Self*, I said, *you need to get it together. Use your instincts, feel it out and go for it.* So I did. I stuck the next one. After I bailed and came up in the shallow water, I raised a victory fist, but there was no one around to see it. I paddled out one last time to make sure it wasn't just beginner's luck. It wasn't.

xo

-c.



the lone surfer

8/9

Vol. 12: Rolling With It

I woke to a text from Corey: SURF IS SICK! A month ago, this would've meant "no lesson today because newbie surfers cannot actually handle good surf." But now, it means it's go time. I pulled my wetsuit onto my legs and rode my bike to the beach with the arms flapping down by the spokes, like I'd seen *real* surfers do. I scanned the scene. The waves were coming in pretty rows, neatly groomed, and...errr...kind of big. My old friends stopped by for a minute: doubt and fear, fear and doubt.

Can I do it?

Only one way to find out. I zipped up my wetsuit and joined a huddle with Corey and a few of his other protégées. "I can't do a turtle roll," said one nervous lady, surveying the heavy impact zone. (For those not in the know, a turtle roll is when you're paddling out and a huge wave is coming to rock your world and instead of trying to spear through it, you flip over and hang on to your board like a little monkey while the wave rushes over you.) "Yeah," said Corey. "Whenever I try to teach someone to turtle roll, they feel like they're drowning."

Since I'd changed up my lesson time last minute, Corey placed me in the care of one of his minions, Chris. I suddenly realized I had never been surfing without Corey. He was my Linus blanket, and it was about to be yanked away. *Waaaahh*. Also? The first thing Chris says when I meet him: "I'm going to have you do a turtle roll."

I protested, but Chris pressed. “You should try it before you decide you don’t like it.” Just then, a mammoth wave crushed me, so I had lots of time to consider his point while wrestling with my board, sputtering in the whitewater, and getting pushed back several feet. Okay, I thought, I’ll try it. And I liked it! The impact zone was cuckoo, as expected. My shoulders were on fire halfway out, so it was good to know I could just roll under a wave instead of getting clobbered and pushed back by it. It was a revelation, courtesy of Chris, who lives on a sailboat and is lovely and really great at giving directions calmly so you don’t get rattled when there are six-three men flying at you on massive paddleboards. He even let me go on about what surfing has taught me about life, how you have to persevere through the tough times to reap the big rewards, blah blah blah. If he thought I was super cheesy, he didn’t let on. So everybody go check out Chris’ site [Live in Color](#) and buy his t-shirts. They’re rad.

The lineup was crowded. Today’s celeb surfer was Chris Martin of Coldplay, which made me wonder when a rock star I really like is going to show up at Ditch Plains. Can I get a Devendra or even a Ke\$ha to gawk at while I chill in the water? I was distracted by other surfers a few times, not because they were famous, but because they were on my wave. But I held my ground pretty nicely, I think, and got some super nice long rides. One beauty was so perfect, I couldn’t even believe it was real as I dropped into its glassy gorgeousness. *This is so frickin’ fun*, I was thinking to myself as I rode it down the line and into the beach. When I met Chris (the instructor, not the singer) back on the inside, he asked me how it went. “I couldn’t see you at all,” he said. “The wave was over your head the whole time.”

xo

-c.

8/8

Vol. 11: Come Monday, It'll Be Alright

So I had a crappy weekend. I won’t go into it too heavily, except to say that my wallet was stolen, my ukulele gig was rained out, some seagulls stole my sandwich, and I was absolutely ROBBED during a bingo dance-off at Ruschmeyer’s (see Vol. 8), but whatever, dude. What. Ever.

Sunday was a no-go for surfing. It poured most of the day, then the water churned up like a washing machine making it suitable for only a few daring shortboarders to flop around in. Fun to watch! Not fun for a beginner to try.

So, Monday morning, bright and early, I paddled out into some pretty heavy surf with Corey. I was a little nervous. The impact zone was intense, and I still felt drained and salty from the bad luck I’d had over the weekend. I had a really hard time keeping my board straight and getting enough speed up to bust through the whitewater. Eventually, I made it out to the lineup and waited for the right wave. “Okay go!” Corey said when a nice medium-sized one came. I started paddling for it, but a few seconds later, Corey grabbed my leash and told me to stop. “Nope,” he said, “Let’s let Jimmy Buffet go.” I looked over and saw an older paddle boarder digging his way

to the wave. Indeed, it was Jimmy Buffett. I'd heard legend of his presence in Montauk, but hadn't seen him in person yet. It was funny because just the day before, I'd been doing some rainy day browsing at Air & Speed, the surf shop in town, and "Come Monday" played on the stereo. I've been to some Buffett shows in my time, but I've always considered it telling that his music (and fans) are kind of, um, alcohol oriented. But that day, I had stopped for a second to appreciate the perfection of that particular song. It gives you the hope that the promise of romance can lift you up and get you through a couple of miserable days.

I dug my hands into the water, pulled back and looked left. As Jimmy sailed by, a flash of sea spray atomized off the back of the wave and a half-rainbow appeared over his head.

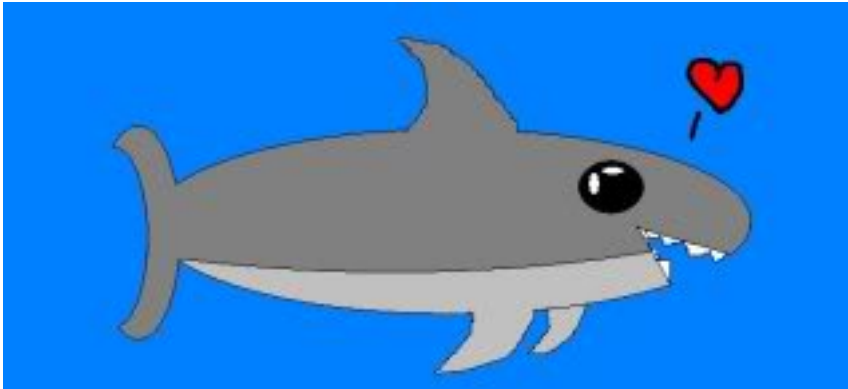
I took it as a sign that everything's going to be fine.

xo

-c.

8/7

Vol. 10: A Farewell to Shark Week



i heart sharks

When the surf is tiny, there's lots of time to chat. Usually, it's me blathering on to Corey about my personal problems, my musical pursuits or the social dynamics at my beach house. All last week, we talked about sharks. I shook Corey down for tales of marine animal encounters (he's seen one shark—it was harmless and swam away quickly). I asked him to have a rearview mirror installed on my board, so I could see danger approaching ("objects in mirror are closer than they appear!"). One day, I even joked that if only a shark would approach us, I would be happy to get some cardio action by swimming for my life, so mellow were the waves that day. I guess I've just been in that old shark spirit. Hasn't everybody?

Sharks are sexy. Or at least that's what the Discovery Channel wants you to think come late July when you're (ahem) channel-surfing to escape summertime reruns and you land on a segment

where these diver dudes are submerged in a cage, looking to shove an HD camera into a great white's mouth for an ultra-insiderly look at all the drama, all the danger, all the glamour of the real life of a shark. Oh, joy! It's [Shark Week](#) again.

I dig sharks. I think they're the coolest things. So it makes me sad that, when I tell people I'm learning to surf, they'll often think I'm really brave, or even a little crazy, because they're afraid of the water. Why? Sharks. I find it so hilarious that people who aren't a bit scared of careening out of New York City, going top speed on the Long Island Expressway, get out here and just sit on the beach and stare at the water because they think a shark might eat them if they get in.

I blame Steven Spielberg. I do! Because while Shark Week sensationalizes sharks, it's *Jaws* that really ruins their rep. Sure, there's the occasional contemporary news story about shark attacks off the coast of Australia, and Corey did tell me that one of his little surfettes had been freaked out in the water after seeing *Soul Surfer*. But no other phenomenon in culture has done more to shift the common perception of the ocean than *Jaws*. That 1975 movie, inspired by a 1916 incident, has pretty much ruined the ocean forever for millions who cannot swim in a lake, a pond or a pool, much less the open ocean, without hearing that menacing soundtrack in their heads or hallucinating dorsal fins poking through the surface of the water.

Don't get me wrong. I love *Jaws*! Love it. It's a classic. It has everything you'd want in a movie. It set the bar for the summer blockbuster, and its soundtrack exemplifies the dramatic power of simplicity and repetition. But I have to wonder if Spielberg, while making the film, realized that he was essentially shifting an entire generation's ability to enjoy something as elemental and ubiquitous as water. Shark Week is over, but *Jaws* is forever.

When will it be safe to go back in the water...?

xo

-c.

8/5

Vol. 9 Getting Going Again

Once you lose momentum, it can be a struggle to get your groove back. I learned this when I had to take a three-week break from surfing in the middle of the summer. Back in sultry Brooklyn, I longed like a lovelorn wanderer for the coolness of the water, the sound of the surf, the thrill of the rides. As the City dragged on through July, I dreamed daily of my reunion with the ocean.

Well, as these things go, my re-entry into the Montauk surfing life was far less fiery than I'd imagined it would be. For one thing, the waves weren't so hot. They were small, soft and difficult to surf, so the take-offs were tricky, the rides short and unsatisfying. Obviously, you want the opposite. Also, there was wind. And there was a lot of waiting around for waves, which were difficult to spot, so when one would come, I'd be determined to get up on it. But no. Time after

time, I missed. I couldn't keep up. I'd get up on the wave and it would just sort of ooze under me. Corey suggested I adjust to the conditions. "You're standing too far back on the board," he said. "When the waves are like this you need to get up and get going on them."

Then, a nice wave came and I paddled like hell for it. Corey gave me a push and I popped up, my front foot a whole step ahead of the usual position. But like the markets that day, I did a bit of a nosedive. I was frustrated. I'd done exactly what Corey said, and it didn't work. "That one was different," he said. "You should've stayed back." Arggghhh!

The moral of the story? Don't expect the waves to surf you, surf the waves. Read, them, take cues, figure out what they want you to do, how they want you to react to their changing moods. Or, as Corey says, "There are no crappy waves, only crappy surfers." Gulp.

xo

-c.

7/8

Surf Diary Vol. 8: Talk of the Town

If you've been reading along, you know that surfing is the main reason my summer is going off, but it isn't the only thing. There's music, food, friends, parties, places. Montauk is FUN.

A lot of my most fun times have come in the form of dinner gatherings that include grilling tilefish, playing my ukulele, hanging out with old friends and bonding with new ones. (Obligatory shout outs: Lisette and Nils, Theresa, Mike P., Mike S., Ken, the [Joe Fresh](#) crew, Priya and Jeff, Stephan, and the list goes on...!) And food trucks are fun to hit up, like the new Airstream lobster roll truck parked at the surf camp beach.

Of course, there is also a lot of going out to do in Montauk. One night, I got a crew together to check out [South Edison](#) on rec from my friends at [Immaculate Infatuation](#). On our plates: beet salad, cheesy grits, lamb ribs and all manner of seafood. (Also: some kind of ridiculous salted caramel brownie-ice cream thing that may have set me back several days' worth of extra calories. Oh well! Good excuse to spend more time in the water!) I've also had meals and late nights at [Ruschmeyer's](#), Montauk's new-this-season go-to for dancing and romancing. Set up around a summer camp theme, the place is a huge lakeside mini-resort where hordes of people gather, spring break-style, to booze and whatnot.



The mighty Ruschmeyer's!

Perhaps the loveliest time of day in Montauk happens between 8 and 9pm this time of year. For Cali peeps, sunsets over the water are a dime a dozen, but we East Coast beachettes have to find a strategic West-facing spot to see bright pink and orange clouds mellow into mauves and greys. Montauk has a bunch of places to do that. There's the Montauket, an old school-style bar and restaurant with a patio where they blast classic rock at you and everyone cheers when the sun disappears. [Navy Beach](#) is the swankier option, with its white powdered sand, sofas and pretty people. Another favorite is [the Surf Lodge](#), which sure gets a lot of shizz-talk for being trendy-trendy-trendy, but is actually a good place to tipple while watching the day dwindle, especially on Sundays, when there's live music. I saw Foam favorite [Smith Westerns](#) there last month, and I even got to steal a moment there with *Foam* Editor-in-Chief Kristina Dechter when she hit town just after the Fourth!



Foam Editor-in-Chief Kristina Dechter at the Surf Lodge

Speaking of which, my Independence Day was the best in recent memory. Like a microcosm of the dream summer I envisioned for 2011, it included music, surfing, friends, fireworks and food. I played two super-mellow ukulele sets at the Gig Shack on Main Street, then raced back to Ditch Plains for a late afternoon session. Corey (see Vols. 2, 5, 6 & 7) and Kristin (Vol. 2) couldn't come to my show because they were out in the water, so they sent their parents! Cute!

xo

-c.



Corey's dad, Steve, my new surf buddy!

6/30

Surf Diary Vol. 7: When Nerves Turn to Gnarl

I knew when I got into this that surfing could be scary. Being a nut job, that only turned me on more. But then, when I got to the beach yesterday afternoon, I wanted to turn around and go back. The surf looked biggish and choppy, and the waves were frequent and kind of fast. I'd been out of the water a week and I worried that I would forget everything I learned, that I would hurt myself or someone else, or, worse, that it wouldn't be fun.

I think every student of surfing has those tweak-out moments where you're like, Why am I doing this? This was such a bad idea. I can't do it. *I'm scared.* But even though I just started surfing, I've been a writer and musician all my life, so doubt and anxiety are like old friends. They're like family. They tell me again and again that being terrified in a challenging situation is almost always an indication that something amazing is about to happen.

I got out in the water with Corey and off we paddled. It was hard. I got tossed backwards a few times when my nose went up. I kept getting turned sideways, but I was determined to bust

through the impact zone. At one point, Corey gave me a push from behind, and when I did my push up through the wave, it smacked me in the chest and my back arched strangely. I fell off my board and got trounced by at least three more waves.

Eventually, we made it out. I was trying to act tough, but Corey could see I was frayed. “If you’re scared at any point,” he said, “we can go in.” I admitted I was nervous, but I trusted Corey. If he didn’t feel I was in any danger then I was willing to go for it. Corey identifies waves in the most comforting way, too. “Cristina!” he’ll say, his voice rising an octave, “Do you see that wave? Look how cute it is! It’s just for you.” And I’ll think, *yes, this wave has been sent expressly to me by the magical forces of the universe, and my only purpose in the world is to stand up on the board and ride it to the beach.*

So that’s what I did. Again and again. Got up just about every time. I began to enjoy not only the rides, but the wipeouts and the paddle-outs, just for the challenge, because I knew that “trouncing experience,” as Corey called it, could only make me stronger. I began to think of the waves I was riding as different shades of attractive. They were either cute, or pretty, or glamorous, or gorgeous.

According to Corey’s adorable interpretations, there are two kinds of waves: a “cute little one” and a “wave of the day.” A wave of the day is just that. It’s large and lovely, gentle but powerful. It comes at you just so. You can’t waste it. You must rock it. So, when Corey announced that such a wave was arriving, I knew it was go time. I took off strong and popped up confidently. I turned left and admired my beautiful wave. It was curvy and shiny and sexy and perfect. I cruised along its shoulder, just ahead of the white water, and aimed straight down the line. It was how I always dreamed surfing would be.

xo

-c.

6/21

Surf Diary Vol. 6: Why It's Hard



Not really.

If you say you want to learn to surf, some people will try to discourage you, citing difficulty, as if that's any reason not to do something exciting. Maybe they tried surfing once on vacation in Mexico for like an afternoon and it didn't go so well. Whatever. That kind of talk makes me want to do it that much harder, *just to show those Negative Nellies.*

But anyway. It's a known fact that learning to surf is treacherous, but more for reasons I hadn't thought of than ones I had. Before I started, I was thinking of how physically difficult it would be to stay balanced on a moving board on a wall of water, or that the paddling would be tiring, or the

wipeouts would be painful. That stuff is all very true, but there is a litany of more mundane concerns.

When I'm not in the water, I find myself Googling things like "seasick surfer" and "smelly wetsuit," asking my [Twitter](#) followers what to do when you have to pee in the middle of a session or cruising beauty blogs for sun care solutions ([Shiseido sun protection stick](#) is the truth). Go ahead and vent your own petty water woes with the hashtag #surfgirlproblems. Maybe I'll retweet you and see if my Foamies come back with any solutions.

I'll tell you straight up that, after a week of surfing, I have a few war wounds. Nothing major. Just little things like light bruises on my forearms from wrestling with the board, tenderness in my ribs from lying down and paddling, a rash on my legs from wetsuit irritation and this pesky flip-flop blister on my toe that keeps getting sand ground into it.

Of course, when you try to surf and don't know how yet, you get tossed around in whitewater a lot. I'm lucky to have an instructor ([Corey the Great](#)) who insists on ultra-safe surfing and keeps frustration and discomfort to an absolute minimum, but you know, you're in the ocean, in the waves. You get effed about a bit. (Like if you're sputtering around after a wipeout and you totally forget that your instructor told you like five times to keep your board perpendicular to the wave and instead you have it parallel between you and the wave exactly how he told you not to and it flips over sideways and mows you down and everyone in the lineup sees and you paddle back out sheepishly and say you did it on purpose because you're "finding your style." Oh wait, that's just me.)

The main thing, though, is the embarrassment factor. If you read Vol. 1, you know that I am pretty much asking for awkwardness as assurance that I am expanding as a surfer and human being. Well I am getting my wish. I can barely pick up a board without feeling like the least agile member of Lamda Lamda Lamda. And even before I get to that point, there's the task of putting on a wetsuit (not so easy, it turns out!) and standing on the beach in it, feeling constricted and claustrophobic, my Bettie Page bangs stuck to my vampire-like forehead with sweat and sunscreen, choking down Advil with gulps of water to keep from getting a dehydration headache and wondering again why I am doing this to myself.

If you're thinking of getting into surfing to look cool, think again. I figure the cooler someone looks while surfing, the greater the number of times they probably looked stupid to get to that point. Or at least I hope so.

xo

-c.

6/20

Surf Diary Vol. 5: Stoked!

You know when you understand a concept, but you don't *really* know what it is until you experience it? After my first surfing lesson, I had that kind of a-ha moment.

The waves were super gentle that day, and my amazing instructor, Corey, put me on a big old boat of a board so I'd be able to get up easily. We had practiced pop-ups a bunch of times on the beach and Corey said I pretty much had it down. Of course it was a whole different thing when we got in the water. I wasn't too tired from paddling because the surf was small, but when Corey nudged me into a wave and yelled "1..2..3...stand up!" I panicked a little. I was so overwhelmed by the movement of the wave, the feeling of the wetsuit, and just sheer anxiety that my body forgot everything we'd practiced on dry land.

But, as Corey promised, after a few tries I started to get it, first in a kind of half-warrior stance, and then, after a few choice wipeouts, on both feet, riding the wave all the way into the beach. I was surfing.

When I got home, I told my surfer house mate Mike all about it. I told him that I felt relaxed and alive at the same time, that there was a sort of tingle to my skin, that my mind was completely clear, my body totally calm, and that I couldn't wait to get back in the water and try again and again.

"Oh yeah," he said. "That's the stoke."

For the first time ever, I know what that means.

xo

-c.

6/17

Surf Diary Vol. 4: What Does a Surfer Look Like?



beach goths

Here's a funny thing. A lot of times, when I tell people I'm learning to surf, they say, "You don't look like a surfer." This seems weird and backwards, but I guess I know what they mean. Sure, I have dark hair with blunt bangs (right now anyway), fair skin and all the stylings of a city girl (high heels, red lipstick, a lot of dark clothing). And, hell, my name is Black.

But I have to say it hadn't occurred to me that people would think I was less entitled to enjoy a sport because of the way I look. I thought maybe we were past the kind of pigeonholing that makes us assume one person cannot have a dark side *and* a sunny side, or that their clothes and hair color necessarily signify such things. People are complex! That includes surfers. Never mind the fact that the ocean is a deep, dark, mysterious thing indeed.

Just ask Foam favorite Nathan Williams of [Wavves](#), who, through his dreary-sunny music, introduced us to the concept of "[Surf Goth](#)" (also: "Summer Goth," "Beach Goth," and "California Goth.") So I'm going to be a gothy girl who surfs, or surfy girl who goths, depending on the season, the occasion, or however the hell I feel that day.

I love when I get to play it both ways.

xo

-c.

6/13

Surf Diary Vol. 3: What to Bring?

Well, I've done my pushups, my cardio, my swimming and my swimwear shopping and finally, tomorrow, I jump on the Long Island Rail Road from Atlantic Station in Brooklyn and ride it all the way out to Montauk Station. In 36 hours, I'll be in the water.

Obviously, packing for the beach isn't like packing for, say, a business conference. The most important things are the three S's: Swimwear, Sunglasses and Sunscreen.

IN MY BAG: Two bikinis and a one-piece (all by the amazing [Malia Mills](#)); family size Banana Boat SPF 50+ to slather on my body, [Sheisedo sun protection stick](#) for my face, plus [Shady Day sunscreen wipes](#) (SPF 30) just for cruising around town by bike; two pairs of sunglasses (one nice, one novelty); tangerine Bensimon sneakers, red Worishofer slides; an Isabel Marant sundress, a Samantha Pleet romper, a Billabong denim workshirt, and all manner of t-shirts, tanks and shorts. Plus, the good people at [Roxy](#) sent over a wetsuit. Did you hear that? I own a wetsuit!



vintage essentials

On my person, I'll have two important vintage finds: a 1970s straw hat with a feather in it to shield my honker from the sun, and my 1960s Giannini ukulele for strumming on the beach and such. People go nuts for that.

More soon!

xo

-c.

6/3

Surf Diary Vol. 2: Here's the Plan

One of the reasons I put off learning to surf for so long is I'm not based in Santa Monica like the other lucky *Foam* staffers. As the rock & roll wing of the mag, I make my home in Brooklyn, New York, a costal enclave of sorts, where there is no real beach. So, I got myself a summer share in a house in [Montauk](#), at the tip of Long Island, where I will surf with Corey Senese of [CoreysWave Professional Surf Instruction](#) at the famed [Ditch Plains](#), one of the most beloved beaches on the East Coast. In between trips out there, I'll jump on the NYC subway and head out to [Rockaway Beach](#) in Queens, a surf spot that is, by all accounts, having its moment. Apart from surfing, my summer will involve SUPing (with the amazing [Gina Bradley of Paddle Diva](#)), swimming, fishing, hiking, parties, tacos, popsicles, music festivals, shopping, and, with any luck, romance.

But back to surfing. I chose [Corey](#) as an instructor because he is known as the best in Montauk, and I'm not out here trying to eff around. His partner, Kristin, contacted me about a month ago and said that Corey likes working with one student over a whole season and that he promised I would be an "advanced beginner" by Labor Day. The plan is to head to Montauk on June 15 and begin the summer with a full week of intensive surf lessons and then continue my training Fourth of July week. When I spoke to Corey on the phone, he explained that the learning curve with surfing is shallow at first, then turns quite steep. In other words, you can learn to surf fairly quickly, but being a good surfer takes years. "It's mainly about conquering fear," he said.

By the way, Corey and Kristin are awesome. I call and email them pretty regularly with anxious questions, and they always reply quickly and enthusiastically. The main thing I wanted to know was how I could prepare on dry land for the physical demands of surfing. Corey explained that any type of training, especially cardio, is helpful, because if you're tired after paddling in the water for 30 minutes, you aren't going to progress very quickly. (All those super-long interval workouts on the elliptical all winter are about to pay off!) He also said core and upper-body strength are important, and that I could expect to do about 50 pushups (or pop-ups, as surfers call them) in my first lesson alone. So now, every hour or so, I kick of my high heels, drop and do ten.

It's like boot camp, but super fun.

xo

-c.

5/27

Surf Diary Vol. 1: The Love of Beginnerism

For know a better, fresher, busier sphere—a wide, untried domain awaits, demands you. —Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

I love being a beginner.

You know that awkward, clueless feeling you have on the first day at a new job or fitness class? I get off on that. I mean, I hate how it feels. I'm not a masochist. I just love what it means: that there is so much to learn, a whole new kind of person to be, and ahead, a burning mystery: *Can I do it?*

I'm telling you this because I have decided to spend the summer learning to surf. And it's about time. In my three years on staff at *Foam*, I have felt like something of a fraud. I learned to play ukulele in '08. I bleached out my hair in '09. I brought you *Wavves* and *Best Coast* in '10. I'm a Cancer. I have a deep, deep love for the beach and summer and swimwear and crunchy saltwater hair and the feeling of a swift sea breeze on the skin. But I'm not a real surf girl because, well, I don't actually surf.

That's going to change in '11. With the support of my fellow *Foam* eds, I am going to learn to ride waves, dammit. And I want you to come along with me by watching this space all summer, where I will update you regularly on my progress, because I suspect many of you are like me, wannabe surfers. So let's be real together. Learn to surf yourselves and tell me about it in the comments!

xo

-c.

NEXT ARTICLE

PHOTOS

[CAFÉ TROPICAL](#)

10 COMMENTS

May 27, 2011 at 09:48PM [Rachel](#)

Can't wait to read how it goes. Good luck!

Jun 03, 2011 at 05:38PM [Cassandra Loynd](#)

I think I need to try along with you & possibly blog about it. Enjoy!

Jun 03, 2011 at 10:01PM [Cristina Black](#)

Cassandra: DO IT!!

Jun 04, 2011 at 02:27PM [schnello](#)

Ugh, push-ups. You go, girl!

Jun 07, 2011 at 01:39PM [alexa wilding](#)

You are my hero, this is insane! I am terrified of the water so you are kind of rocking my world. Love this!

Jun 13, 2011 at 08:51PM [Tom Kaestner](#)

Corey is the man. He's a great teacher but the real deal is the guy rips! Really, he rips so hard and with beautiful style. You are in good hands, soon to be, surfer girl!

Jul 01, 2011 at 02:29AM [bonnie](#)

if surfing was easy everyone would be doing it!!! no its not easy but its just one of those things you have to keep going with-i never thought id be able to surf but i got there hey if i can do it anyone can do it! lol

Jul 01, 2011 at 04:18AM [Cristina Black](#)

Bonnie: You are so right. Powering through is the only way!

Oct 21, 2011 at 08:16PM [Windsor Andersen](#)

This sentence is me down to the t - "I have a deep, deep love for the beach and summer and swimwear and crunchy saltwater hair and the feeling of a swift sea breeze on the skin. But I'm not a real surf girl because, well, I don't actually surf".

I plan on learning to surf in 2012 or else!

<http://eatlovebikini.blogspot.com/>

Oct 22, 2011 at 05:33PM [Cristina Black](#)

Windsor: Do it! You won't regret it, I promise.