

# THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT Laura

Fresh off of *Orange is the New Black's* SAG Award and three-season pickup, and the release of her debut book *The Stash Plan*, Laura Prepon is having the time of her life

Words by Vanessa Pascale

It's late morning and SoHo House New York's members-and-guests-only lounge is bustling with patrons staring into phone screens and laptops, and chatting amongst themselves whilst sipping on hot brews and nibbling on breakfast remnants. The furnishings are cloaked in rich, velvety fabrics, and peering down from the weathered tin ceiling are understated pendant lights comingled with massive, ornate chandeliers. It's a cozy refuge on this cold, rainy day.

When Laura Prepon enters the room, I wave her over. She hugs me hello, and introduces me to her

best friend Jodi. There certainly is something about Laura that magnetizes. Just the other day a girlfriend of mine confessed that Laura would be her first girl-kiss choice, if she had to choose a female to lock lips with. Though I don't imagine making out with her, I find myself drawn to the inviting juxtaposition of strength and fragility she exudes. She appears delicate and unassuming with her long, black hair swept up in a pony and tucked beneath a baseball cap and her sinewy body outfitted in dark yoga pants, long-sleeved tee, and sporty vest. Her beauty is further highlighted with the bill of her cap, which directs you to her green eyes and flawless, makeup-free face.

## Behind-the-Scenes

“When I was on *70s Show*, I found this guy who put me through his film school one-on-one at night. He ended up producing my second short film. I became his little protégé. From there I did a web series called *Neighbros*, where I was a one-woman-crew. We ended up selling it to Comedy Central. Directed the pilot. They went with a show called *Workaholics*—we were very similar. Since then I’m like, I want to do a feature. I want to do something that I write. I’ve been working on a feature that I want to direct, so that’ll be my first big thing. I’m in a different film school now.”

EXCLUSIVE



Photo Credit: Ray Kachorian

On a book tour to promote her debut book, *The Stash Plan: Your 21-Day Guide to Shed Weight, Feel Great, and Take Charge of Your Health*, collaborated on with nutritionist Elizabeth Troy, Laura is noticeably excited to talk about the lifestyle change that altered her body. Having grown up fascinated with nutrition and food, —and with a mother who’s a chef and father who’s a doctor— she knew that a book on these subjects were in her future. “I didn’t want it to be another celebrity cook book. I wanted it to mean something.”

After landing her well-known role as Donna on *That 70s Show*, the New Jersey-born, Los Angeles-based actress began to experience several different ailments. “It was embarrassing... I’m like, ‘How am I supposed to do a book about nutrition and food if I can’t figure out my own body?’” Laura pushed herself in the gym and wasn’t overeating – yet the weight clung to her 5’10” frame. Ravenously, she imbibed books on the body and food – searching for a remedy. After enduring a litany of tests and doctors (she even indulged a shaman who shook maracas over her head. “I was desperate.”) over a fifteen-year time span, she was finally referred to Elizabeth Troy.

“Her viewpoints on food were really different. I started learning a lot of cool stuff and I got really inspired to write a book. Between my knowledge of the body and food, and the fact that I was already a chef, and her kind of food-based science, based on Eastern philosophy and Chinese Meridian Theory —that’s why this book came about. And there’s nothing like it on the market,” she beams. “I can honestly say when we pitched all of our publishers, everybody wanted it because —and that’s not like me being, ‘Ayyy’” she says in a Fonzie voice. “They were like, ‘There’s nothing like this that’s out there.’ We educate people in a way that’s not condescending or makes you feel like a dummy, literally just through my personal experiences and through Elizabeth’s personal experiences too.”

*The Stash Plan*, which made *The New York Times* bestseller list, centers on creating a stash of food twice a week, drinking bone broth, stretching, and Chinese Meridian Theory. In adhering to this lifestyle, Laura has leaned out, kept the weight off, and her vigorous workouts —that entailed a morning that began with spinning, followed by kickboxing, then weight training which adversely “inflamed” her body and caused her to hang on to weight— are a thing of the past. You get to workout less? “Girl, I started dropping weight when I stopped working out. Ask her.” She motions to Jodi. “She’s my best friend and she knows. When I stopped kicking my ass at the gym and started stretching, swimming, sweating in my sauna, and getting massages religiously, that’s when I actually started to lose weight,” she says.

Laura had to train herself to relax and be nice to her body, which was challenging. “I love going to the gym and listening to Zeppelin and lifting weights —that’s one of my favorite things to do and I can’t do it, because then I’m completely inflamed for a week... I’ll fall back sometimes into those habits, as we all do.”

To stay on track with *The Stash Plan* while traveling, she chooses hotels with kitchenettes so that she can prepare her stashes. But it’s all about living by the 80/20 rule, and as someone Irish and Russian, she loves a cocktail, she adds. “We won the SAG Award a few weeks ago for Best Ensemble and we drank champagne and ate chocolate. By the time we got to the after-party, we were eating

watching commence! The award-winning Netflix show, which films in Queens and upstate New York, was picked up for not one but three more seasons. Unfamiliar with TV protocol, I ask if a multiple-season pickup like this is common. “Back when I was on *70s Show*... *Friends* was on when we were on, back when that show was on the air, that’s the last time I really heard about shows getting picked up for two or three more seasons. That’s kinda the old school way of doing TV. I was shocked when we got picked up for three, especially now with all the different media platforms... all these shows that are everywhere. The fact that we, number one, rose to the top and that we’re such a cultural phenomenon is incredible... It was insane, like, amazing.” She smiles widely.

## What is your fondest memory from *That 70s Show*?

“Awe man, that’s tough. I have two. One was when we were shooting the pilot and Topher [Grace] and I did our scene on top of the hood of the Vista Cruiser, where we kiss for the first time. We’re so young. We’re so naive. We’re so cute. And it’s when you first see Eric and Donna have their first kiss. It was so special. And then, in the finale, I can’t even talk, I’m going to start crying,” she says as her green eyes well up with tears. “It was amazing, all of us together doing the finale in the driveway when it ended. Mila [Kunis] was balling. It was crazy. Those are probably the two, bookends.”

whatever we could off those trays, and I didn’t give it a second thought. The next day, woke up, made my breakfast with my stash —didn’t even think about it. You have to enjoy your life or what’s the point?” The other 20% of the time, she allows herself some good ol’ dive bar food like gluten-free sliders, French fries, and chicken wings. “Jodes, we should open up a dive bar where all of the stuff is crazy organic, hormone-free, and amazing,” Laura says excitedly. “Dive bars are the best. You go in. You listen to some Creedence. Get a drink. Get some fries. Wouldn’t it be great to have that?” she asks wistfully. “Absolutely, I’m in,” Jodi replies. “Great. I’m going to think about that,” Laura says carefully, citing that she tends to dive into many different ventures. “The last thing I need is another one, but that might be the way to go.”

Speaking of indulging, *Orange is the New Black*’s fourth season returns July 17th. Let the binge-

The racy role of Alex Vause, Piper Chapman’s love interest, continues to push and challenge Laura as an actress —which she loves. “When I’m reading the script, ‘Oh crap. I have to do that this week? Whoa! I love that. That’s my favorite, ’cause that’s when I grow and improve as an actress —when I’m scared. And I tend to do things that scare me. For me, she’s just a lot of things: She’s awesome, a total badass, but she’s really vulnerable and this relationship she has with Piper is so tumultuous, but they love each other so much. And they hate each other. And it’s this constant tug-of-war mentally. And physically. We get pushed out of our comfort zone all the time, which I love. To do a show where I’m not pushed out of my comfort zone, I would not be happy.”

The natural redhead, who has gone blonde in the past, dyed her hair black to play Alex —and has found that she feels the most herself in this hue. “Growing up as a teenager, nobody knew where to put me

## What are you watching on TV?

"I love *Homeland*. *Homeland* is amazing. When I saw Claire Danes, was it the SAG Awards? I was like, 'Oh my god, she's amazing.' I'm still trying to catch up on *Breaking Bad*. I love the History Channel. I like shows like *Alaskan Bush People*, where you learn about these weird subcultures of people. Like *Swamp People*, these guys live on the bayou for a few months out of the year, they hunt alligator, and no piece is wasted. It's just fascinating to learn about these subcultures of the world. I just love going to new cultures and experiencing new things."

'cause I was tall, had a deep voice, and red hair. When I'd audition against other actresses for *I Know What You Did Last Summer* or whatever, no one ever saw me as the typical girl that can be the lead of a movie because I looked so, I was so different. As I was growing up, I've been with my manager since I was 15, he's like, 'Laura, you have to believe me, this is going to help you. You don't want to be a cookie-cutter-blonde-girl. This is amazing, and what's going to make you.' And he's right. No one else could play Donna or Alex, except for me. These are really iconic characters that the typical cookie-cutter-girl can't play, and that makes me really happy. As I got older and matured into myself, the black hair just kind of makes sense with me and everybody around me. I feel like it suits me. Also, you can't play a rockabilly lesbian in *Orange* and have red or blonde hair," she says with a smile.

This fall, her movie *The Girl on the Train*, in which she plays Cathy, Emily Blunt's character's roommate, comes out. "Awesome movie. Tate Taylor directed it. Emily was just so stellar — loved working with her." There have been a myriad of 'wow' moments in the last year for Laura, but the one that sticks out is *OITNB*'s recent SAG Award. "That was one of the best nights that I've had in a long time. It was so special to be on that stage with my cast. They had asked me. 'Laura, if you guys win, you're going to represent/speak for the group.' I was so flattered about that —that meant a lot to me. To be on that stage surrounded by this incredibly talented group of women that is so diverse, so awesome... It was literally one of the highlights on my career. Hands down. And it was such an acknowledgment from your peers... Everything's great." She laughs. "I work really hard; to see it pay off is very, very nice."

Over some girl talk I discover that we share the same good taste in certain "dreamy" men, a tendency to say yes to things before really thinking about it ("But I end up doing really cool things because of it!" she exclaims), and a predilection for creating a warm, inviting haven. "My house is always the main area where the group

hangs out. I'm friends with a lot of guys who come over and I feed them. And when I'm not there all my friends are." Because Laura plays pokers, is a motorcycle owner and UFC enthusiast, she feels that the common misconception is that she isn't girly. "When people actually get to know me they're like, 'Wow, you're actually, like. You're a girl!'" she laughs about the reaction received when others discover her domestic goddess range. "I love cooking and I love creating a home. I love wearing that hat as a woman. I love being surrounded by flowers. I like decorating, entertaining," coos Laura, who friends aptly call Martha Stewart. A nurturing, multifarious soul, Laura is the kind of woman you need in your circle of friends and want in your corner. For Terasa, (our shared friend who connected us for this interview) Laura is like the sister she never had. "She's always there to lend an ear... She is super creative and adventurous. Once she sets her mind on something, she is tenacious, which not only makes her a great actress, but a great role model," says Terasa, dubbed the "long-lost Prepon" by Laura.

"Honestly, she's so chill and a real person," Jodi replies when Laura asks for help in figuring out what people would be surprised to find out about her. "I don't know if people would be surprised though, do you?" asks Laura. They go back and forth until Laura concedes. "That's nice. Thanks, Silly Bitch," she says to Jodi. "Sorry, that's a term of endearment. This is what all my best friends and I call each other. When I first moved to New York, I was so homesick, and they made me this book that said *The Silly Bitches* and it was all pictures of the best friends (Laura, Terasa, Jodi, Camilla, and Rebecca —who played her best friend on *October Road*, she points out)." I loved *October Road*, I tell her. "Girl, I love when people like *October Road*. Thank you," she says genuinely. "We are all such good friends," she says of the cast that also included Bryan Greenberg and Geoff Stults. I believe it. It's become crystal clear to me why Laura is adored (our Instagram photo together received a staggering 1,006 likes, a lot for my page, because she has over 2.4 million devoted Insta-followers) by so many. **ML**





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