

# HOUSTON

HOTEL MAGAZINE



## Haylie Duff

THE *REAL GIRL* DISHES ABOUT HER LIFE IN AND OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN

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# *The Real Deal*

**Haylie Duff** has lots of news these days — new movies in the making, a new book, a new cooking show and a new husband-to-be. Meet this multi-talented celebrity from Houston whose life is taking off in new directions.

BY ELLEN RITSCHER SACKETT





Barbara Protopopu



**H**AYLIE DUFF HAS PLENTY on her plate. The 29-year-old actress is making a name for herself as a cook, starting with her popular food blog, *The Real Girl's Kitchen*. It evolved into a cookbook, which led to a webshow that was picked up by the Cooking Channel. She has been busy on the sets of several movies for which she has starring roles. When she's not working, she spends time with her mother Susie and sister Hilary, her friends, and her fiancé. She is, indeed, a real girl — down to earth, and what you see is what you get.

Haylie Katherine Duff was born in Houston on Feb. 19, 1985. "I associate Houston with evening bike rides with dad, swimming, all kid stuff," she says. Between her first and sixth grades, she and her family lived in the Hill Country near San Antonio.

"We lived so far away from everything," she says. "It was just me and my sister. She and I

hung out with each other, day-dreaming, getting lost." By the time the family moved back to Houston, the sisters had formed a tight bond. "That time gave us that foundation to be close to each other," Haylie says.

Haylie started acting when she was 14 years old. "I was in a dance company in San Antonio, and I was painfully shy. My dance teacher encouraged me to take an acting class. I loved it!" Hilary, two-and-a-half years younger, wanted to be like her big sister.

"You know how siblings are," Haylie explains. "I came home from acting class and said, 'Wow, I love this,' and Hilary said, 'I want to do it, too!'"

"The teacher asked if I wanted to audition for a [Goldie Hawn] movie filmed outside of Houston, and I got the part." From there, things snowballed, and one thing led to another as they made connections in Hollywood, Haylie says. Soon Susie and her daughters moved to Los Angeles.

Both girls took numerous auditions, landing spots in television commercial and small parts before scoring more important roles. Haylie made guest appearances on a number of made-for-television films, such as *Love Takes Wing* (Dr. Annie Nelson) and its sequel *Love Finds a Home*, and TV shows, including *Chicago Hope* and *Boston Public*.

Haylie has been busy on the sets for a number of feature, made-for-television and direct-to-DVD films. She plays the starring role as Elizabeth Carter in *The Wedding Pact*, a comedy romance that was released last February. She also has the lead role in the romance, *Naughty and Nice*, playing the part of Dr. Sandra Love. Haylie appears as Brittany Gallo in the crime thriller *Badge of Honor*, which is in post-production. Altogether, according to IMDb, Haylie has 55 film credits to her name and four producer credits that include executive producer for the *Real Girl's Kitchen* TV series



Haylie Duff on the red carpet at the premiere of *Legally Blonde The Musical* at the Pantages Theatre in Hollywood, California.



The two Duff sisters, Haylie (left) and Hilary (right), pose for a photo at the premier of their movie, *Material Girls*, in New York City.



Haylie Duff was one of the celebrity speakers at the Los Angeles Ultimate Women's Expo, held at the Los Angeles Convention Center on Oct. 27, 2013.

and *Legally Blonde the Musical: The Search for Elle Woods*, a reality-TV series for which she played a mentoring role.

Haylie's first role in a feature film came 10 years ago when she was cast as Summer Wheatley in the 2004 cult-movie classic, *Napoleon Dynamite*, and she received a Teen Choice Award for her performance. Soon after, she captured the limelight as Sandy Jameson in 32 episodes of the WB television series *7th Heaven*. Haylie's acting talents took her to New York, where she landed the role of spoiled rich girl Amber Von Tussle, sporting a spectacular bouffant, in the 2006 Broadway production of *Hairspray* in 2006. She also appeared in a 2010 Off-Broadway production of *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, a five-woman play written by Nora and Delia Ephron based on the book of the same name by Ilene Beckerman.

At times, the sisters' careers have overlapped with shared

projects. Haylie played the part of Cousin Amy in two of episodes of the *Lizzie McGuire* series, and she and Hilary shared star billing for the 2006 feature film, *Material Girls*. Hilary's career soared once she was selected for the lead role in the Disney Channel's award-winning teen sitcom, *Lizzie McGuire* and the movie based on the show. As a vocalist, she grew to super-stardom as her recordings achieved platinum status.

The multi-talented Haylie also contributed vocals to a number of soundtracks for films starring her sister, including *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* and *A Cinderella Story*, and lent her song-writing talents to three of Hilary's CD releases. The two created a video that covered "Our Lips Are Sealed," the song made famous by the '80s pop

group, The Go-Go's.

Rather than engaging in sibling rivalry that one might expect from sisters involved in the same, competitive industry, Haylie says, "We support each other."

"This is what we feel is so unique about our story," Haylie says. "The majority in this business come into it in two different ways: Some people have some family connection in the industry, and the other people come out here [to L.A.] with a backpack and a dream."

Haylie marvels at how brave her mother was to pack up her kids and move to a strange city. "I look at my mom and think, 'God, she's so strong,'" "We didn't know anyone here. My mom even bought a book on how to find an agent." (Eventually her mother, Susan

**"I think I was a little too honest [in my book]."**



## Haricot Vert Salad

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 handfuls haricot verts
- 1 handful cherry tomatoes
- 1 handful chopped dill
- 1 teaspoon whole-grain mustard
- 1 splash red wine vinegar
- 1 pinch sea salt

### STEPS:

- Boil beans in a big pot for about 6 minutes.
- Remove beans from heat.
- Drain beans and place them in a bowl of cold water.
- Let cool.
- Add cherry tomatoes, dill, mustard, vinegar and salt.
- Toss and enjoy.

Haylie Cobb



Alicia TV (TV production company)

The Real Girl's Kitchen is not only about food; its purpose is also to bring together people for good times shared.



Yara Roberts

The Real Girl's Kitchen features recipes that are elegant yet uncomplicated for easy entertaining.

## Egg Salad Tartine

### INGREDIENTS:

- 5-6 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 stalk sliced celery
- 6 stems chopped chives
- 1 tablespoon fat-free Greek yogurt
- 1 tiny squeeze lemon juice
- 1 pinch paprika
- 1 pinch sea salt and black pepper
- Crostini (slices and toasted sourdough or French baguette)
- Chopped dill to garnish

### STEPS:

- Slice eggs into rings and set aside half.
- Mash the other half gently with a fork.
- Combine the eggs in a mixing bowl.
- Add remaining ingredients.
- Try to avoid over-mashing eggs.
- Arrange on the crostini and garnish with the chopped dill.



Haylie Cobb

"Susie" Cobb, became an agent and producer herself as manager of daughter Hilary's career.)

"Our home life was so stable," she says. "Mom was with us all the time, on sets, traveling, and she was involved in our career and personally too. She knew our friends, she knew our boyfriends. There was no place for us to get out of control. We still had to do chores. We didn't get caught in up in trouble."

Although it's been years since she left, Haylie still considers Houston home. On visits, she enjoys outings to the Galleria and eating Tex-Mex, in particular, but "now when I go back, the majority of my time is spent with my family ... since we don't have that much time together."

Growing up in Texas, Haylie's mom always prepared home-

cooked meals for her family, and dinner together every night was a ritual. Haylie's earliest memories, she writes in her cookbook, are from the times she spent in the kitchen with her mother and grandmothers. So when Susie discovered her drawer full of take-out menus, Haylie felt ashamed.

At 24 years old, she decided it was time she finally learned to cook.

"I'm a self-taught cook," she says, but she also says she learned from her mother, grandmother and dad. In her book, she recounts a few of her early

kitchen that were sometimes disastrous, but she wasn't afraid to experiment and to fail. In the process, she became a bona fide foodie and started writing a food blog that gave voice to her passion.

Shortly after Haylie created

the blog, her father gave her a book of his grandmother's family recipes. Haylie was particularly touched by a letter sent from a New Orleans café owner in response to her great-grandmother's query about how to make a perfect cup of French-drip coffee; the recipe was handed down in his family from his great-grandmother. Haylie was impressed by their desire and effort to connect across state lines and generations. She decided that reaching out and making connections with others through food would be important to her, too.

Fast-forward a few years. Haylie's friendly blog posts and its imaginative, healthy recipes earn her a loyal following. She decided to break up with her long-term, live-in boyfriend, packed up her car with her laptop and dogs, and moved to Venice Beach, California, for six months. While there, she focused on writing her cookbook.

**"I'm not bridezilla yet! I am not going too crazy!"**

"I learned so much about myself when writing this book," Haylie recalls. "It was the first time I found myself single in my 20s. I had been with this person for so long, and I was in a space I was uncomfortable with: lots of reflecting, looking in, to figure it all out."

"I wasn't just here to write my book," she writes in *The Real Girl's Kitchen*. "I was here to let go of some things I'd been carrying around like a heavy purse that hadn't been cleaned out in a while. I was here to grow. I was here to move on."

During this time of self-discovery, she met new friends and dated — "all the stuff people do in their 20s that I hadn't done," she says. "It was the best thing I could have done for myself. I wouldn't have the things I have now, and for that I am so grateful."

*The Real Girl's Kitchen* (Penguin Books), which was published last October, is as much about Haylie

as the recipes. It offers a glimpse into what, besides food, is important to the Real Girl: family, friends and a healthy lifestyle. In many ways, it is an open book about herself. "I think I was a little too honest," she admits.

"The thing that's cool is that I can look back and see that journey now," Haylie says.

Her cookbook is filled with simple, elegant recipes made with minimal ingredients. She intended the recipes to be "approachable and not intimidating," and she believes "there's something for everyone" inside. She encourages readers to modify the recipes to their own tastes. The book is a visual feast, too, and Haylie is credited with the photographs. The dishes made specifically for the

photo sessions were given to the homeless in Venice Beach.

The cookbook has received many rave reviews. One of the most heartfelt is one written for Amazon by her father, who stayed in Houston when the rest of the family moved to the West Coast. He wrote:

*"Haylie put her heart into the book as she does with everything she takes on. ... Yes, as her Dad, I bought a number of them just like any Dad would do to support his daughter's work. I took one as a hostess gift last night ... [which] made the rounds among the guests all*

*evening and now looks like an old veteran on her shelf. It was a big hit ... If you follow Haylie as an actor, you will get to know her even better through the book as each recipe has a story. She wrote every word. And, yes, it did not go over very well taking her*

**"I do have a strong sense of self. I'm very comfortable with myself."**



## Watermelon Jenga

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 seedless watermelon
- 1 8-ounce block feta
- A few mint leaves
- Olive oil to garnish
- Balsamic vinegar to garnish
- Sea salt

### STEPS:

- Cut watermelon and feta into cubes of matching size.
- Build the tower.
- Sprinkle with mint.
- Drizzle the oil and vinegar.
- Sprinkle with a pinch of salt.



Kuhl-Linscomb



Baranne Photography

Left: Haylie Duff and Beverley Mitchell met while on the set of the popular TV series, *7th Heaven* and have remained good friends. Above: Haylie takes time out to play with her dogs, who have been known to crash the set of her show. The last chapter of her cookbook is devoted to dog-treat recipes.

Yoni Eckstein



Above: Haylie enjoys time in the kitchen with her sister, Hilary, nephew, Luca; and her mom, Susie. Left: Haylie announced her engagement to Matt Rosenberg on her blog on April 3, 2014. Above right: Then as now, Haylie and her sister Hilary share a close bond.

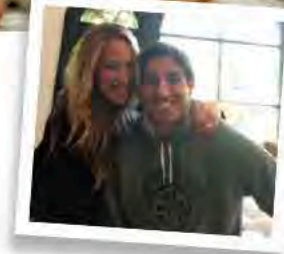


Photo courtesy Haylie Duff



Photo courtesy Haylie Duff

## Some of Haylie's Favorite Houston Spots



Baranne Photography

### Tiny Boxwoods

"Tiny Boxwoods is a quaint restaurant located right next to a flower nursery so it's the perfect spot to grab a light and delicious meal on a sunny day. I love the Tiny's Summer Salad for lunch and appreciate its no-fuss menu. Tiny Boxwoods focuses on serving simple, yummy food with fresh ingredients, which is exactly how I approach meals in my own kitchen. The décor is also so cute! It's a great place to visit when I want to catch up with family and friends." [TinyBoxwoods.com](http://TinyBoxwoods.com)

### Ninfa's

"It may not be the healthiest option, but when in Texas, I have to have Tex-Mex. Ninfa's on Navigation is authentic

and delicious; the queso is amazing and definitely satisfies my craving for greasy Mexican that I can't find in LA. The atmosphere is also really fun — the waitresses wear colorful embroidered Mexican dresses!" [Ninfas.com](http://Ninfas.com)

### Kuhl-Linscomb

"Don't get me wrong, I love to visit the Galleria when I am in town, but Kuhl-Linscomb sells cute furniture, gifts and nick-nacks that you can't find at designer and department stores in the mall. It also carries some local and upcoming jewelry designers, so it's a great place to find a new piece you won't see on anyone else. Whenever I visit Kuhl-Linscomb, I feel like I am discovering something new." [Kuhl-Linscomb.com](http://Kuhl-Linscomb.com)

to *Hooters for wings!* Enjoy — Robert Duff Nov. 8 (2013)"

"Daddy Duff" contributed to her cooking show by sending his old smoker to L.A. for one of her episodes, so Haylie could host a real, Texas-style backyard barbecue with smoked brisket using his special rub.

"The thing that I love about the *Real Girl's Kitchen* is that it's a loose-format show. No two shows are alike. When we were coming up with the concept, that was one thing I fell in love with," she says. "It's a new way to look at a cooking show. We go and meet all kinds of people, try out some great, new killer food and bring it in the kitchen."

The *Real Girl's Kitchen* webshow premiered on Ora.TV. The first of 10 episodes that constitute the first season debuted on the Cooking Channel on June 7. Segments were taped in L.A. and New York, the gastronomic capitals on both coasts and cities she knows well. In one show, Haylie learns how to make goat

cheese; in another she creates a rustic pizza. She cooks on a food truck, hosts a family crab boil, visits a rooftop garden, makes soba noodles and more, all the while gleaning information from experts who show her the way.

Haylie cooks for family and friends with each other. They are most often drawn into the preparation, too — a clever approach that benefits the viewers, who learn along with her guests. Haylie greets every new challenge with enthusiasm and is not above playing an occasional prank or throwing a surprise in here or there. Even her dogs make appearances on the show. "I want people to watch and feel like they're hanging out with us."

"This whole avenue of my career requires me to be true to myself," Haylie says. "I knew I would have to open up my life and take the risk if I was going down this road. It's been positive and wonderful."

Toward the end of her time

in Venice, Haylie met her husband-to-be, Matt Rosenberg, who recently launched Subway Tile Shirts, an apparel line silk-screened with New York City subway signage.

"We met as I was writing my book. We were friends first for a long time," she says. "He is my opposite, yet he really balances me. He is the best."

She announced their engagement on her blog on April 3. "He proposed to me on April Fool's Day," she says. "He thought it was funny, which it was, although I didn't think so at the time. I was thinking, *Is this a joke? What is happening right now?*" The two have yet to settle on a date, although she is beginning to plan the wedding, which will take place in California. "I'm not bridezilla yet! I'm not going too crazy!" she laughs. When asked whether she wants children, she replies, "I'm open to what life sends my way, and I'm hoping at some point it sends a baby."

Right now, she is enjoying

being an auntie to Hilary's two-year-old son, Luca. "I love to do artsy stuff and gardening things with him, like we picked cherry tomatoes together the other day. These are the sweet moments I treasure," she says.

How does Haylie do it all? So far, she says it has been "bizarrely easy" to manage her acting career with her cooking show. And so far, the timing has lined up well. "Cooking is how I found the balance between the two," she says. "The universe is telling me that I'm doing the right thing and to keep doing it."

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