

T H E
ULTIMATE
GUIDE TO
ANAL SEX
FOR WOMEN

TRISTAN TAORMINO



The Ultimate Guide to Anal Sex for Women

by **Tristan Taormino**

Illustrated by Fish



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for Felice,

*whose heart and
soul*

are in here

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Introduction

Confessions of a Backdoor Betty: Why I Love Anal Sex and Why I Wrote This Book

Confessions

Yes, I admit it—I love anal sex. The first time someone put a finger in my butt, I almost went crazy from the pleasure. The sensations I experienced were so intense, incredible, and heavenly that it was mind-blowing. I felt high from the experience, and I couldn't wait to do it again. The first time I put my finger in someone else's butt, the results were just as fabulous—I felt entrusted with my partner's deepest vulnerabilities, in awe of the ecstatic pleasure I could give. Then came more fingers, tongues, vibrators, small dildos, bigger dildos, butt plugs, a penis, bigger butt plugs, even an entire small hand.

Each time I could take a little more and give a little more, I felt more sexually alive and powerful. As I incorporated anal eroticism into my sex life, my sex life became better and better. The sex got hotter, my partners extra adventurous, my orgasms fierce and explosive. The physical sensations were undeniably some of the best I'd ever felt in my life. I confess too that beyond the deep body gratification, the naughtiness of it all really turned me on. Even my most kinky, sexually liberated friends weren't doing *this—or* if they were, they never talked about it (and I knew the intimate details of everything else they were doing in bed). Only sexually voracious gay men fucked each other's asses with abandon the way I was. Neither my partners nor I identified as gay men, so what did we think we were doing?

Too Many Myths

Growing up in this culture, it is nearly impossible to escape the taboo of anal sexuality and all the myths surrounding it. From an early age, we are taught that our assholes are private, dirty, and shouldn't be touched in a sexual way. Whether we learn about the birds and the bees from popular books or in sex education class, the anus is rarely mentioned, unless to say it's behind our genitals. As I grew up, I heard "fag jokes" about men who "do each other in the butt"; these men were derided for their practice of anal sex. If we do hear about people other than gay men having sex, they are usually labeled "kinky" or "perverted," and the sex is clearly considered abnormal. When anal sex is acknowledged as an erotic preference in sex research and popular advice columns, it is portrayed as a fantasy of straight men whose women partners endure pain in order to please. There are rarely representations of women who enjoy anal sex with either men or women. Most recently, anal sex has been linked to the AIDS virus and represented as dangerous and

even deadly.

I became sexually active in the eighties, just at the beginning of the AIDS crisis; by the time I became more sexually literate and experienced and discovered the pleasures of anal sex, AIDS had become epidemic. Because gay men were becoming infected in alarming numbers, they became designated the high-risk group. According to the majority of safer sex guidelines at the time, anal sex was how you got AIDS. And I was having anal sex. It's scary when major medical institutions tell you that one of your favorite things to do in the world is no longer just naughty, but actually life-threatening.

The progress made in the sexually liberated 1970s and the decadent 1980s, which contributed to a wider acceptance of many sexual practices previously considered taboo (including anal sex), was squelched by AIDS phobia in the 1990s. For example, in the first edition of the very popular *The Joy of Sex*, published in 1972, Dr. Alex Comfort writes:

This [anal intercourse] is something which nearly every couple tries once. A few stay with it usually because the woman finds that it gives her intenser feelings than the normal route and is pleurably tight for the man.¹

However, in *The New Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking for the Nineties*, Comfort describes the rectum as "a canal primarily engineered for other purposes." He dismisses the practice of anal sex because of the risks associated with HIV infection: "In the light of present knowledge, this is best avoided altogether."

When the fear of AIDS first became widespread, much of the so-called safer sex guidelines were rife with misinformation. The same institutions releasing propaganda about safer sex

claimed that heterosexuals and lesbians weren't at risk. Then heterosexuals and lesbians started getting sick. Members of the gay community and AIDS activists realized that the key to saving lives was having correct information and making it widely available. The problem is that myths and misinformation about anal sex are rampant in our society, while accurate statistics, facts, personal experiential accounts, and healthy, positive representations are nearly impossible to find. Soon, activists realized that they had to start producing their own information.

The Truth About Girls and Boys

Of the little that has been written about anal eroticism, much has been by and for men who have anal sex with other men. In fact, in spite of the cultural taboo and largely because of AIDS, many members of the gay community have openly acknowledged that gay men have anal sex. In general, gay men seem to embrace anal sexuality and discuss it more honestly than others. In the wake of the AIDS epidemic and its devastating effects on the gay male community, exploration of the practice and risks of anal sex has become a way to save lives. Yet, because discussions, informative workshops, and literature tend to be community-based, people outside the community don't always have access to them.

This book is written primarily for women who want to learn more about anal sex and health and to explore insertive and receptive anal pleasure with women, men, and transgender people. My work focuses on the particular psychological, emotional, physical, and health-related issues that women face. Although the book concentrates on the experiences of women, many of the guidelines and generalizations about anal sex apply to everyone, regardless of gender.

"I'd Like Another, Please, Sir"

It is surprising to me that only one book exists that is devoted solely to anal eroticism: *Anal Pleasure and Health* by Jack Morin. While it is an incredibly groundbreaking, informative, and insightful work, it seems odd that it is the only one in a field populated by so much selection and variety. I recently decided to investigate just what sex books are being sold in America's bookstores. As my test site, I chose a well-known national chain bookstore in a fairly conservative neighborhood of Manhattan.

As I perused the shelves of the "Sexuality" section, I found an extensive selection. The majority of the books were devoted to improving the sexual awareness and the sex lives of readers—they discussed how to have hot sex, better sex, orgasmic sex, more sex, and safer sex. There were books by sex therapists, sexologists, sex researchers, sex workers, sex advisors, and other sexuality specialists. There were even a half-dozen titles dedicated to fairly alternative sexual practices, such as sadomasochism (S/M), dominance and submission, pain and pleasure, and bondage and discipline. Obviously, there is a significant market for sex books. This is due in part to our society's obsession with sex and sexuality, but it also reflects the importance of sex in our lives. People are hungry for information, ideas, and advice on all aspects of sexuality.

Among the thousands of books about sex currently in print, many are quite focused and specialized, covering such topics as solo sex, oral sex, vibrator sex, sex after fifty, fantasy sex, lesbian sex, phone sex, role-playing sex, gay sex, tantric sex, healing sex, transgender sex, cybersex, leather sex, kinky sex. There are also titles devoted to erotic massage, foreplay, romance, cross-dressing, monogamy, and nonmonogamy. And yet among the sea of sex volumes, there is only one about anal sex.

Anal Pleasure Stuck in the Margins

In general self-help sex manuals and other books that claim to cover the full spectrum of sexual practices, anal sex usually receives a mere few pages or a couple of sentences—if it is not left out altogether. In popular titles like Dr. Ruth Westheimer's *Sex for Dummies*TM and *Sex in America: A Definitive Survey*, there is only brief information about anal eroticism and health. The coverage of anal sexuality pales in comparison to thoughtful, thorough, and informative sections on just about every other kind of sexuality; in addition, the information presented is often negative, misinformed, outdated, and even incorrect. So, while these volumes are described as "complete," "definitive," and "comprehensive," those of us searching for information on anal pleasure are often left wondering why it's missing.

Media Representations M. I. A.

If anal sex is in the margins of written works, it's off the map in other media. When was the last time you saw a positive representation of anal eroticism in a film? When was the last time someone mentioned anal sex on television? In a mainstream magazine? When I asked a group of women where they had seen representations of anal sex, the responses included:

- *Anal Pleasure and Health*, by Jack Morin (the only book of its kind)
- *Try* (a novel) and other works by Dennis Cooper
- *Trust* (a guide to handballing, or anal fisting), by Bert Herrman
- The original edition of *The Joy of Sex*
- *Lesbian erotica*
- *The Story of O* (classic erotic S/M novel), by Pauline Reage
- *The Lesbian S/M Safety Manual*, edited by Pat Califia
- *Sapphisty : The Book of Lesbian Sexuality*, by Pat Califia

- The Good Vibrations mail-order catalog
- Gay male erotic magazines and videos
- Chester Mainard's anal massage video
- Porn videos
- Leather-S/M community workshops

One respondent said: "From my perspective, I think there's mostly been a dearth of information, a loud silence, about women's—especially heterosexual women's—anal desires."

Because American media is consumed with sex and sexuality, many of the images we see on a daily basis—from soap operas and beer commercials to music videos and magazine ads—are saturated with sex. However, there is a great big void when it comes to anal sex.

Where Do Women Get Information About Anal Sex?

Women have many sources for information about sexual health and practices: family doctors, gynecologists, other health care professionals, therapists, parents, siblings, and friends. However, these sources generally don't provide information about anal health and sexuality. When was the last time you talked to one of these people about anal sex? While we may talk to any number of people about sexual health, STDs, birth control, and safer sex, most women don't feel comfortable discussing anal sexuality, and most experts don't bring up the subject. Even when I've been thoroughly quizzed on my sexual practices during a gynecological exam, the subject of anal sex and health has never come up.

Who Am I?

As you've probably noticed, no titles or initials appear before or after my name—no M.D., Ph.D., M.A., C.S.W., or M.S.W. I am not a doctor, psychiatrist, psychotherapist, or sex therapist, although I have studied the work of many people who are.

As I explained before, I am less of an anal expert than an ass aficionado and student. I have combed sex self-help books, sex research studies, sex surveys, sex advice columns and books, health manuals, safer sex guidelines, and various erotic materials for information on anal sexuality. I've tried to learn as much as I can about anal anatomy, health, and sexuality and have relied on other more qualified individuals for areas outside my own knowledge and experience. I have attempted to write about the subject in a form and language that everyone can understand.

What Anal Sex Is and What it Isn't

While there has been a great deal of silence and little research about anal sex, the mythology, practices, and representations of anal sex have a complex history. One could write an entire book analyzing the anal taboo in American society; the myths about anal eroticism could be the central theme of another book. And don't forget these worthwhile topics: the etymology of anal sex, theoretical and critical discourses about anal sex and society, and the psychology and psychoanalytic history of anal sex. Some impressive work has been done in these areas, and more work is certainly needed. I give an overview of the anal taboo and related myths in chapter 1, and throughout the book I refer to any number of these larger historical and theoretical issues as they relate to anal sex. They have informed my own thinking about anal sexuality. However, this book is meant to be not a theoretical work but a hands-on, useful, and practical resource for people interested in exploring anal sexuality.

Survey Says

In order to incorporate the experiences, attitudes, feelings, and perspectives of other women, I conducted a small, confidential,

written survey of women who have had anal sex with women, men, or transgendered people. I sent a survey containing thirty-six questions to colleagues and contacts and encouraged them to pass it on to others. I took a qualitative approach over a quantitative one, as I was more interested in the details of people's feelings and experiences than in compiling statistics. I asked respondents questions about a variety of matters: their first encounters with anal eroticism; anal activities they've experienced; giving and receiving anal pleasure; anal erotic likes and dislikes; anal sex positions; toys used for anal stimulation and penetration; desires, fantasies, and fears associated with anal sex; gender play, role-playing, and S/M; STDs, HIV, and AIDS; sources for information about anal sexuality; and media representations of anal sex. I have incorporated excerpts from the questionnaires throughout the book (set off in italics) in order to illustrate important points and to give readers a glimpse of some real-life opinions, feelings, and experiences other than my own. The quotes are meant to capture the voices of individuals and what they have to say about anal eroticism; they are not meant to represent norms, values, and beliefs among women in general.

A Road Map

First, a word about terminology, I have tried to be as explicit and specific as possible in this book. When I use the term *anal sex*, I mean it to encompass *all* forms of anal eroticism, including manual stimulation, oral stimulation, and anal penetration of all kinds.

The first chapter explores myths and facts about anal sex. The anal taboo and anal sex myths are both prevalent and well-rooted in American society. These myths, based on fear more than fact, often prevent people from voicing their anal desires and acting on those desires. The first chapter is a good

place to begin exploring these myths more closely. If we challenge the deeply ingrained notions behind them and discover how they have affected our own attitudes about the anus and its erotic potential, we can begin to replace those myths with truths. In addition, you may find the facts useful for communicating about anal sex and dispelling any misinformation you or your partner may have.

In the second chapter, I provide a brief anatomy lesson, covering related muscles and body parts, and encourage you to get better acquainted with your anus. In addition, I discuss some basics—hygiene, relaxation, safety—you should know about before beginning anal exploration of any kind to ensure that you're taking good care of your body.

In chapter 3, I discuss some of the ways we can take care of ourselves emotionally and psychologically, covering topics like desire, communication, fear, and patience. In addition, I explore some of the issues that may come up during anal sex with a partner, including fantasy, power dynamics, and trust.

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of latex condoms, gloves, and dental dams as well as different kinds of lubricants. There is a guide to the various tools you can use to enhance anal pleasure, including butt plugs, vibrators, dildos, and anal beads, and some hints about how to assess the safety of any other tool you're thinking of using for anal sex.

You may feel inclined to skip right away to chapters 5-10, but be patient; it's important to read the preceding chapters first to ensure you are well prepared for anal sex. Chapters 5-10 cover the ins and outs of anal masturbation, anilingus (also called rimming), insertive anal penetration, and receptive anal penetration, as well as other activities, including enemas (or anal douching), shaving the anal area, anal fisting (inserting

a hand in someone's rectum), S/M and anal play, and gender play.

Chapter 11 is an important one for everyone to read. It covers general anal health and how to maintain a healthy, happy anus. In addition, I discuss several common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), how they are transmitted, general symptoms and treatments, HIV, AIDS, and safer sex practices. The information about various diseases is written specifically as it relates to anal sexuality.

Throughout the book, I have included brief excerpts from erotic literature and quotes from popular books and magazines. My research references recent, well-known sex studies and books. I hope these brief erotic passages will encourage you to enact your own anal fantasies and enjoy the full range of anal eroticism. I have also included exercises designed to help you explore and practice some of the topics discussed. At the end of the book, I have included a resource guide, with selected books and other sources for people who want to learn more about anal sex.

It is time for anal sex to come out of our closets. The more dialogue and information we initiate, the more we can all have our sexual desires and practices validated and can really begin to enhance our sex lives with ideas, techniques, and facts about anal sex. I want this book to empower women with knowledge about our bodies and sexualities. I want women to have safe and pleasurable anal sex with ourselves and our partners. And, while the cover touts this book as the "Ultimate Guide," I don't consider it the final word by any means. I hope it is just the beginning—the beginning of more discussion, more research, more investigation, and more exploration of the world of anal sexuality.

I hope beginners, fans, and experts alike will use and enjoy this book to help fulfill, improve, and enhance their explorations of anal sex.

I know that the moment I discovered anal eroticism and shared it with a lover was a huge turning point in my erotic life. And it still drives me crazy after all this time.

Tristan Taormino
New York City
September 1997

NOTES

1. Alex Comfort, *The Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1972), 126.
2. Alex Comfort, *The New Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking for the Nineties* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), 244.
3. Jack Morin, Leo Bersani, and Cindy Patton, among other scholars, have written some resourceful theoretical work about anal sexuality. See Resources at the end of this book for more information.

10 Myths About Anal Sex



Myth #1: Anal sex is unnatural and immoral.

TRUTH: Students of sociology and social change are aware of the axiom that today's deviance may well be tomorrow's norm. The present widespread approval of the practice of masturbation and oral sex is an example of a deviance of yesteryear that has changed into a norm. The definitions of what is or what isn't deviant behavior are established by various legitimate institutions, the most important being government and religion.¹

The anal sex taboo is well established in American culture. Prevalent in religious, legal, medical, and scientific institutions, the taboo is clearly manifested in information about health and sexuality. The myths that follow will be familiar to most people, and they both inform and reinforce the anal sex taboo. Taboos usually defy logic, science, and experience; they

generally have more to do with misinformation, fear, and a desire to maintain the status quo. In the case of anal sex, the taboo mirrors some fundamental elements of our society. For example, anal sex being considered dirty is linked with the cultural obsession with hygiene and cleanliness; the perceived connection between anal sex and gay men reflects deep-seated societal homophobia. Both so-called facts prevent people from experiencing anal pleasure.

In *Anal Pleasure and Health*, Jack Morin traces the religious roots of the anal sex taboo:

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the taboo against anal intercourse is seen as coming from God. In the Old Testament story, God completely destroys the city of Sodom, presumably as punishment for rampant sodomy among its people. Many scholars now believe that the punishment was for Sodom's violation of hospitality rules, and had little, if anything, to do with sex. The sodomy interpretation, however, is still one generally accepted. Among believers, condemnation of anal sex is not based on any discernible principle except the desire to avoid the wrath of God.²

Today, the people and institutions invested in maintaining that anal sex is unnatural and immoral are often the same folks who support antigay legislation, banning sex education in schools, and sodomy laws, which make it illegal to have any kind of sex other than procreative, heterosexual vaginal intercourse.

Myth #2: Only sluts, perverts, and weirdos have anal sex.

TRUTH: Anal sex is practiced and enjoyed by women, men, and transgender people of all kinds, from the perky girl next

door to the daring dominatrix in the dungeon. In fact, in today's sex surveys and self-help books, the sections on "kinky" or "deviant" sex practices—including bondage, cross-dressing, S/M, golden showers, and group sex—do not usually include anal sex. Anal sex is more often categorized with vaginal intercourse and oral sex.' The notion that anal sex is kinky, abnormal, or perverted is based on the assumption that only a few specific kinds of sex—usually heterosexual, procreative, penis-vagina intercourse—are natural, normal, and conventional.

MY BEST FRIEND, Jane, called me a few weeks ago.

"I beat you," she said.

"You beat me? You have a job, your boyfriend went to Princeton, and you live in a major city. I'm sporadically employed in a town with, like, one off ramp, and my boyfriend went to a minor Midwestern university and thinks deodorant is bourgeois. The only thing I have on you is that I'm a bigger slut."

"That," she said, "is precisely how I beat you."

"You had anal sex."

"Bingo."

My heart sank. "You must be very pleased with yourself"

"Honey, you have no idea."

-SARAH MILLER

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