



PAIRING FOOD AND LITERATURE: TIPS FOR BOOK CLUBS

Integrating book-related cuisine into meetings gives book club members a chance to connect with the literature, try new recipes, and spice up their meetings. Here are some ideas for matching food with the books you're discussing:

Read with food in mind. Notice foods or dishes the author mentions. Authors may include the same food frequently, such as honey cake in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, or pumpkin in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith. Make note of any foods that play a leading role in the literature that you might want to try.

Explore new foods. Perhaps there's a food mentioned in a book that intrigues you. Many books with foreign settings, or that are set in different time periods, include references to interesting dishes - and provide excellent opportunities for culinary exploration. You might try an Afghani dish with Khaled Hosseini's novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, or Roman Punch, a frozen champagne drink from Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*.

Get creative! Find interesting and unusual ways to link food to your reading selection - and have your club guess the connection. Some of our favorite pairings: pumpkin biscuits with *Seabiscuit* by Laura Hillenbrand (a book club combined the "biscuit" in *Seabiscuit* with pumpkin, the name of *Seabiscuit's* pony companion); asparagus spears and flat noodles, representing The Point and The Flats, the two neighborhoods depicted in Dennis Lehane's *Mystic River*; and strawberry shortcake covered with thick whipped cream, a visual reminder of the Antarctic landscape in Alfred Lansing's *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*.

No time to cook? Serve simple prepared foods such as Dutch cheeses with *Girl With A Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier, canned foods - even SPAM! - with *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, or alphabet cookies with Myla Goldberg's *Bee Season*.

Resources

The Book Club Cookbook (Tarcher/Penguin, 2004) by Judy Gelman and Vicki Levy Krupp, a cookbook designed for book clubs, featuring over 100 favorite book club titles paired with recipes.

The Book Club Cookbook website, www.bookclubcookbook.com, features author recipes paired with their books (<http://www.bookclubcookbook.com/MainRecipePage.htm>), and recommendations from book clubs across the country (<http://www.bookclubcookbook.com/book-recommendations.htm>), some paired with menus.