



MONTAUK

by Nicola Harrison

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ST. MARTIN'S GRIFFIN

*A
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Selection*



Author's Note

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for reading *Montauk*. This is my first novel and I've had such an amazing and exciting time connecting with people in bookstores and libraries and at book clubs, both in person and online and hearing not only how they connected with the characters in my story, but hearing about their own personal adventures in Montauk, and, of course to hear people discuss the ending!

Now that you've finished, I thought it would be fun to provide you with a little information about how I came to write this book, why I wrote it and, for those of you planning to discuss *Montauk* with your book club, to give you some questions to help get the conversation started.

I was inspired to write this novel after spending a lot of time in Montauk myself. We used to have a house out there and we'd drive the three hours from Manhattan to Montauk for the weekend, just to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

We bought the house from a local lobster fisherman named Billie, who was moving to Florida. For years, whenever we'd speak to the locals at the fish market or the grocery store and tell them where our house was they'd say, "Oh yeah, you live in Billie's house." And though we don't own it anymore, it's probably still considered Billie's house. That strong sense of community and loyalty—along with a fascination with the stories that unfolded when the summer visitors were not around—appealed to me.

I fell in love with Montauk, its natural beauty and its history, and I became very nostalgic for the little fishing village and the way it used to be when



people first started visiting it back in the 1920s and 30s.

As for Beatrice, I wanted to write about a woman who was feeling lost in her life. She was doing things expected of an adult at that time—getting married, being a good wife, thinking about starting a family—and yet she feels completely swallowed up and overshadowed by her life and marriage.

Like Beatrice, I also lost my brother in an accident far too young and I wanted to explore some of those emotions that I knew all too well, and also delve into how an early loss can have a profound impact on future relationships.

Speaking of relationships, I had tremendous fun exploring the female relationships in this book. I thought about what would happen when a large group of women, along with their children and nannies, are sequestered at a luxurious resort, all the way out at the tip of Long Island, for the entire summer. What kinds of friendships would form? Fierce loyalties, fierce jealousies, fierce betrayals and fierce love—these intense human emotions became the building blocks at the very heart of my novel.

I hope you enjoyed reading *Montauk* as much as I enjoyed writing it. It means the world to me.

With love and gratitude,

Nicola

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Book Club Ideas

I love a good book club. There's something so satisfying about finishing a good book and having someone to talk to about it. Posting about it on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter can sometimes satisfy that need, and it's great to have those resources at our fingertips, especially when you want an immediate response to a book you JUST finished! But there's nothing quite like getting together with a group of friends and fellow booklovers to settle in, have a good chat—maybe be surprised by many differing opinions—about a book you just spent the last few weeks reading on your own.

Book clubs, in my humble opinion, are also a great excuse to eat and drink and are even more fun if you keep the food and drinks on theme. So, I thought I'd share with you the recipes for some food and drink options that appear in *Montauk*, in case you'd like to serve any at your book club.

If you choose to do this, please share the fun! Send me a picture of your book club members holding copies of *Montauk* and pics of the food or drinks you choose to serve (no need to limit yourself to my suggestions—anything on theme), post it to social media and tag me, and I'll pick two winners to receive a signed copy of my next book as soon as it comes out.



Gin Fizz

This was enjoyed by Beatrice at the Seahorse for Jeanie's "Week in Review Meeting."

Ingredients:

1 ounce fresh-squeezed lemon juice

2 ounces dry gin

1 teaspoon of powdered sugar

1 lemon wedge

Club soda to top

Preparation:

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice and add lemon juice, sugar and gin. Shake vigorously and strain into a highball glass. Top with club soda and garnish with a wedge of lemon. (You can also skip the gin for a delicious and refreshing nonalcoholic drink.)

Mint Julep

This was Dolly's drink of choice, also at the Seahorse.

Ingredients:

4 mint leaves

1 teaspoon powdered sugar

2 teaspoons water

2 ounces bourbon

Preparation:

In a highball glass gently muddle the mint, sugar and water. Fill the glass with crushed ice, add bourbon and stir well. Garnish with a mint sprig.

Note: I've given recipes for single drinks here, though I suggest making a batch for optimal book discussion time.

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Book Club Ideas

Chocolate Cherry Fluff Pie

This is the dessert that Beatrice makes for Thomas, the day after he's been injured, in the lighthouse kitchen.

Ingredients:

For the piecrust

2 cups chocolate wafers (such as Nabisco)

1/3 cup melted butter

1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips

For the filling

25 large marshmallows

1 cup milk

1 3-ounce package of cherry or strawberry Jell-O

2 cups cream

1 cup frozen pitted cherries, thawed and drained

Preparation:

Crush chocolate wafers with a rolling pin and mix with melted butter. Press into pie dish. Melt chocolate chips in microwave and drizzle on piecrust. Place in fridge to set.

Either in microwave or in a double boiler, melt marshmallows in the milk and whisk together. Add in Jell-O and stir. Let it cool.

Whip cream and fold into the cooled marshmallow/Jell-O mix.

Fold in the thawed, drained cherries and pour the mixture into the piecrust. Place in fridge to cool until firm.

Slice and serve when fully cooled. Serve with whipped cream and a cherry on top.



Many thanks to the Lost Recipes Found website, where I found this delicious old-fashioned dessert and other wonderful recipes!

<http://old.lostrecipesfound.com/recipe/chocolate-cherry-fluff-pie/>

You can reach me at Nicola@NicolaHarrison.com, and for my latest book and tour information, you can sign up at www.nicolaharrison.com for my newsletter.

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Discussion Questions for Montauk

1. What was your initial reaction to Beatrice, and how did your perception of her evolve throughout the book?
2. Do you think Beatrice and Thomas's connection was inevitable, or do you think it was their shared history that solidified it?
3. How do you think Charlie's death affected Beatrice as a friend and a wife?
4. What does Harry's intense business interest in developing Montauk's resort potential reveal about his character when contrasted with Beatrice's own appreciation of the community, which deepens for very different reasons? What do their attitudes toward this setting tell us about the two of them and about the strains in their marriage?
5. Do you think Harry's character evolved over the course of the novel or does he remain the same?
6. The idea for the novel came to the author after spending many years out in Montauk. Discuss the role that the landscape and atmosphere of the town plays in the novel. If it were not set in Montauk, New York, how would the story have differed?



7. Do you think *Montauk* was inspired by present-day events? How does the novel parallel similar issues happening today in other small towns/resort towns?
8. Social gatherings play a significant part in the story. How do events like the greasy pig contest and the masquerade ball reflect the shared human needs of the participants and to what extent do they reveal key differences?
9. Initially captivated by her husband and the seductive glamour, wealth and worldly sophistication he offers, Beatrice is later drawn to the enduring values, dignity and steadfast friendships she finds among the inhabitants of the fishing village. Do you think her own family background influences these dynamics and the choices she ultimately makes? Can you relate to this in some way?
10. Beatrice develops loyal friendships with Elizabeth and Dolly, two women from very different backgrounds. What characteristics do the two women share and how do they differ? What do these friendships tell us about Beatrice's values?
11. What do you think would have happened if Thomas lived and Harry walked away?
12. Were you satisfied with the book's ending? What do you think the future holds for Beatrice and her baby girl?

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