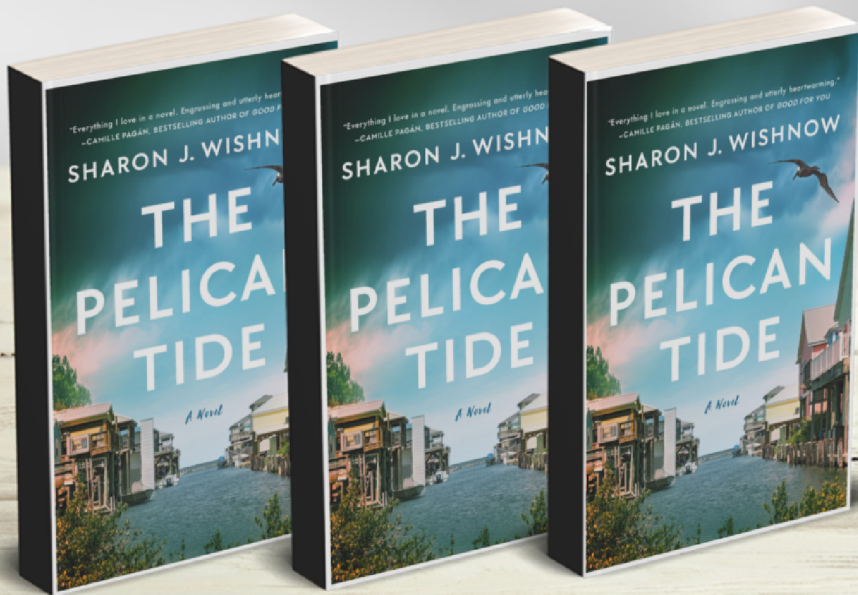


Book Club Kit



**Just add
conversation!**

Reader Questions and Recipes



Dear Book Club Reader,

I'm honored that you've chosen to spend a few hours in Grand Isle, Louisiana with Josie, Brian, Minnow, and of course, Gumbo the brown pelican.

I write stories about flawed, educated women with plots that have environmental themes. I'm drawn to stories that show how changes in the environment change people.

The Pelican Tide deals with the human and environmental fallout from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The idea came to me in 2020 after I watched a webinar from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution: Lessons from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. I couldn't believe it had been ten years since the spill. I began to wonder what happened to the people. I had questions about what it would be like to live through such a disaster.

Grand Isle is a real place. The island and the residents have had a hard time in the 21st Century with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, The Deepwater Horizon Spill in 2010, and Hurricane Ida in 2021. Ida caused 100% property damage to the island.

The economy of Louisiana is built on agriculture and fishing, tourism, and petroleum. It was natural for Josie to be a chef in my story world. However, I had a difficult time deciding on her name. She's named after a dear woman in my life, Chef Josephine Francois who sadly died as I started this story.

Mayor Louise Martil is named after my oldest (in the sense of years known) girlfriend, Ellen Louise. Though Louise and Ellen are not alike, the feelings of friendship and deep connection these characters have come from a real place. Other characters have interesting origin stories that I'd love to share if you're curious.

The Pelican Tide also deals with motherhood, relationships, and forgiveness. Parents and lovers make choices in their lives. Would you have done the same?

Perhaps the most important character is Gumbo the brown pelican. He is based on a real pelican named Big Bird and I invite you to access this link <https://www.earthtouchnews.com/conservation/human-impact/saying-goodbye-to-bigbird-the-rescued-pelican-who-was-so-much-more-than-a-viral-video-star/> to read about him and see the amazing videos.

The famous chef Julia Child is quoted as saying, "A party without cake is just a meeting."

And a book club without snacks is an English class. I've included recipes for Josie's Tea Cakes, Maisy's Chocolate Chili Chip Cinnamon Brownies, and if you're brave, Revenge of the Cajun Reaper hot sauce.

Please be careful if you make it, but do let me know if you do. You could booze up your gathering as well with Amaretto Sunrises or Iced Sweet Tea with a splash of Bourbon – Daniel Dean style. Or maybe try your hand at some beignets. Food is love and stories connect us all.

Thank you again for reading and if you're so inclined, passing this story along and leaving a review.

Keep it spicy y'all!

Sharon

Reader Questions

1. After Josie discovers Brian has pawned her jewelry, she leaves him and moves in with her father and brother. Do you think she was right not to tell Minnow and Toby why she left Brian?
2. Minnow develops an ulcer that is made worse from the stress of her parents' separation. What signs did her parents miss?
3. Throughout the story, we learn about Brian's gambling and that he has confided to his friend Penman and spoken about it during marriage counseling. However, he refuses to apologize and take ownership for the emotional and financial havoc he has caused his family. Why do you think he is so reluctant?
4. Hughdean and Josie have a complicated relationship, where he is often cruel to her yet tender to Minnow and Toby. We learn that Odeal was abusive to him as well, yet he holds Josie responsible for the strain in the family. Why do you think he treats her the way he does?
5. The devastating explosion on the Deepwater Horizon was caused by a lack of company and government oversight and a series of what was determined to be preventable maintenance and leadership problems. Brian defends the oil industry, counting on a reassignment, and like others in the community, he accepts an oil spill as part of doing business. What do you feel is the responsibility of government and industry to protect people and the environment?
6. Gumbo the pelican is important to the family. How is his relationship different for each member? What does he represent in the story?
7. When Josie learns that Vacation Ventures is canceling Odeal's as island restaurant of the year because of the oil spill, she's ready to give up. Do you feel the magazine was right to cancel the feature? Why do you think she agrees to enter the Ragin' Cajun?
8. Josie wants to repair her relationship with Minnow and not have her hate her like she hated Odeal. When Minnow is planning her college road trip, Josie doesn't tell her that her college money is gone. Do you think this is fair to Minnow? Is Josie lying to her?



Reader Questions

9. Both Josie and Brian are jealous of Louise and Hollis: Josie because Louise and Hollis are close to her children, Brian because he feels left out of their friendship. Why are Louise and Hollis important to Josie and Brian's relationship and reconciliation?
10. Throughout the story, Josie has several opportunities to press Brian to tell Minnow and Toby the truth, but she doesn't. Why do you think she holds back, and is she right?
11. Despite all Brian has done to hurt Josie and the family, Josie reconciles their relationship. Why do you think she does this?
12. When Gumbo is determined to be missing after the storm, the family takes off in two boats to search for him. Then when he returns oiled to the restaurant, Josie agrees to allow Minnow to travel by helicopter with Hollis to the animal rescue center in Buras. Do you think these extreme measures were appropriate to save him?
13. While Josie reconciles with Brian and finds a way to reconnect with Hughdean, she never forgives Odeal. She never came to see Odeal when she was sick and only came to the funeral. Louise says, "Obligation is a funny way people are connected. If there's no love or a legal and binding contract, I don't think it counts." Do you agree? Was Josie justified in not seeing her mother?
14. When Gumbo returns to the restaurant, the family is preparing to leave in a food truck for the rest of the summer. Brian and Josie decide to let Minnow stay behind. Do you think this was a good choice for the family and for Brian and Josie's relationship?



Recipes

Josie's Tea Cakes

Ingredients

- 4 oz. (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 134 g cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg, room temperature
- 2 tsp. orange zest, finely grated or chopped
- 2 tsp. amaretto liquor or almond flavoring or a combination
- 250 g all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. buttermilk
- Optional: sugar for shaping and rolling

Directions

In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugar until well combined.
Mix in egg.

Mix in orange zest and amaretto or almond flavoring. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, mix flour, baking powder, and salt.

Mix the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, alternating with the buttermilk.
Turn dough on a smooth surface, and knead until ingredients are combined. The dough will be very soft.

Shape into a disk and cover with plastic wrap.
Refrigerate for 1 hour or overnight.

Preheat oven to 375°F.
Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside.

Remove dough from the refrigerator and unwrap. Allow it to soften.

Knead dough, and roll it out to ¼-inch thickness.

If the dough is sticky, spread a layer of sugar on a work surface, and roll out the dough. Optionally, roll it out between two layers of plastic wrap. This will make it easier to work with the dough.

Use a round cookie cutter to cut out shapes, or roll the dough into balls and flatten with your thumb.

Place cookies on prepared pan, about 2 inches apart.

Bake for 7–9 minutes, until bottoms are lightly golden.
Remove from pan, and place on cooling rack to finish cooling.

Once cooled, store in an airtight container.

Note: oven temperatures vary, as will cooking time

Recipes

Maisy's Chocolate-chili bark &

Chocolate-chili-chip Cinnamon Brownies

Chocolate-Chili Bark Ingredients

- 12 oz. good quality chocolate, 54 percent cacao or higher
- ½ tsp. ground cloves
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. ground cayenne or red pepper
- 2 tsp. sweet paprika
- 1 ½ Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- Optional: ¼ c. pepitas or pistachios or a mix

Directions

Melt chocolate over a double boiler until creamy.

Stir in ground spices and cocoa powder until blended.

Prepare a baking sheet with either parchment paper or a silicone mat. If using nuts, spread them on the baking sheet, and pour melted chocolate over to cover.

If omitting the nuts, spread the chocolate on the prepared tray.

Refrigerate until hard, 1 hour or longer, or leave at room temperature until solid.

Note: chocolate-chili bark is excellent all on its own and pairs nicely with red wine.

Cinnamon-Chili-Bark Brownies Ingredients

- 200 g sugar
- 200 g brown sugar
- 65 g flour
- 125 g cocoa powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. cinnamon
- 4 eggs
- 8 oz. butter, melted (2 sticks)
- 1 c. chopped chocolate-chili bark
- 2 tsp. vanilla

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Butter 11×7 pan, and line with parchment paper.

Beat eggs until light yellow.

Mix in sugar, brown sugar, flour, cocoa powder, salt, and cinnamon.

Slowly pour in vanilla and melted butter.

Stir in chocolate-chili bark.

Pour batter into prepared pan and bake 45–55 minutes.

Brownies need to rest until cool and will be soft and delicious.

Recipes

Revenge of the Cajun Reaper

All measurements are after peeling and deseeding. That's quite important. Please be careful and wear gloves when working with hot peppers!

Ingredients

- 250 g Carolina Reaper chili peppers
- 280 g sweet red bell peppers, deseeded, pith removed
- 200 mL Spanish sherry vinegar
- 150 g yellow onions
- Juice of 1/2 large lemon
- 20 g fresh Italian parsley, chopped finely
- 15 g whole garlic cloves
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 10 g smoked paprika powder
- 3 cloves
- 1 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil

Directions

Slice the onions thinly and caramelize them. Fry with a little olive oil over a low heat for 20–40 minutes. The lower and slower, the better.

While the onions are caramelizing . . .

Cut the red peppers into large chunks, deseed them, and remove the pith.

Remove the stalks from the Carolina Reapers (keeping as much of the flesh as possible), and break them open to make sure there are no black seeds inside. Discard any black seeds or soft mushy flesh that you find. Avoid chilies with blackened seeds, as these will be bitter. (If you wouldn't eat it, don't put it in the sauce.)

Place red peppers, reapers, and whole cloves of garlic in an oven tray. Sprinkle lightly with olive oil and toss to coat.

Roast in a convection oven for 20–30 mins at 375°F.

Add the roasted peppers, chilies, and garlic to the pot with the caramelized onions.

Add lemon juice, smoked paprika, salt, and tomato paste, and mix well.

Add the Spanish sherry vinegar, cloves, and dry basil, and bring to a simmer. Simmer on low heat for a further 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and stir in the parsley.

Cover the pot and allow it to cool completely (about an hour).

Blend, using a stick blender so that the sauce is relatively fine but not completely smooth. This sauce should have flecks of red (peppers), white (chili seeds), and green (parsley). A completely smooth sauce will lack complexity on the tongue.

Allow the sauce to mature for at least 2 weeks before using.

- Keep a small amount separate and test every couple of days. This will allow you to know when it's ready.
- When using the sauce, mix lightly with a clean spoon to avoid getting a spoonful of oil! Oil will eventually rise back to the top.
- Sauce is good for 6–9 months at room temperature or indefinitely if kept in the refrigerator.