



BOOK CLUB GUIDE

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SKYPE BOOK CLUB VISIT :
LIZA@LIZANASHTAYLOR.COM

Author interview, discussion questions, and recipes in a
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I wish I owned this stylish
Veuve Clicquot trailer, I'd
bring it to your book club
meeting.



Author photo by Brett Walsh, Paris.

A CONVERSATION WITH LIZA

From the blog *Mark Gottlieb Talks Books*

How did you first come to writing and what was your initial writing journey like?

Good question. To say I got a late start is an understatement. I started as a fashion designer and from there worked in design and had a shop on Nantucket. When my youngest went to boarding school I went back to school myself, to study literature. I was working on an English degree for about a year, then one semester the only classes available were something along the lines of “Literature of the Restoration,” (which just made me want to weep with anticipatory boredom), or “The Writing of Fiction.” That was in 2013, and I was 53. I started writing Etiquette for Runaways then. The first drafts, well...suffice it to say that I cringe just thinking about them. That class, though, was a fantastic introduction and I never looked back. I finished an MFA program in Creative Writing in January 2018, at Vermont College of Fine Arts. Along the way, I’ve been fortunate to have the time to write and some very good teachers.

As an author of two historical fiction novels, what do you feel that the historical fiction genre affords writers?

To me, historical fiction as a genre is rich with stories to be unearthed and re-told, and through research, I often find



historical factoids that can shape and define a plot. Plus, there are no cell phones, and the clothes are much better. As a reader, I go to Historical Fiction because I love learning the quotidian details of any given period. That's been the case since I was a child.

What was the inspiration behind your novel *Etiquette for Runaways*? For instance, I detect a hint of Daniel Defoe's 1722 book *Moll Flanders*...

Yes, you're exactly right. I had just finished reading *Moll Flanders* before I started writing this novel. Her story made an impression on me and influenced my plot (minus the marrying her brother bit). I was taken by Moll's naivete, which she overcame through sharp instincts and the pursuit of dubious opportunities. An impoverished young woman in 1722 had very few options, and Moll got ahead by using her wits. She didn't always make good choices, though, and I liked that about her. Defoe was way ahead of the curve.

I've heard you live in a historical home. What is that like and do you draw any inspiration from it for your writing?

I live in an 1820's Virginia farmhouse. It was never a grand house, and it was badly enlarged several times over the years. When my husband and I bought it eighteen years ago it hadn't been renovated and the wiring was ancient. Forget about air conditioning, and all the fuses blew if you made toast and plugged in the coffee maker at the same time. But I loved it. Not to get all woo-woo, but it spoke to me. We've done a lot of work over the

years. I write in the old bunkhouse. I'm always finding antique bottles and hardware and bits of porcelain in the dirt around the property (along with the occasional black snake). I found a shard of a Victorian-era porcelain doll's face, and that spun into a subplot in my first novel. I wondered whose doll it had been, and what that girl's life was like here, at Keswick Farm. I've set both of my novels here, in part. I can write about the Southwest Mountain view in October and how new-mown hay smells in June. I couldn't do that if my books were set somewhere I've never been.

Can you help me finish this sentence? "I love writing because..."

Oh, there are so many ways to complete that sentence. But here's one...in the seven years since I started, writing has become my creative refuge and my greatest source of validation. Does that make me sound a tad unstable? What I mean is this: as my nest emptied and I stopped working, I wondered what would come next for me. Many of my friends were in the same boat. I saw some of them react as if the world had paused its rotation, like, Arghhh...I'm not a soccer mom anymore! Now I just have to wait until someone gives me a grandbaby. Sigh. And these are smart, professional women! Don't get me wrong, my family still means everything to me, but my writing keeps my cup filled with inspiration and purpose. We have got to evolve through life, you know? I'm just getting this party started.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Spoiler alert! Please note:

The Book Club Kit is intended for people who have read and finished the book. These questions contain “spoilers” that might ruin the story if you haven’t finished *Etiquette for Runaways*. We do actually meet, I’d love to answer and all questions you might have. These are just to whet your whistle.

Discussion Questions:

1. In 1924, At the beginning of the story, May is emotionally naïve and vulnerable. How do you think a modern 19-year-old might react to her circumstances?
2. The novel has three main settings: Virginia, New York City, and Paris. How do these reflect and influence May’s experiences?
3. Do you think May is a victim? Why or why not? Did your opinion of her change through the story? If so, how?
4. May chooses to keep secrets from Delphina and her father. What do you think might happen when they are reunited? Would they talk about Ellen?
5. What would have to happen for May and Byrd to end up together?

RECIPES

VIRGINIA HAM BISCUITS

Of course, *real* ham biscuits need to use Virginia Ham, from Smithfield. It is very salty and is cut wafer-thin, like prosciutto. Use any good rolled biscuit recipe, like this one from White Lily Flour. The biscuits should be silver-dollar sized, and it is just wrong to add honey mustard, etc.

Split the biscuits, lightly butter, and add thinly sliced ham. Wrap in tin foil in half-dozens.

You can freeze ahead this way. Heat them up in a 250-degree oven and serve warm.

In Charlottesville, you can't beat the ones you can order from Foods of all Nations.



*Delphina passed the basket to Byrd. "For the drive."
He peeked beneath the cover. "What a treat!.Nothing in the
world better than your ham biscuits. Thank you."*

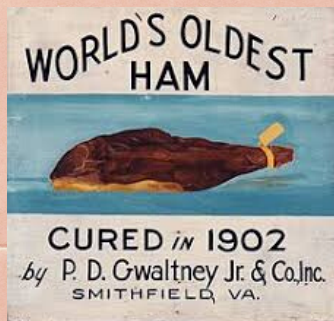
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Vintage ad from Wikipedia



STEWSPOT'S CHOPPED HAM SALAD SANDWICHES

Another Virginia classic from Stuart Burford

This recipe uses leftover Virginia ham, which, if cured and cooked correctly, is super-salty and dry.

Chop up ham finely and add mayonnaise (if not homemade, then Duke's) to bind. Add a tiny bit of brown sugar, a dash of ground cloves, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon French's mustard, stir until well combined. Spread honey mustard on Pepperidge Farm thin white bread and top with ham mixture. Cut into triangles, of course.

COUSIN KIMBERLY'S MOTHER'S ROASTED SUGARED PECANS

My cousin Kim grew up in Newport News, Virginia, and now lives in New Orleans. She's a great cook, as was her gorgeous mother, Julie. There are lots of variations on this recipe—some add red pepper flakes, curry powder, or cayenne, which give a nice contrast to the sugar.

ROASTED SUGARED PECANS

2 pounds pecan halves

1 stick butter

½ cup sugar

salt- a shake or two

Preheat to 275–300°F. Melt butter in 9x13" pan. Sprinkle with sugar and salt. Add nuts, toss. Cook, stirring every 15 minutes for 45 minutes – 1 hour until brown.

MINI ORANGE DRIP CAKES

My mother made a similar recipe only it used lemons. These are similar to a French Madeline in texture. This recipe comes from the late, legendary Keswick caterer, Stuart Burford. These freeze well.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Ingredients:

6 egg yolks

1 cup sugar

5 egg whites. Beaten stiff

1 cup flour

Syrup:

2 cups frozen orange juice

1 cup sugar

¼ cup lemon juice

Zest of 2 oranges



Beat egg yolks until pale. Add sugar gradually and beat until thick, about 8-10 minutes. Fold in egg whites. Add flour all at once and gently fold in egg mixture. Fill ungreased mini muffin tins $\frac{3}{4}$ th full and bake for 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Allow to cool for a few minutes, then gently remove from pan. If outer crust remains in pan, not to worry! That will make them more absorbent and spongier. Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ " of syrup into a shallow dish and press cakes into syrup to coat. Place on waxed paper, bottom side up, until cool.

STEW POT'S MARINATED SHRIMP

(from the Clever as a Fox Cookbook from the
Keswick Hunt Club)

1-1/2 lbs. shrimp (can use pre-cooked frozen, if you're a
cheater, like me)

1/2 c. butter

1/4 cup Worcestershire Sauce

2 T. brown sugar

1 tsp. dried rosemary, crumbled

2 tsp. black pepper

1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper

4 tsp. paprika

4 tsp. lemon juice

2 bay leaves

1 tsp. basil

1 tsp. dried oregano

Boil shrimp and remove shell, if necessary. Melt butter in a
skillet; add rest of ingredients. Toss shrimp in butter mixture.
Can be served hot or cold.

CRAB LOUIS

Here is a fabulous cold supper, or a wonderful dip. The recipe comes from Dani Rasmus Crichton's fabulous blog, [Sly Rooster](#), and though I don't know Dani, she very graciously allowed me to use her recipe.

Ingredients: 2 lbs jumbo lump crabmeat
1 cup mayonnaise
2 Tbsp Dijon country-style mustard
2 Tbls Old Bay seasoning
1 Tbsp granulated garlic

For Serving: Assorted crackers
and/or cocktail bread
2-3 hard-boiled eggs, whites and yolks chopped

1 red pepper, diced
1 yellow pepper, diced
4-6 scallions, finely chopped
1 red onion, finely chopped
a couple Tbsp capers
lemon slices, optional garnish

Instructions: Gently pick through the crabmeat to remove any shell. Add all of the ingredients (crabmeat thru garlic) into a bowl and gently mix to combine. Tightly pack crab mixture into a glass bowl, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour or until ready to serve. When ready to serve, loosen crab mixture from the bowl by running a butter knife around the sides. Unmold onto a plate or large platter. Serve with an assortment of sturdy crackers or cocktail rye, eggs, peppers, scallions, onion and capers.

By [Sly Rooster: Creating Comfortable Cooks](#). Adapted from The Commonwealth Club of Virginia.



Photo from Sly Rooster

