

Girl talk

Author Kristin Hannah explores the power of food and friendship

by JUDY GELMAN



Kristin Hannah

Costco's suggested Book Club read provides insight into a selected novel, as well as an appropriate recipe to accompany your own book club's discussion.

Kristin Hannah's *Firefly Lane* tells the story of Kate Mularkey and Tully Hart, whose friendship—spanning over three decades since they meet as eighth graders in 1974—weathers ups and downs until betrayal puts their relationship to the ultimate test.

A self-described foodie and recipe collector, Hannah is interested in what her characters are cooking and eating. “Food memories are so powerful,” she explains. “Who doesn’t remember the menu at family gatherings? Your mother’s best recipe and her worst? The dishes you’ve tried to re-create as an adult to serve to your children? In serving a family recipe to the next generation, we link ourselves to our history.”

Food scarcity is a theme in several of Hannah’s novels, including *Winter Garden*, *The Nightingale* and *The Four Winds*. “In those books, mothers are fighting to feed their children during difficult times,” she says.

Food has a different role in *Firefly Lane*, which she says is the most personal of her books, set in her Washington state hometown and at the university she attended. Kate’s mother, says Hannah, is a fictional version of her own mother. “It’s

no surprise that food comes into play,” she notes. “In the first scene that Kate and Tully meet, Kate’s mother asks her to bring a casserole to the new neighbors. To Kate, who has grown up in a loving, traditional home, the all-too-ordinary casserole is an embarrassment. To Tully, who has had a troubled and dangerous childhood, the casserole, made by someone’s mom, is a symbol of all the comforts she has never known.”

Hannah imagines this casserole would have been Tuna Noodle Surprise but shared ideas for more-book-club-friendly, novel-inspired fare, including Kate and Tully’s favorite cocktail, the margarita.

“Because *Firefly Lane* is an anthem to female friendship in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, I’d go retro with my book club menu,” says Hannah, who suggests serving any of these: margaritas, chips and homemade guacamole, chips and seven-layer dip, sparkling wine and honey-baked brie or cosmopolitans and a charcuterie board.

Hannah recommends jazzing up a book club gathering with period music, including some of the songs mentioned in *Firefly Lane*. “Play a few, like ‘Goodbye Yellow Brick Road,’” she says, “and see what memories are evoked and shared. And then there are clothes! Have fun with a 1970s or 1980s theme!” ■

Judy Gelman is the author of *The Book Club Cookbook* and creator of the website BookClubCookbook.com.



LEFT: KEVIN LYNCH; RIGHT: © LOUNO MOROSE / SHUTTERSTOCK

Guacamole

- 3 ripe Haas avocados**
- Juice of 1 lime**
- ½ tsp kosher salt**
- ½ tsp ground cumin**
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper**
- ½ medium onion, diced**
- ½ jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced**
- 2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- 1 Tbsp cilantro, chopped**

Slice avocados in half and remove pits. Scoop avocado pulp into a medium bowl and toss with lime juice to coat. Add salt, cumin and cayenne to avocado and mash with a potato masher. Fold in onion, jalapeño, tomatoes, garlic and cilantro. Let guacamole sit at room temperature for 1 hour before serving. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Adapted from an Alton Brown recipe.

COSTCO CONNECTION

Firefly Lane (Item 1514564; 12/29) is available in most Costco warehouses.

