

Hiding places

Author Charles Belfoure explores one man's commitment to a lifesaving mission

by JUDY GELMAN AND VICKI LEVY KRUPP

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

Charles Belfoure's historical thriller, *The Paris Architect*, set in 1942 Paris under German occupation, tells the story of a gifted architect who reluctantly accepts a lucrative but dangerous commission: devising elaborate hiding places for Jews. After one of his hiding spots fails, he commits fully to his lifesaving mission, even as the Nazis seek frantically to uncover his identity.

For book clubs taking on this serious subject matter, Belfoure suggests a French omelet and a baguette as the perfect complements. "Omelets with herbs were the soul of French cuisine, even during



the war, when butter and eggs were hard to come by," he says.

In *The Paris Architect*, when French citizens craving six-egg omelets "were hard-pressed to get one egg a month," those with means spent astronomical sums on black-market eggs. Bread—a mainstay of French life—was taken away under the occupation. "Flour, salt and yeast were impossible to come by, so when one could find these ingredients it was like finding gold," Belfoure tells the *Connection* via email. "Bread became highly valuable to barter or sell."

To re-create a 1940s French atmosphere for discussing *The Paris Architect*, Belfoure suggests period music, including the albums *La Vie Parisienne: French Chansons from the 1930s & 40s* and *The Voice of the Sparrow: The Very Best of Edith Piaf*.

To help visualize the story's architectural settings, Belfoure recommends viewing impressionist paintings *Paris Street; Rainy Day* by Gustave Caillebotte and *Avenue de l'Opera* by Camille Pissarro. "Most of the interior scenes in the book take place in the new Paris created by Georges[-Eugène] Haussmann for Napoleon III, where he tore down the old city and built the great apartment blocks and boulevards depicted in these paintings," he explains. ■

Judy Gelman and Vicki Levy Krupp are behind the cookbook and website *The Book Club Cookbook* (bookclubcookbook.com).

Classic French Omelet with Herbs

French omelets have a smooth surface, created by shaking the pan and stirring the eggs while cooking. A plastic fork prevents scratching the pan's surface. Although classic recipes call for high heat, moderate heat allows additional time for stirring the eggs and prevents early browning.

3 large eggs

Pinch of kosher salt

Pinch of ground white pepper

2 to 3 tsp finely chopped delicate herbs (some combination of chives, parsley, tarragon and chervil)

1 Tbsp unsalted butter

Using a plastic fork, beat the eggs, salt and pepper in a medium bowl just until the whites completely disappear. Stir in the herbs.

In an 8-inch nonstick skillet, melt the butter over moderate heat, swirling the pan, until the butter is foamy but not browned. Add the eggs. Stir continuously with a fork, shaking the pan, for 1 to 2 minutes, to create the smallest possible curds. When most of the eggs are solid, cook without stirring for 10 seconds to create a thin skin on the underside.

Remove the eggs from the heat. Gently roll one side of the omelet to the center, then the other side, and invert onto a plate with the seam on the bottom. Serve immediately. Makes 1 omelet.

Adapted from Daniel Gritzer's Classic French Omelette recipe on seriouseats.com.

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The Paris Architect (Item #1325413; 3/25) is available in most Costco warehouses, along with food and beverages for hosting a book club.

