

A new era

Ken Follett explores the dawn of the Middle Ages in his latest novel

by JUDY GELMAN

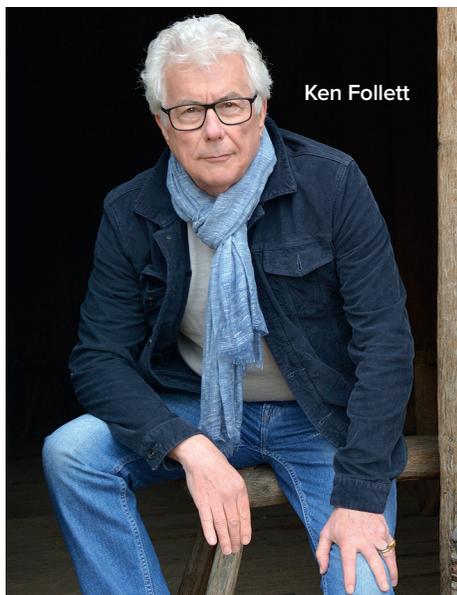
Costco's suggested Book Club read provides insight into a selected novel, as well as an appropriate recipe to accompany your own book club's discussion.

Ken Follett revisits the fictional town of Kingsbridge in his new novel, *The Evening and the Morning*, the prequel to his historical epic, *The Pillars of the Earth*. It's the dawn of the Middle Ages, A.D. 997, and England is under attack by Vikings and soon to be conquered by Normans.

Against this backdrop, a boat builder, a Norman noblewoman and a monk come into conflict with a ruthless bishop, in a sweeping tale of ambition and rivalry, death and birth, and love and hate. The story ends a decade later, where Follett's *Kingsbridge* series begins.

The Bayeux Tapestry, a work of embroidery depicting the Norman Conquest of England, was essential to Follett's research for his new book. The tapestry depicts everyday life in the 11th century, including meal preparation. He encourages book club members to view the tapestry in books or online when reading and discussing his novel.

"It's the most important historical document of the period," says Follett. "You see a group of chaps sitting down to a jolly dinner, and the cutlery and plates they used," he adds. "One of them is guzzling from a drinking horn, and you can



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see the servants cooking and serving dinner. The Anglo-Saxons loved big feasts with lots of guests, but, most of the time, people lived on oatmeal or coarse bread. Then as now, the food you ate was a sign of your wealth and social status."

For book-inspired fare, Follett recommends sampling a modern version of a favorite Anglo-Saxon wine called mead. "It's a sweet, potent brew made from fermented honey, and it was strong as well as sweet. It often made them what they called 'druncon,'" he explains.

Hippocras, a medieval wine with spices, was popular throughout the Middle Ages, and can easily be reproduced in modern kitchens. It was named for the Greek physician Hippocrates, who was thought to have invented the long, conical bag used to strain the wine.

Hippocras recipes in early medieval cookbooks call for steeping a variety of spices and herbs with sugar in wine. "Sugar is out of fashion now, but it was the opposite in the past," notes culinary historian Ken Albala.

"Medieval hippocras was likely made with white wine, which was considered healthier and more digestible than red wine," Albala notes. The drink was served cold and was considerably spicier than modern mulled wines. ■

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

Hippocras (Spiced Wine)

- 1 (750 mL) bottle dry white wine
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp fresh ginger root, chopped
- 1 inch dried galangal (Thai ginger) or 2 inches fresh (optional), chopped
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- ½ whole nutmeg pod
- 4 cardamom pods
- 5 whole cloves
- 5 black peppercorns
- 1 tsp marjoram leaves or ¼ tsp dried marjoram
- ¼ tsp grains of paradise (optional)
- ¼ tsp dried spikenard root (optional)
- 1 whole long pepper (optional)

Pour wine into a large pitcher. Add sugar and stir until dissolved. Add ginger and fresh galangal, if using. Lightly crush the remaining spices and herbs, and add to wine. Let stand 24 to 48 hours. Strain the wine through a coffee filter or a fine-meshed sieve into a clean pitcher. Pour the hippocras into a bottle. Cover and refrigerate; drink within 4 days. Makes 4 to 5 servings.

Notes: Powdered spices will clog the sieve, so crush spices into small bits. Many ingredients are available online or at specialty stores.

Adapted from 14th-century recipes in Le Viandier de Taillevent and The Forme of Cury.

COSTCO CONNECTION

The Evening and the Morning (Item 1448514) is available now in most Costco warehouses.

