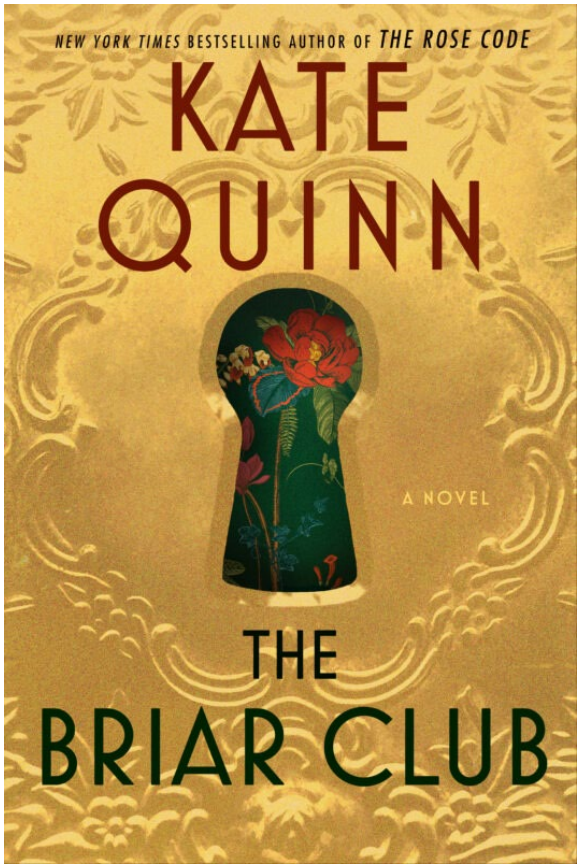
Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Briar Club by Kate Quinn

Included in the Kit:



- Book summary
- Author biography
- Discussion questions
- Recipe suggestions

Book summary

The New York Times bestselling author of The Diamond Eye and The Rose Code returns with a haunting and powerful story of female friendships and secrets in a Washington, DC, boardinghouse during the McCarthy era.

Washington, DC, 1950. Everyone keeps to themselves at Briarwood House, a down-at-the-heels all-female boardinghouse in the heart of the nation's capital where secrets hide behind white picket fences. But when the lovely, mysterious widow Grace March moves into the attic room, she draws her oddball collection of neighbors into unlikely friendship: poised English beauty Fliss, whose facade of perfect wife and mother covers gaping inner wounds; policeman's daughter Nora, who finds herself entangled with a shadowy gangster; frustrated baseball star Beatrice, whose career has come to an end along with the women's baseball league of WWII; and poisonous, gung-ho Arlene, who has thrown herself into McCarthy's Red Scare.

The Briar Club
by Kate Quinn

Grace's weekly attic-room dinner parties and window-brewed sun tea become a healing balm on all their lives, but she hides a terrible secret of her own. When a shocking act of violence tears the house apart, the Briar Club women must decide once and for all: who is the true enemy in their midst?

Capturing the paranoia of the McCarthy era and evoking the changing roles for women in postwar America, The Briar Club is an intimate and thrilling novel of secrets and loyalty put to the test.

(Source: https://www.katequinnauthor.com/books/the-briar-club/)

The Briar Club
by Kate Quinn

Meet the Author



Kate Quinn is the New York Times and USA Today bestselling author of historical fiction. A native of southern California, she attended Boston University where she earned a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Classical Voice. She has written four novels in the Empress of Rome Saga, and two books in the Italian Renaissance, before turning to the 20th century with "The Alice Network", "The Huntress," "The Rose Code," "The Diamond Eye," and "The Briar Club." She is also a co-author in several collaborative novels including "The Phoenix Crown" with Janie Chang and "Ribbons of Scarlet" with Stephanie Dray, Laura Kamoie, Eliza Knight, Sophie Perinot, and Heather Webb. All have been translated into multiple languages. Kate and her husband now live in Maryland with three rescue dogs.

(Source: https://www.katequinnauthor.com/about/)

Discussion Questions

1. Would you recommend this book to someone? Why or why not (or with what caveats)?
2. Who was your favorite character and why? Which character did you find the most complex or intriguing?
3. How much did you know about this book before picking it up? What surprised you the most about the book?
4. How thought-provoking did you find the book? Did the book change your opinion about anything, or did you learn something new from it? If so, what?

5. How did the book make you feel? Did it evoke any emotions? Make you laugh, cry, or cringe?
6. How, if at all, did this book relate to your own life? Did it evoke any memories or create any connections for you?
7. Did this book challenge or change your perspective on any historical events or figures? Did it make you want to learn more about them?
8. What were some of your favorite scenes from the book? Why did they stand out to you?
9. What was the most challenging or difficult part of the book for you to read or understand? How did you overcome it?
10. How would you adapt this book into a movie? Who would you cast in the leading roles?

(Source: https://bookclubs.com/blog/ultimate-list-of-book-club-discussion-questions)

Recipes

Beef Wellington Bites



Ingredients:

For the beef pieces:

- 1 pound beef tenderloin (450 grams)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (or to taste)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

For the mushroom filling:

1. 1 tablespoon olive oil
2. 1/2 onion, minced
3. 2 cups finely chopped button mushrooms (about 7 ounces/200 grams),
4. see note 3
5. 1 tablespoon regular soy sauce
6. black pepper, a generous pinch
7. 1 teaspoon dried oregano
8. 1/2 cup pitted black olives (60 grams)

For beef wellington bites:

9. 1 pound puff pastry (450 grams)
10. mustard, to taste
11. 1 small egg, beaten

Directions:

Cut beef into 1-inch pieces (2.5-centimeters) and season with salt and black pepper.

Heat oil in a skillet/frying pan and brown half of the beef pieces on high heat on all sides, about 1-2 minutes max! Transfer onto a plate lined with a paper kitchen towel and repeat with the other half. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 400 Fahrenheit (200 Celsius).

Meanwhile: In the same skillet, heat a little oil, add minced onion and sliced mushrooms, and sauté for 10 minutes on medium-low heat, stirring occasionally. Add soy sauce, oregano, black pepper and stir well.

Transfer the mixture to a food processor and add olives (make sure there are no stones in them). Process until smooth-ish.

Unfold/unroll puff pastry sheet and cut it into about 3-3.5 inch (8-9 centimeter) squares. Spread some mustard in the center of each square, then spread some mushroom mixture over. Top with a piece of beef. Grab 2 opposite tips of the pastry and fold them over the beef. Repeat with the other two corners/tips. Make sure to press down the corners so they don't open during cooking.

Transfer the parcel onto a baking tray (see note 6 & 7) lined with baking parchment. Repeat with the rest of them. Brush them with beaten egg.

Bake in a preheated oven at 400 Fahrenheit (200 Celsius) for 10-15 minutes or until the pastry is puffed and golden brown.

Best served warm with a dipping sauce of your choice.

(Source: https://www.appetizeraddiction.com/wp-json/mv-create/v1/creations/86/print)

Recipes Continuation

Smoked Salmon Canapés



Ingredients:

12. 4 Slices of wholemeal/granary bread, From 800g loaf
13. 50 g Salted butter
14. 100 g Smoked salmon
15. 150 ml Crème fraîche
16. 1 tsp Horseradish sauce, See notes
17. Fresh dill
18. Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Butter the bread, remove the crusts and cut into small squares (I do 4 per slice).

Cut the smoked salmon into strips and sit on top of each one.

Mix the crème fraîche with horseradish sauce (taste and add more if needed).

When you're ready to serve, dollop the sauce on and top with fresh dill and black pepper.

(Source: https://www.tamingtwins.com/smoked-salmon-canapes/#wprm-recipe-container-18062)