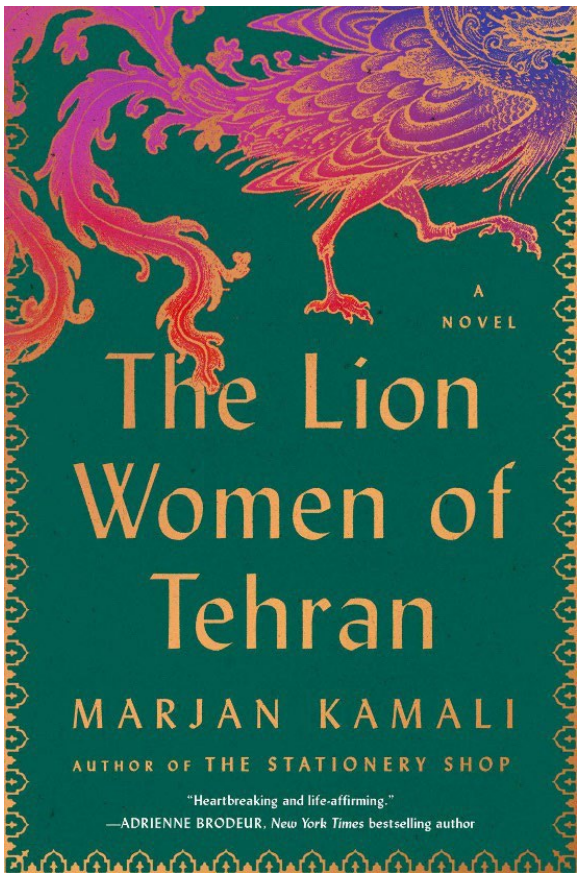
book club kits

Lion Women of Tehran
by Marjan Kamali

Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

Lion Women of Tehran by Marjan Kamali

Included in the Kit:



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

Book summary

In 1950s Tehran, seven-year-old Ellie lives in grand comfort until the untimely death of her father, forcing Ellie and her mother to move to a tiny home downtown. Lonely and bearing the brunt of her mother's endless grievances, Ellie dreams for a friend to alleviate her isolation.

Luckily, on the first day of school, she meets Homa, a kind girl with a brave and irrepressible spirit. Together, the two girls play games, learn to cook in the stone kitchen of Homa's warm home, wander through the colorful stalls of the Grand Bazaar, and share their ambitions of becoming "lion women."

But their happiness is disrupted when Ellie and her mother are afforded the opportunity to return to their previous bourgeois life. Now a popular student at the best girls' high school in Iran, Ellie's memories of Homa begin to fade. Years later, however, her sudden reappearance in Ellie's privileged world alters the course of both of their lives.

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Together, the two young women come of age and pursue their own goals for meaningful futures. But as the political turmoil in Iran builds to a breaking point, one earth-shattering betrayal will have enormous consequences.

(Source: https://simonandschuster.com/books/The-Lion-Women-of-Tehran/Marjan-Kamali/9781668036587)

Meet the Author



Marjan Kamali, born in Turkey to Iranian parents, spent her childhood in Kenya, Germany, Turkey, Iran, and the United States. She holds degrees from UC Berkeley, Columbia University, and New York University. She is the 2022 recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Award. She is the author of *The Lion Women of Tehran*, *The Stationery Shop*, and *Together Tea*. Marjan lives with her husband in the Boston area. They have two children.

(Source: https://simonandschuster.com/books/The-Lion-Women-of-Tehran/Marjan-Kamali/9781668036587)

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Discussion Questions

1. The book opens from Ellie's point of view in 1980s New York City. What are some observations she has about the city? What does this tell you about how she sees herself there? Discuss how she describes New York in the first chapter and in Part Five compared to how she describes Tehran. What are the differences?
2. How would you describe the city of Tehran during Ellie and Homa's childhoods? What feelings does it invoke? How was Tehran different for both girls before they lived in the same neighborhood?
3. Ellie's mother has an obsession with the evil eye. Where do you believe this originates? What effect do you think this has on Ellie's mother's outlook on life, and how might it affect Ellie as she grows up?
4. Ellie spends much of her childhood mourning her father's death. How does her image of him compare to the man Ellie's mother reveals him to be later in the book? How does Ellie's relationship with her mother change once she finds out? How does this help explain Ellie's mother's actions throughout the book?
5. Seven years pass between Part One and Part Two, and we find Ellie at an upscale school in a nice neighborhood with a new group of friends. How has her life changed, and how have her relationships changed, or stayed the same?
6. Two themes of the book are betrayal and jealousy. How was this explored throughout the book (i.e. between characters, through the setting, between social classes, in politics, etc.)? Were there instances of betrayal that surprised you?
7. Homa talks about growing up to be "lion women" throughout the book. How would you describe "lion women," and how do Homa and Ellie understand the idea? How might it apply to women in general?

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Recipes

Koloocheh



Ingredients:

- 3 1/2 Cups All Purpose Flour
- 1 Cup All Purpose Flour
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 1/8 Tsp Baking Powder
- 1/8 Tsp Baking Soda
- 2/3 Cup Unsalted Butter
- 1/4 Cup Unsalted Butter
- 2 Tbsp Vegetable Oil
- 1 1/2 Tbsp Vegetable Oil
- 1/4 Tsp Saffron
- 1/8 Tsp Vanilla
- 1/4 Tsp Ground Cardamom
- 2 Tsp Ground Cinnamon
- 1 Medium Egg

Directions:

Soak saffron in 2 tbsp boiling water for half an hour. Batter:

In a large bowl, Combine 3 1/2 cups of all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, 2/3 cup of unsalted butter, 2 tbsp vegetable oil, and 1/2 tsp of the soaked saffron, stir well.

Add 3/4 cup of boiled water gradually and knead thoroughly. Cover the bowl with a plastic wrap of a lid and allow to rest for 20 minutes.

Filling:

Combine 1/4 cup of unsalted butter, 1 1/2 tbsp vegetable oil, and sugar in a large bowl. Stir thoroughly until well mixed. Add vanilla, ground cardamom and ground cinnamon to a cup of all-purpose flour and stir well. Add the mixture to the sugar bowl and mix thoroughly until well combined.

Take a fist full of the batter/dough, flatten to a round. Place a tbsp of the filling on the batter, roll the batter around the filling, press the edges to seal and flatten to a patty shape. Place the koloocheh onto a well-floured baking pan. Dip a cookie stamp of your choice into a flour and press on top of koloocheh to see the imprint clearly.

Beat an egg yolk with the remaining of the soaked saffron. Brush koloocheh surface with the beaten egg mixture.

Preheat the oven to 400º F (204º C), bake the koloocheh for 25 minutes or until golden.

(Source: https://aashpazi.com/koloocheh)

Recipes Continuation

Lamb meatballs with sour cherries, pomegranates & pistachios

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- 2 tbsp very roughly chopped pistachios
- 2 tbsp pomegranate seeds

For the meatballs

- 1.2kg lamb mince
- 1 small red onion grated
- 4 garlic cloves grated
- 1 red chili deseeded and very finely chopped
- 1 lemon zested
- 50g fresh white breadcrumbs
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp ground allspice
- 3 tsp ground cumin

For the sauce

- 75g dried sour cherries
- 100ml pomegranate juice
- 1 large onion finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- 100ml red wine

Directions:

Put all the ingredients for the meatballs in a large bowl and mix them together with your hands, really pummeling the meat so that the spices and seasoning get well mixed in. Using wet hands, form the meat into 24 balls just a little bigger than a walnut. As you form these, put them on to a baking sheet or a tray. Cover them and put in the fridge for 45 mins or so to firm up.

For the sauce, put the cherries and the pomegranate juice in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Take the pan off the heat and leave the cherries to sit in the warm liquid and plump up for 40 mins or so.

Heat ½ tbsp olive oil in a frying pan and fry the meatballs in batches (they will give off lots of oil when frying). Transfer to a plate as each lot are browned.

Remember you aren't cooking these through, just browning them. Gently fry the onion in 1 tbsp oil until pale gold. Add the garlic and cook for another couple of mins, then add the wine, stock, pomegranate molasses, cinnamon and bay. Add the cherries, too – they should have absorbed nearly all of the pomegranate juice.

Put the meatballs back in the pan. Bring the sauce to just under boiling, then turn the heat down low, season well, cover the pan and cook for 15 mins. Take the lid off and cook for another 15 mins. You should have a nice sauce around the meatballs, but if it seems too thin, remove the meatballs and reduce the sauce by boiling it, then put the meatballs back in.

Taste for seasoning – you should consider the sweetness as well as the saltiness – and adjust it if you need to (you could add a teaspoon of honey, or a little more pomegranate molasses). Scatter with the herbs, pistachios and pomegranate seeds to finish.

(Source: https://bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/lamb-meatballs-sour-cherries-pomegranates-pistachios)