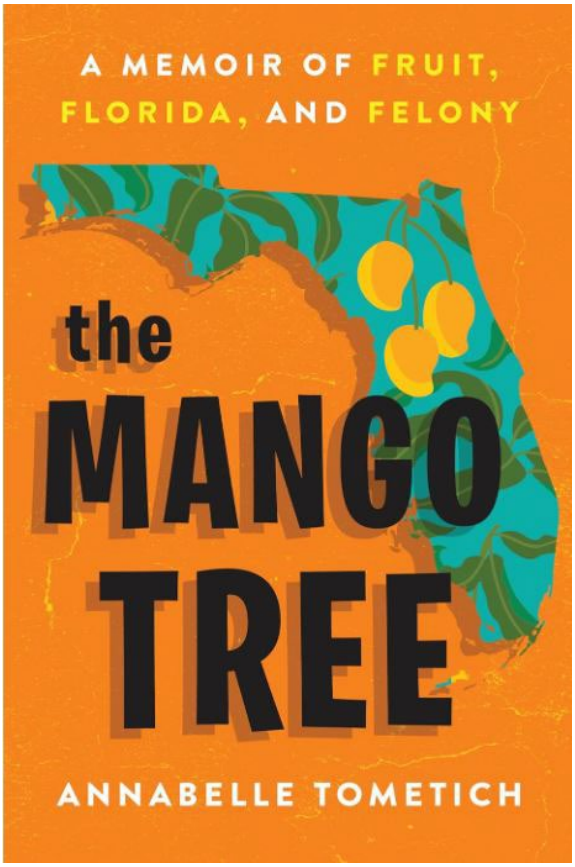
The Mango Tree
by Annabelle Tometich

Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Mango Tree by Annabelle Tometich

Included in the Kit:



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

Book summary

When journalist Annabelle Tometich picks up the phone one June morning, she isn't expecting a collect call from an inmate at the Lee County Jail. And when she accepts, she certainly isn't prepared to hear her mother's voice on the other end of the line. However, explaining the situation to her younger siblings afterwards was easy; all she had to say was, "Mom shot at some guy. He was messing with her mangoes." They immediately understood. Answering the questions of the breaking-news reporter—at the same newspaper where Annabelle worked as a restaurant critic—proved more difficult. Annabelle decided to go with a variation of the truth: it was complicated.

also available to download from Libby

So begins The Mango Tree, a poignant and deceptively entertaining memoir of growing up as a mixed-race Filipina "nobody" in suburban Florida as Annabelle traces the roots of her

upbringing—all the while reckoning with her erratic father's untimely death in a Fort Myers motel, her fiery mother's bitter yearning for the country she left behind, and her own journey in the pursuit of belonging.

With clear-eyed compassion and piercing honesty, The Mango Tree is a family saga that navigates the tangled branches of Annabelle's life, from her childhood days in an overflowing house flooded by balikbayan boxes, vegetation, and juicy mangoes, to her winding path from medical school hopeful to restaurant critic. It is a love letter to her fellow Filipino Americans, her lost younger self, and the beloved fruit tree at the heart of her family. But above all, it is an ode to Annabelle's hot-blooded, whip-smart mother Josefina, a woman who made a life and a home of her own, and without whom Annabelle would not have herself.

Source: https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/annabelle-tometich/the-mango-tree/9781668636879/

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Meet the Author



Annabelle Tometich went from medical-school flunky to line cook to journalist to author. She spent eighteen years as a food writer, editor, and restaurant critic for *The News-Press* in her hometown of Fort Myers, Florida. Her writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Catapult*, the *Tampa Bay Times*, and many more publications. Tometich has won more than a dozen awards for her stories, including first place for Features Writing from the Florida Society of News Editors in 2020. She (still) lives in Fort Myers with her husband, two children, and her ever-fiery Filipina mother. You can find her online at annabelleTM.com.

Source: https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/contributor/annabelle-tometich/

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Discussion Questions

1. As a kid, Annabelle becomes obsessed with numbers and counting. She's always trying to make things add up. Do you think Annabelle shed this quirk as she got older? What coping mechanisms did your younger self devise to deal with difficult circumstances?
2. Describe the role of motherhood in this memoir. How does the relationship Annabelle has with her mother influence the choices she makes growing up?
3. As she recounts her upbringing, Annabelle also describes her complicated relationship with her father. What makes their bond so complex? How does it relate to Annabelle's relationship with her mixed-race background and her identity as a daughter?
4. Throughout the memoir, and especially once Annabelle goes to the Philippines with her mother, we see family members wrestle with what it means for someone to leave their ancestral homeland. How has that played a role in the family and what does it mean for both Annabelle and her mother? What does it mean for Annabelle's extended family?
5. When she finds a promising-looking mango seedling in the yard, Annabelle's mother, Josefina, tells Annabelle, "Do not touch this…I need this to grow." What do you think the promise of a mango seedling means to Josefina?
6. Mangoes—and food in general—play a key role throughout the memoir, showing how Annabelle's relationship with her mother and her Filipino roots develops over time. What significance does food play in your life and relationships?
7. Annabelle often references the idea of "normality" (example on p.146); what is her definition of "normality," and how does it change throughout the memoir? By the end of the memoir, how have her feelings on wishing to be "normal" evolved?

Source: https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Mango-Tree-Reading-Group-Guide-1.pdf

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Recipes

Mango Chutney



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tsp. cooking oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2-3 mangoes, peeled & cubed
- 1/3 cup golden raisins
- 1/4 crystallized ginger
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. whole mustard seeds
- 1/4 tsp. chili flakes
- 1/2 to 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup vinegar (white, red, or apple cider)
- Optional: cornstarch slurry (1-2 tbs. cornstarch mixed with 1-2 tbs. cool water)

DIRECTIONS:

Heat oil in a medium to large saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onion and garlic until soft and translucent. Add mango, raisins, ginger, cinnamon, mustard seeds, and chili flakes and stir until well combined. Stir in sugar and vinegar. Bring the mix to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 30 to 45 minutes or until reduced to your desired thickness. For a more jam-like texture, add a touch of cornstarch slurry to help thicken the mixture. Cool and store in fridge for up to 2 months.

Source: https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Mango-Tree-Reading-Group-Guide-1.pdf

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Mango Mojito Mocktail



INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 cup mango, fresh or frozen (if frozen, thaw before using)
- 2 tbs. water (may need a little more or less for a puree-like consistency, depending on the juiciness of the mango)
- 1 lime, quartered.
- 6 mint leaves
- 1 cup soda water
- extra mint and lime for garnish

DIRECTIONS:

Muddle lime pieces in your glass to release the juices. If you don't have a muddler, use the handle end of a wooden spoon, or similar. Clap mint together in your hands until the scent is released. Add to the lime. Give it a gentle press with the muddler. Blend mango and water in a small blender to create a mango puree. Add the mango puree to the lime and mint mixture and stir gently. Fill the glass with ice. Top with sparkling water and stir gently. Garnish with mint and a lime wheel.

Source: https://mindfulmocktail.com/mango-mocktail/#wprm-recipe-container-7486