

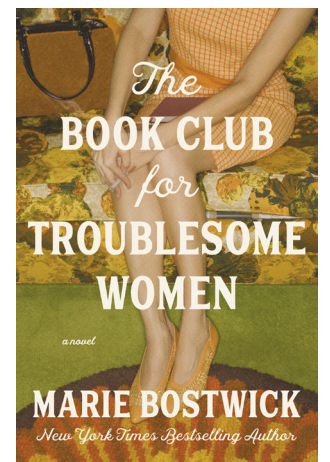


MARIE BOSTWICK'S

The Book Club for Troublesome Women

BOOK CLUB PARTY KIT

April 22, 2025
Harper Muse
ISBN 978-1400344741
\$18.99 (USD)



HELLO, I'M MARIE



DEAR READER,

Thank you so much for choosing to discuss *The Book Club for Troublesome Women* with your book club.

As a book club member myself, I know that adding a few book-themed touches make meetings even more fun. That's why I've pulled together this party kit, which I hope you enjoy.

The kit includes book-inspired food and beverage recipes, a musical playlist to add atmosphere and nostalgic touch to your meeting, a roster of additional reading for those who want to dig deeper and, most importantly, a list of questions to help kick start your discussion.

You'll find plenty to talk about in the pages of the book – the personalities and motivations of the characters, the choices and course corrections they make as the story unfolds, the ways they support each other, or fail to support each other, as well as questions about what you might have done had you walked in their shoes, and the myriad ways in which a story set in 1963 still rings true to women today.

The story centers on four very different characters – Margaret, Charlotte, Viv, and Bitsy – who travel four very different paths to fulfillment.

And if I'd written eight characters, or ten, or ten thousand, each of them would likewise have traveled a different road, a journey custom-fit for their singular personalities, circumstances, strengths, weaknesses, challenges, needs, desires, and dreams. Just like in real life.

These characters are very dear to me. This book is very dear to me. But I wrote it for you.

Besides weaving a good yarn, a page-turning story you can get lost in, I wrote it to supply you with viewpoints to consider and questions to mull over, aspirations to reach for. Mostly, I wrote it in hopes that you would find something of yourself in these pages, and something of your sisters and mine, all the unique, imperfect, troublesome women of this oh-so troublesome and troubling world.

Because no matter who we are or where we gather – at the office, the volunteer committee, or the neighborhood book club - need each other, still.

MARIE BOSTWICK

New York Times Bestselling Author, Lifestyle Blogger



WWW.MARIEBOSTWICK.COM

BOOK CLUB PARTY RECIPES

BASED ON *THE BOOK CLUB FOR TROUBLESOME WOMEN*

These book-themed recipes, inspired by some goodies Margaret Ryan made for the inaugural meeting of her new book club, will bring a festive, early 60's vibe to your book club gathering!



TROUBLESOME BOOK CLUB COCKTAILS & MOCKTAILS



OVERVIEW

During the first meeting of the book club, the women are hesitant to open up so the conversation drags initially. All that changes once Charlotte marches into Margaret's kitchen and finds the liquor, mixing up a batch of tongue-loosening cocktails she called, "Truth Serum."

The bright green beverages Charlotte serves are actually vodka stingers, but they do have the desired effect. After a few sips, the Bettys start sharing stories and secrets, and building a bond.

I'm sharing two delicious beverage recipes that are perfect for every member of your book club. The first is for a classic vodka stinger, a popular cocktail during the 60s. The second is a yummy, minty-flavored mocktail.

Mix some up for your book club gathering, and raise a glass to Troublesome Women!

INGREDIENTS

Classic Vodka Stingers

2 oz vodka
1 oz crème de menthe

Stingless Stingers

2 oz mint simple syrup (see instructions)
2 oz white grape juice
3 oz cucumber flavored tonic water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pour vodka and crème de menthe into an ice-filled cocktail shaker.
2. Shake vigorously, then pour into cocktail glasses. Serve immediately.

INSTRUCTIONS

To make the mint simple syrup, combine ½ cup sugar, ½ cup water, and ½ a bunch of fresh mint into a heavy bottomed saucepan or pot. Heat on stove over medium heat, stirring, until syrup begins to bubble. Lower heat, simmer for 1-2 minutes. Strain out mint. Cool syrup completely in the refrigerator before using.

1. Pour mint simple syrup and white grape juice together in a glass of ice.
2. Top with cucumber flavored tonic water. Serve immediately.

MIDCENTURY COCONUT CAKE WITH PINEAPPLE FILLING

RECIPE CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE



INGREDIENTS

For the Cake

2.5 cup cake flour
1 T baking powder
½ tsp salt
½ cup unsalted butter, slightly softened
1.5 cups sugar
5 T vegetable oil
1 ¼ cup whole milk
1.5 tsp coconut extract
1 tsp vanilla extract
3 eggs

Pineapple Filling

20 oz can crushed pineapple
½ cup sugar
3 T cornstarch

Coconut Cream Cheese Frosting

1 cup unsalted butter, slightly softened
4.5 cup powdered sugar
12 oz cream cheese, softened (remove from refrigerator about 30 minutes before using)
1.5 tsp coconut extract
1 tsp vanilla

Decorations

1 cup shredded sweetened coconut
1 15 oz can pineapple rings
Maraschino cherries

OVERVIEW

Though she'd already made four different appetizers for first book club meeting, Margaret makes a cake decorated with, "coconut, canned pineapple rings, and maraschino cherries.

Recipes for these kinds of cakes –really thinly veiled advertisement from companies that sold canned pineapple, shredded coconut, or other products – appeared regularly in 60's era women's magazine, so this cake is about as mid-century as it gets.

If baking just isn't your thing, you can use a cake mix, canned filling, and even prepared icing to recreate Margaret's cake. The most important thing here is the decorations. But if you're up for baking a dessert from scratch, give my recipe a try. Either way, your book club is in for a treat!

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Cake

1. Preheat oven to 350. Oil and flour two 8-inch, round baking pans.
2. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt together in a bowl. Set aside.
3. Cream butter and sugar together, using a hand or stand mixer. Add vegetable oil, milk, and extracts, blending until smooth, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Add eggs one at a time, mixing until batter is light and fluffy.
4. Divide cake batter evenly to the two prepared pans. Bake for 45 minutes, or until cake is baked through and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
5. Remove pans from oven. Allow cakes to cool completely before removing from pans.

MIDCENTURY COCONUT CAKE WITH PINEAPPLE FILLING

RECIPE CONTINUED



INSTRUCTIONS

For the Pineapple Filling

1. Stir sugar and pineapple together in a cooking pot on the stove. Sprinkle or sift cornstarch onto mixture, whisking to combine.
2. Turn the burner onto medium high and bring the filling to a boil, stirring frequently. Lower heat. Simmer filling for 5-7 minutes, stirring constantly, until filling thickens.
3. Place cooked filling in the refrigerator, allowing it to cool completely before using. Filling will become thicker as it cools.

For the Coconut Cream Cheese Frosting

1. Using a hand mixer or stand mixer, blend together softened butter and one cup of the powdered sugar. Blend in the rest of the sugar in batches, adding about a cup at a time.
2. Add softened cream cheese and extracts to the sugar/butter mixture, blending until smooth and fluffy. Store frosting in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Assembling & Decorating the Cake

1. Place first layer of cooled cake on a platter. Spread completely cooled pineapple filling on top of the cake. Place second layer of cake on top of the first layer.
2. Spread frosting on top of and around the sides of the cake, covering it completely with a thick, even layer of frosting.
3. Using clean hands, gently press handfuls of shredded coconut into the frosting around the sides of the cake. Decorate the top of the cake with pineapple rings, placing cherries in the center of each ring and in open areas, as shown in the photograph.

SMOKY SALMON CREAM CHEESE SPREAD

MAKES APPROXIMATELY 2 CUPS



INGREDIENTS

1 6oz can salmon, drained
1 8 oz block cream cheese, softened
2 T grated shallots
Juice of one half of a lemon
2 T mayonnaise
1 T horseradish sauce
2 tsp smoked paprika
1/2 tsp kosher salt
1/4 tsp ground pepper

*Optional

1/2 cup pitted green olives, sliced, for decorating. (See photo)
Crackers or crudites for serving

OVERVIEW

As Charlotte points out during their first book club meeting, Margaret is, “all about garnishes.”

To modern eyes, molding Smoky Salmon Cream Cheese Spread into the shape of a fish and decorating it with sliced olives to represent fish scales seems a little over the top. But back in the 60s, hostesses like Margaret were indeed all about garnishes.

If you'd like, you can go full-on-Margaret, olive-scales-and-all when making this nostalgic appetizer for your book club. Or you could just put it in a pretty bowl, sprinkle with chopped parsley or dill on top, and serve it with crackers or crudites. It's delish, either way.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place salmon in medium sized bowl and flake with a fork. Add cream cheese, shallots, lemon juice, mayo, horseradish sauce, smoked paprika, salt and pepper to bowl.
2. Use a hand mixer to blend ingredients on low speed for a good two minutes, until ingredients are well combined and the spread is fairly smooth.
3. Prepared spread can be served in a pretty bowl along with crackers and crudites, or molded by hand into a fish shape on a platter and decorated with sliced olives to simulate scales, as shown in the photo.

READING GROUP GUIDE

for *THE BOOK CLUB FOR TROUBLESOME WOMEN*

- 1.** Describe Margaret's encounter with Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*. How did it reframe her life as a wife and a mother? What did the book give voice to that she'd never heard expressed before? Likewise, how did it affect Charlotte, Bitsy, and Viv in different ways?
- 2.** If possible, describe a book you've read that has completely altered your outlook on the world. What has been the book's lasting impact on your thinking or your actions?
- 3.** Of the four Bettys—Margaret, Bitsy, Charlotte, and Viv—which woman resonates with you the most and why?
- 4.** Discuss the marriages in this novel. Whose were most successful? The most frustrating? Whose outcomes surprised you the most?
- 5.** What particular struggles did the Bettys endure that women still experience today? How much has changed for American women of all stripes since the 1960s? What steps forward—and what steps backward—have been taken?
- 6.** Did Walt's transformation by the novel's end surprise you? If so, what were you expecting of him and his story?
- 7.** What held Charlotte back from pursuing her art, and what eventually set her free? Describe how she was able to find contentment and purpose in something she loved despite several disappointments along the way.
- 8.** What factors led to Margaret's success as a writer? What qualities did she embody, and how crucial was her proverbial "village"?
- 9.** For decades, women have debated the possibility or impossibility of their "having it all." In your opinion, what does having it all look like? Can having it all be attained? And how might each of the Bettys answer this question?
- 10.** Think over some of the other women who came alongside the Bettys and broadened their horizons (such as Dr. Fran and Katharine Graham). How do the women of this novel take opportunities to "pay it forward," and how can women today do the same?
- 11.** Which do you think was more transformative for the Bettys: the books they read together or the sisterhood and camaraderie they experienced?
- 12.** Do you have a "village"? If so, how has the support of those friends made a difference in your life? Have you always gotten along well? Or, like the Bettys, did you experience some bumps, misunderstandings, or rifts along the way? How did you work through them?

PLAYLIST

for *THE BOOK CLUB FOR TROUBLESOME WOMEN*

A peppy, book-themed playlist is a great way to set the tone at your book club gathering. Check out my list of eight nostalgic and one contemporary tune that Troublesome Women will love!

Blame It on the Bossa Nova by Edye Gourmet

This is the first song that shows up in the story and it's a very appropriate way to introduce Vivian Buschetti. Already a mother of six, Viv would love to resurrect her stalled nursing career. The fact that she finds her husband, Tony, irresistible keeps putting a wrench in her plans.

Where Did Our Love Go by The Supremes

When Margaret gets a part time job, the simmering tension in her marriage bubbles over, leaving her sad and confused, wondering what happened. This song was a huge hit for the Supremes, maybe because it's one almost any married couple can identify with at some point.

These Boots Are Made for Walking by Nancy Sinatra

As Charlotte Gustafson discovers, taking the risk to stand up for yourself, or even walk away, can be incredibly freeing and empowering.

Wipe Out by the Surfaris

Possibly the greatest dance party tune of all time. Feel free to crank up the volume and bust a move, just like Bitsy and the Bettys do in the story.

You Don't Own Me by Lesley Gore

An anthem for all women who find the courage to value themselves.

With a Little Help From My Friends by The Beatles

Women supporting each other is a huge theme in the book. Each of the four characters is transformed during the story, but none of them could have done it alone.

Dreams of the Everyday Housewife by Glen Campbell

The fact that a tune about a woman who gives up on her dreams and herself made it to number 3 on the Billboard Hot Country Singles in 1968 should be a cautionary tale. That's why, even though I loathe the song, I'm including it on this playlist.

Respect by Aretha Franklin

Respect. It's what every woman wants and deserves, for themselves and from others. Margaret, Charlotte, Viv, and Bitsy don't settle for anything less. Neither should anybody else.

Woman's World by Katy Perry

Let's wrap up with contemporary tune that cuts to the chase, "It's a woman's world and you're lucky to be livin' in it... Baby, we ain't goin' away."

FURTHER READING

for *THE BOOK CLUB FOR TROUBLESOME WOMEN*

For those who want to dig deeper, here's a list of books you might find interesting.

The first section includes books Margaret, Charlotte, Viv, and Bitsy read, either independently or collectively as book club picks. The second section includes non-fiction titles that I used for research, plus two books focused on real life historical figures who make appearances in the story.

Books read by the Bettys, either collectively or individually...

The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Dearly Beloved by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf

The Group by Mary McCarthy

Gift From the Sea by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Books about the history of feminism and two historical figures highlighted in the story...

A Strange Stirring by Stephanie Coontz

The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman by Mary Wollstonecraft

Personal History: A Memoir by Katherine Graham

Camera Girl: The Coming of Age of Jackie Bouvier Kennedy by Carl Sferrazza Anthony