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books that
COOK

FEED MIND AND BODY AT BOOK CLUB GET-TOGETHERS

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“LET US SEE THE *results of good food* IN A
strong body, AND THE RESULTS OF GREAT
READING IN A *full and powerful mind*.”

Analogies between books and food come easily. They have for centuries. It's been a couple hundred years since English essayist Sydney Smith, for one, implored “Let us see the results of good food in a strong body, and the results of great reading in a full and powerful mind.”

Smith likely didn't envision the combination of Raspberry Diet Rite and *Welcome to My Planet (Where English Is Sometimes Spoken)*, though it scored major benefits for Pam Hoye's Twin Cities book group. “It was a small start,” Hoye says of the group's first ingestible/book pairing. Applicable, too. The book's main character, named for its author, St. Paulite Shannon Olson, is addicted to that very specific soda.

In the five years since, the club has regularly connected book with food or drink—blood orange cocktails and roasted garlic (see recipes) for the vampire chick-lit book *Undead and Unwed* by Hastings novelist MaryJanice Davidson; hunks of rustic breads and cheeses for the sixteenth-century novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory. “It's a fun way to bring the book, or at least a piece of it, alive,” Hoye says.

As book clubs surged in popularity (thanks, Oprah!), many of them, like Hoye's, seek a deeper connection to the books, and to each other, through food. *The Book Club Cookbook* (Penguin, 2004) proves that urge by profiling clubs with names like Wuthering Bites and Epicureaders from across the country. It showcases 100 books, from *The Good Earth* to *Harry Potter*, paired with more than 100 recipes ranging from simple to challenging. Examples include the sun-dried tomato and goat cheese pizza (see recipes) alluded to in *The Devil Wears Prada* by Lauren Weisberger and tandoori shrimp (see recipes), a tribute to the hero in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* that combines his Indian heritage with the seafood that nourished him.



OPPOSITE PAGE A local book club adds the right flavor to its discussion of *Lucia, Lucia* with lasagna. THIS PAGE What better accompaniment for *Red Meat Cures Cancer* than toasty mini-burgers with hand-cut garlic fries?

“Food goes hand-in-hand with getting together,” says St. Paulite Suzanne Brust, a club member highlighted in *The Book Club Cookbook*. “When it relates to the book, though, it creates a richer experience.” Brust’s first such experience was an unforgettable Russian feast, capping a year her book club dedicated to Russian literature nearly two decades ago.

Now, when it’s Brust’s turn to host her club, she jots down food possibilities as she reads. Then she mines her own recipe books, the Internet, or visits local restaurants for ideas. Eliminate the need for such research with books that incorporate recipes, such as food writer Amanda Hesser’s *Cooking for Mr. Latte* or Madhur Jaffrey’s *Climbing the Mango Trees*. Also, some author Web sites encourage reader contact. Kris Holloway, for example, who wrote about her Peace Corps experience in *Monique and the Mango Rains*, readily shared Monique’s West African Peanut Stew recipe with us (see recipes).

Full mouths make conversation difficult, so take the pressure off guests by eating, then talking, or by offering smaller portions. When Hoye hosted her club for *Red Meat Cures Cancer* by Starbuck O’Dwyer, she whipped up mini-burgers and hand-cut garlic fries (see recipes) to feed into the irreverent theme. “I went with the smaller burgers to keep it social and portable,” she says.

Another benefit to the menu: The fries could be cut and the patties formed the night before. Easily pre-prepped foods are a big plus, especially since book clubs tend to meet weekday evenings, leaving most hosts only a sliver of time between the day’s activities and book club. You don’t want to miss out on the discussion because you’re stuck in the kitchen.

To avoid getting overwhelmed, keep things comfortably within your culinary limits. Consider old standbys: Rena Wiltfang-Roepke, a member of Hoye’s group, prepared her family’s time-tested lasagna (see recipes) for the discussion of *Lucia, Lucia* by Adriana Trigiani. Incorporate purchased food or limit book-themed dishes to an appetizer, dessert, or drink. Ideally, food will enhance your time with the book and each other, providing that deeper experience to which Brust attests. “Over the years, so many books have really influenced me,” she says, “and my eating.” **MH**

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FOR BOOK CLUB RECIPES, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 124.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RESOURCES IN THIS STORY, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 123.



OPPOSITE PAGE Thai-spiced tandoori shrimp offers a clever culinary/literary pairing for a discussion of *Life of Pi*. THIS PAGE The chronic dieters in the bestseller, *The Devil Wears Prada*, won’t sample the sun-dried tomato and goat cheese pizza, but book-club members can.

Recipes

Looking for additional recipes?
Check out www.mhmag.com.

Blood Orange Cocktails

What's the perfect accompaniment for *Undead and Unwed* by Hastings novelist MaryJanice Davidson? A drink that attracts vampires and a munchie that repels them, of course. Cocktail recipe from Laura Salyards Fryberger of Minneapolis.

Makes 2 cocktails

½ c. citrus-flavored vodka
¼ c. blood orange juice, bottled or fresh squeezed
1 Tbsp. simple syrup (1 part sugar and 1 part water mixed over medium-low heat in a saucepan)
blood orange slices for garnish, halved

In a cocktail shaker, combine vodka, juice, and simple sugar with ice. Shake well. Strain into a cool martini glass or cocktail glass with ice. Garnish with orange slices.

Roasted Garlic

Cut off tops on whole garlic bulbs. Drizzle with olive oil. Wrap in foil. Bake at 400 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes (until cloves are soft). Squeeze out onto toasted bread points. If you are around other people, bring gum.

Sun-Dried Tomato and Goat Cheese Pizza

In *The Devil Wears Prada* by Lauren Weisberger, *Runway* magazine's weight-obsessed staffers graze solely at the salad bar. Among the delectables left untouched: a version of this dish, offered in *The Book Club Cookbook*.

Makes 4 9-inch pizzas;
serves 12 as an appetizer

FOR THE PIZZA DOUGH

2¼ tsp. (1 packet) active dry yeast
2 tsp. sugar
1 c. warm water
3 c. all-purpose flour
1 tsp. salt
¼ c. grated Parmesan cheese

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
cornmeal and flour (for rolling out the dough)

TOPPINGS

2 cloves garlic, minced
½ tsp. salt
4 tsp. fresh oregano or marjoram, minced
½ c. extra-virgin olive oil
1 large onion, thinly sliced
1½ c. oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, slivered
1 lb. creamy goat cheese
salt and fresh-ground black pepper, to taste

TO MAKE THE DOUGH:

Dissolve the yeast and 1 tsp. of the sugar in ½ c. warm water. Set aside until yeast is foamy, about 5 minutes. Place the flour, salt, Parmesan, and remaining tsp. sugar in a food processor and pulse until well blended. With the motor running, add the yeast mixture and olive oil. Very slowly pour in additional warm water, if needed, just until the dough forms a single ball that holds together (even a little too much water will produce dough that is too sticky). The dough should hold together when handled, but still be a bit sticky. Transfer the dough to a floured work surface and knead vigorously until smooth and stretchy, about 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer dough to a large oiled bowl and cover with a dampened kitchen towel. Allow to rise in a warm place for one hour. Punch the dough down and allow it to sit an additional 15 minutes.

TO MAKE THE PIZZA:

Place a pizza stone or baking sheet in the oven and preheat to 500 degrees. In a small bowl, gently mash together the minced garlic and salt. Add 2 tsp. of the oregano or marjoram and stir in olive oil. Set aside. Divide the dough into four equal parts and shape into disks. Place a disk of dough on a work surface that has been generously sprinkled with cornmeal. Dust a rolling pin with flour and roll the dough out into an 8- to 9-inch circle. Using your fingers, stretch the dough farther until it is very thin but not in danger of tearing. Pinch around the edge to produce a raised rim. With an oven mitt or thick potholder, remove the pizza stone or baking pan from the

oven and place on a heatproof surface. Sprinkle the stone with cornmeal and lay the prepared crust on top (either lift it gently or use a floured pizza paddle). Brush the dough with the garlic mixture. Spread one-fourth of the onions over the top, cover with one-fourth of the sun-dried tomatoes, and dot with one-fourth of the goat cheese. Sprinkle with remaining tsp. of oregano or marjoram and season to taste with salt and pepper. Bake 5 to 7 minutes, until crust is golden and crisp and cheese is melted. Repeat process for remaining pizzas.

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Tandoori Shrimp

In Yann Martel's novel, *Life of Pi*, the title character constantly yearns for food from his native India while adrift at sea. This easy-to-eat entrée artfully combines these two literary themes.

8 to 10 servings

1½ lbs. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
12 bamboo skewers for grilling
lemon or lime wedges

MARINADE

1 Tbsp. ground cumin
1 Tbsp. sweet paprika
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. ground turmeric
3 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
3 Tbsp. fresh ginger, minced
1 c. (8 oz.) nonfat plain yogurt
3 or 4 cloves garlic, minced
2 serrano chiles, seeded and minced

NOTE: You can substitute 1 tsp. red chili powder, which can be found at Indian groceries, for ½ tsp. ground cayenne pepper. It is bright red and moderately spicy.

Wear plastic or rubber gloves while handling the chiles to protect your skin from the oil in them. Avoid direct contact with your eyes, and wash your hands thoroughly after handling.

Combine all the marinade ingredients

into the bowl of a food processor and process until blended into a smooth paste. Transfer to a large, non-reactive bowl. Dry shrimp well with paper towels and toss together with the marinade. Cover and refrigerate 1 to 3 hours. Soak the bamboo skewers in warm water for at least 20 minutes (this prevents them from burning on the grill). Prepare a fire in a charcoal grill. Drain the skewers and remove shrimp from marinade. Thread the shrimp onto parallel skewers in a ladder-like arrangement (this simplifies turning them on the grill). You should get 4 to 5 on each pair of skewers. Leave at least ½ inch of space between shrimp. Brush the grill rack with oil and place the shrimp on the grill. Grill about 2 minutes per side. Do not overcook. Serve immediately with lemon or lime wedges.

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Mini Beef BBQ Burgers with Hand-Cut Garlic Oven Fries

Bayport book club member Pam Hoye developed these recipes when hosting a discussion of *Red Meat Cures Cancer* by Starbuck O'Dwyer. She made the burgers mini (rather than regular size) to keep conversation flowing.

Serves 4 to 8

1 lb. ground beef
1 Tbsp. salt
1 Tbsp. pepper
2 Tbsp. BBQ sauce
8 small slices cheddar cheese
1 onion, sliced
bread & butter pickles
8 store-bought "dollar" buns, cut in half

Combine beef, salt, pepper, and BBQ sauce. Form into 8 patties. Fry onions and burgers together in a pan, cooking burgers about three minutes on each side. Top burgers with cheese and cover pan for a few minutes until cheese melts. Remove burgers from heat, and continue to fry onions until brown. Assemble each burger with onions and pickles, and top with extra BBQ sauce.

FOR FRIES:

3 large baking potatoes
2 Tbsp. olive oil
garlic salt, to taste
pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Peel and slice potatoes into thin fries. Soak in ice water for 15 minutes. Dry with a kitchen towel and transfer to a large bowl. Toss with olive oil. Spread evenly on a cookie sheet and roast for 20 minutes. Flip fries and cook an additional 15 minutes. Remove from oven, toss with garlic salt and pepper, and serve.

Spicy Lasagna

When hosting her club for the book *Lucia, Lucia* by Adriana Trigiani, St. Paulite Rena Wiltfang-Roepke went Italian for obvious reasons. She whipped up her family's favorite lasagna recipe, as well as the pine-nut cookies that appear in the book.

Serves 8 to 10

3 Tbsp. olive oil
1 c. onions, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 lb. fresh Italian sausage
2 tsp. salt
14-oz. can tomatoes
8-oz. can tomato sauce
6-oz. can tomato paste
¾ c. water
½ tsp. basil
½ tsp. oregano
1 tsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. dried parsley flakes
1 to 2 tsp. hot sauce
½ tsp. red pepper flakes
1 lb. package lasagna noodles
1 lb. ricotta cheese
1 egg
1 lb. mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced
1 c. Parmesan cheese, grated

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Heat 2 Tbsp. olive oil in a Dutch oven or large, heavy saucepan. Add onions and garlic, and sauté for 5 minutes. Stir in the sausage. Cook over medium heat until browned. Add salt, tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato paste, water, basil, oregano, sugar, and parsley flakes. Bring sauce to boil; then simmer for

45 minutes. Meanwhile, cook lasagna noodles according to package directions. Add remaining Tbsp. oil while cooking lasagna noodles to prevent them from sticking. Drain, rinse, and cool. In bowl, blend ricotta cheese and egg. In greased 13"-by-9.5" baking pan, arrange alternate layers of sauce, noodles, ricotta cheese, and mozzarella cheese, finishing with sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 35 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

West African Peanut Stew (Tigadègèna)

Kris Holloway-Bidwell, author of *Monique and the Mango Rains*, gave us Monique's traditional peanut stew recipe, adapted for vegetarians. The stew is even better the next day, she says.

Serves 6 to 8

2 c. onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic
1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
2 tsp. fresh ginger, grated
4 c. vegetable stock
2 c. tomato juice
½ tsp. cayenne (or to taste)
1 to 1½ c. smooth peanut butter
2 c. cabbage, chopped
2 c. sweet potato, chopped
1 c. okra (if available), chopped
salt and pepper, to taste
scallions, chopped, to garnish

Rice or couscous (this sauce can be served over either)

Heat oil in large skillet and fry onions, garlic, and ginger until soft. Add vegetable stock, tomato juice, and cayenne. When hot, add peanut butter, and mix well. Allow to boil for 10 to 20 minutes to thicken, then add cabbage, sweet potato, and okra. Cook 20 minutes or until vegetables are soft. Add water if the sauce is too thick, peanut butter if too thin. Serve over rice or couscous. Top with scallions.

NOTE: In Mali, the stew would be served in a communal bowl, followed by this blessing: "*Allah k'a suma i kònò*," which translates to "May God cool the food in your belly." **MH**