



RECIPE FOR A PERFECT WIFE

by Karma Brown

Summary:

After reluctantly leaving New York City for the suburbs, newlywed Alice struggles with shifting roles at home and achieving domestic bliss in a new fixer-upper.

When she discovers a vintage cookbook in her basement, the allure of cooking up Baked Alaska and Chicken a la King soon leads her into the darker story of the woman who previously owned the house, unfolding in notes tucked into the book.

As Alice discovers striking parallels between this woman's life and her own, she is finally forced to focus on the trajectory of her own life, questioning the foundation of her marriage and what it means to be a wife fighting for her place in a patriarchal society.

This mesmerizing dual narrative of a modern-day woman and a quintessential 1950s housewife is at once witty and charming and dark and sinister—much like its focus characters. With great care and gravity, this book offers a satisfying look at the lies we tell to feed the secrets we keep. *(From the publisher.)*



Author Bio:

Karma Brown is an award-winning Canadian journalist and bestselling author of the novels *Come Away With Me*, *The Choices We Make*, *In This Moment*, and *The Life Lucy Knew*. In addition to her novels, Brown's writing has appeared in publications such as *Self*, *Redbook*, *Canadian Living*, *Today's Parent*, and *Chatelaine*. *(From the publisher.)*

Book Reviews:

[It] turns out Nellie has a lot more to teach Alice about being a wife and a woman than how to bake a good batch of cookies. The most important? Take those trappings you resent so much—cooking, gardening, bearing children—embrace them, then wield them like weapons.

Jenny Rosenstrach - New York Times Book Review

A captivating read, full of twists and turns. Brown weaves a thrilling story that parallels the lives of two characters who struggle with being strong, independent women in a patriarchal world.

Associated Press

(*Starred review*) Chapters alternate between Alice and Nellie.... Brown kills it; her latest is a winner so captivating that fans of modern and old-fashioned stories about women could easily read it in one day.
Library Journal

[Brown] excels at bringing the complexities of women's lives to the page, and her latest novel questions how much has really changed for women over the last 60 years. The pacing is brisk, the characters are appealing, and both timelines are equally well realized. Thoughtful, clever, and surprisingly dark.
Booklist

With plentiful historical details (including recipes and depressingly hilarious marriage advice), the pages devoted to Nellie come to life. ...An engaging and suspenseful look at how the patriarchy shaped women's lives in the 1950s and continues to do so today.
Kirkus Reviews

Strong, well-drawn women anchor Brown's deeply thought-provoking, feminist novel. The spellbinding dual stories complement each other, raising themes of self-discovery, self-preservation and liberation for two women living eras apart.
Shelf Awareness

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What similar challenges do Alice and Nellie face in their marriages? What are differences between these two relationships? Do you think these similarities and differences are products of the different personalities at play, or of the different eras that these relationships occur in?
2. Food plays a role in bonding the characters in this book together, and also in creating power dynamics. Do you see food playing a similar role in your own life, ever? Did you relate to the ways Alice and Nellie emotionally connected with the dishes they prepared?
3. Was it a mistake for Alice to agree to leave Manhattan? Does running away from your problems ever work out? What personal experiences have you had trying to start over in a new place?
4. Were you surprised by the quotes from old books and women's magazines? What did you make of them?
5. Were you surprised by the plot twist in Nellie's point of view?
6. Do you have a collection of old family recipes like Elise left Nellie? What is your favorite recipe passed down by family?
7. Do you see anything symbolic or metaphorical about Nellie's tending to the garden? Does she remind you of other women from literature or mythology because of her skill for planting?

8. Do you identify more with Nellie or with Alice? Why?

9. Is there a parallel in Nellie's life to the situation Alice is forced to endure with James Dorian?
(*Questions issued by the publisher.*)

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