

Saturday Night at the Lakeside Supper Club

by J. Ryan Stradal



About the Book

From *New York Times* bestselling author J. Ryan Stradal comes a story of a couple from two very different restaurant families in rustic Minnesota, and the legacy of love and tragedy, hardship and hope, that unites and divides them.

Mariel Prager needs a break. Her husband, Ned, is having an identity crisis; her spunky, beloved restaurant is bleeding money by the day; and her mother, Florence, is stubbornly refusing to leave the church where she's been holed up for more than a week. The Lakeside Supper Club has been in her family for decades, and while Mariel's grandmother embraced the business, seeing it as a saving grace, Florence never took to it. When Mariel inherited the restaurant, skipping Florence, it created a rift between mother and daughter that never quite healed.

Ned is also an heir --- to a chain of home-style diners --- and while he doesn't have a head for business, he knows his family's chain could provide a better future than his wife's fading restaurant. In the aftermath of a devastating tragedy, Ned and Mariel lose almost everything they hold dear, and the hard-won victories of each family hang in the balance. With their dreams dashed, can one fractured family find a way to rebuild despite their losses, and will the Lakeside Supper Club be their salvation?

In this colorful, vanishing world of relish trays and brandy Old Fashioneds, J. Ryan Stradal has once again given us a story full of his signature honest, lovable yet fallible Midwestern characters as they grapple with love, loss and marriage; what we hold onto and what we leave behind; and what our legacy will be when we are gone.

Discussion Guide

1. To what extent does Florence's childhood help explain her behavior as an adult, and her relationship with Mariel? What positive and negative attributes did she carry through to her later years? Discuss.
2. After Florence and Gustav spend a memorable night together for their 10th anniversary, Florence goes for a walk to the Lakeside property, where Al lives in one of the cabins. What do you think happens, if anything? Do you believe that Al is Mariel's biological father?
3. For his entire life, Ned expects to take over Jorby's, his family's restaurant chain, but he's ultimately passed over. Do you think the chain would've been successful if he had been put in charge? Why or why not? In what situations do you think he thrives?
4. SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE LAKESIDE SUPPER CLUB delves into the complicated topics of male and female infertility and IVF, the trauma we inherit, and the legacies we leave behind. Do you think any character in the novel --- Mariel, Florence, Ned, Betty, Julia --- should have made a different decision at any point, given their circumstances?
5. Family is at the heart of this novel, and everyone feels the repercussions when disaster strikes. Who do you think is responsible for what happened to Gus, if anyone? Do you feel that Mariel is justified in blaming her mother?
6. If Gus had lived, do you believe he'd have been running a supper club or a restaurant chain, or neither? If Betty Miller had survived another 20 years, does that change your answer?
7. What do you think Mariel gets from her friendship with Brenda that she's been missing? Do you think she is content in her marriage to Ned? Why or why not?
8. Were you familiar with Midwestern supper clubs before? What about them sounds appealing to you? Is there a traditional-style restaurant that you or your family return to time and again? If so, what draws you back?
9. The Lakeside Supper Club has existed for almost a hundred years by the time Julia sells it. Do you think she makes the right choice for herself and for her family? What else could she have done?

Author Bio

J. Ryan Stradal is the author of *New York Times* bestseller KITCHENS OF THE GREAT MIDWEST and national bestseller THE LAGER QUEEN OF MINNESOTA. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *Granta*, *The Rumpus* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. His debut, KITCHENS OF THE GREAT MIDWEST, won the American Booksellers Association Indie's Choice Award for Adult Debut Book of the Year. His latest novel is SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE LAKESIDE SUPPER CLUB. Born and raised in Minnesota, he now lives in California with his family.

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