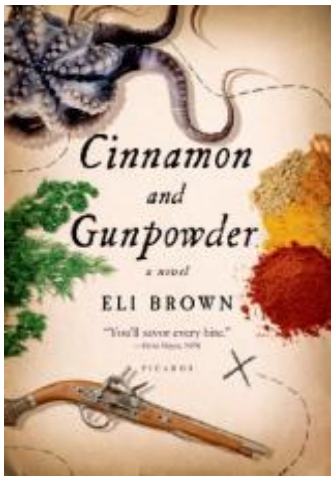
Cinnamon and Gunpowder

by Eli Brown



About the Book

A gripping adventure, a seaborne romance, and a twist on the tale of Scheherazade --- with the best food ever served aboard a pirate?s ship.

The year is 1819, and the renowned chef Owen Wedgwood has been kidnapped by the ruthless pirate Mad Hannah Mabbot. He will be spared, she tells him, as long as he puts exquisite food in front of her every Sunday without fail.

To appease the red-haired captain, Wedgwood gets cracking with the meager supplies on board. His first triumph at sea is actual bread, made from a sourdough starter that he leavens in a tin under his shirt throughout a roaring battle, as men are cutlassed all around him. Soon he?s making tea-smoked eel and brewing pineapple-banana cider.

But Mabbot --- who exerts a curious draw on the chef --- is under siege. Hunted by a deadly privateer and plagued by a saboteur hidden on her ship, she pushes her crew past exhaustion in her search for the notorious Brass Fox. As Wedgwood begins to sense a method to Mabbot?s madness, he must rely on the bizarre crewmembers he once feared: Mr. Apples, the fearsome giant who loves to knit; Feng and Bai, martial arts masters sworn to defend their captain; and Joshua, the deaf cabin boy who becomes the son Wedgwood never had.

CINNAMON AND GUNPOWDER is a swashbuckling epicure?s adventure simmered over a surprisingly touching love story --- with a dash of the strangest, most delightful cookbook never written. Eli Brown has crafted a uniquely entertaining novel full of adventure: the Scheherazade story turned on its head, at sea, with food.

Discussion Guide

1. How did your opinions of Mad Hannah Mabbot, Alexandre Laroche, and Lord Ramsey shift throughout the novel? What separates the heroes from the truly mad characters in CINNAMON AND GUNPOWDER?

2. On page 75, Owen Wedgwood explains culinary harmony to Hannah, describing the six tastes: salty, sour, sweet, bitter, astringent, and umami (which Wedge calls the Pearl Gate). Which of these are you drawn to? Do you share Wedge?s poetic interpretations of flavor?

3. On this voyage, what did you discover about the opium trade of the nineteenth century? Where does Mabbot draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable piracy?

4. Mabbot is a woman in a man?s world. How does her gender influence her perspective and behavior? What role does it play in her relationships with Ramsey and the Brass Fox?

5. After being kidnapped, Wedge makes an inventory of the meager ingredients available aboard the *Flying Rose* . If you had to run to your larder (pantry) right now and prepare a meal as if your life depended on it, what?s the best dish you could fashion?

6. On page 209, as the showdown with Alexandre Laroche intensifies, Mabbot declares that all cargo, except for provisions, must be thrown overboard. She sets an example by jettisoning her precious jewels and asking, ?We love our silver but consider this: What would you pay for your life?? How would you respond? Which of your possessions would be most difficult for you to part with?

7. How is Wedge affected by his memories of losing his wife, Elizabeth, and their child? In chapter six, how does cooking become his ultimate antidote to grief? Is he doomed to experience love as loss?

8. Wedge and Mabbot share humble beginnings. Which played the greater role in their successes: fate or wits? How did they become masters in the sensual seduction of power brokers?

9. If Mabbot were to write a motivational book on leadership, what would she advise readers to do? Is violence the only source of her power? How does she maintain law and order?and achieve victory?on the *Flying Rose*?

10. What makes it easy for Wedge to bond with Joshua? What mutual needs does their friendship fulfill?

11. What are Mabbot?s underlings hungry for: power? fortune? praise? How do Conrad?s motivations compare to those of Mr. Apples? What is the basis of Feng and Bai?s loyalty?

12. Discuss the dishes that appealed to you the most, from Wedge?s first death-defying meal (potato-crusted cod served with saffron rice and a red-wine reduction sauce made from garlic, peeled shrimp, and dried figs) to his subsequent masterpieces (herring paté with rosemary on walnut bread, rum-poached figs stuffed with blue cheese and drizzled with honey, pigeons fried with smoked babirusa pork and simmered in a molé sauce?to name just a few). What makes him a master at flavor-hunting and flavor-pairing? What is the most exotic food you?ve enjoyed?

13. How does Kerfuffle change Wedge?s perception of rabbits, and of life?

14. In his epilogue, does Wedge describe his new life as paradise, or does it seem bittersweet? Can he experience true freedom without the *Flying Rose*?

Author Bio

Eli Brown lives on an experimental urban farm in Alameda, California. His writing has appeared in *The Cortland Review* and *Homewrecker: An Adultery Reader*. His first novel, THE GREAT DAYS, won the Fabri Literary Prize.

Cinnamon and Gunpowder

by Eli Brown

Publication Date: June 3, 2014
Genres: Adventure, Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Picador
ISBN-10: 1250050189
ISBN-13: 9781250050182