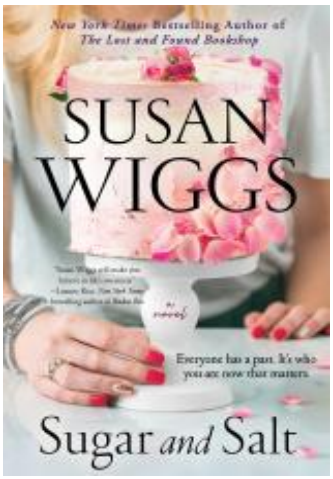
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Sugar and Salt

by Susan Wiggs



About the Book

The *New York Times* bestselling author of THE LOST AND FOUND BOOKSHOP returns to Perdita Street with a can?t-miss tale of friendship, hardship, redemption and love between a San Francisco baker and a barbecue master from Texas.

Jerome ?Sugar? Barnes learned the art of baking in his grandma?s bakery, also called Sugar, on historic Perdita Street in San Francisco. He supplies baked goods to the Lost and Found Bookshop across the street.

When the restaurant that shares his commercial kitchen loses its longtime tenant, a newcomer moves in: Margot Salton, a barbecue master from Texas.

Margot isn?t exactly on the run, but she needs a fresh start. She?s taken care of herself her whole life, pulling herself up by her fingernails to recover from trauma, and her dream has been to open a restaurant somewhere far, far from Texas. The shared kitchen with Jerome's Sugar bakery is the perfect setup: a state-of-the-art kitchen and a vibrant neighborhood popular with tourists and locals.

Margot instantly takes to Jerome?s grandmother, the lively, opinionated Ida. The older woman proves to be a good mentor, and Margot is drawn to Jerome. Despite their different backgrounds, their attraction is powerful --- even though Jerome worries that Margot will simply move on from him once she?s found some peace and stability. But just as she starts to relax into a happy new future, Margot?s past in Texas comes back to haunt her.

Discussion Guide

1. At the start of the novel, Margot thinks, ?She tried to feel her own worth. Sometimes the self-talk and self-care worked. A little bit. Other times, the effort simply drew a wall of loneliness around her.? Do you think Margot?s

traumatic history is responsible for this feeling? Is it something that many women experience in our society?

2. Ida tells Margot early on that ?my heart?s stuck in the past.? Why did her youthful romance with Frank have such staying power? Was it unfair for her to marry Douglas Sugar? What would you have done in her situation?

3. Why are Jerome and Margot attracted to each other despite being from very different backgrounds? What personality traits do they share? How do their differences complement each other?

4. Margie?s experiences in the criminal justice system were inspired by a number of real-life stories, including that of an Alabama woman named Brittany Smith, who was incarcerated and faced life in prison after murdering the man who violently raped her, leaving her terribly injured. Were you surprised by the fact that Margie wound up in jail? What do you think should have happened to her after she shot Jimmy?

5. In prison, Margie is desperate to terminate the pregnancy that resulted from being brutally raped. Despite the fact that abortion was legal at the time the scene takes place, she?s unable to have one while in jail, and her own lawyer refuses to help her due to his anti-abortion views. What did you make of her dilemma? Should her experience have been different? How? And how would the situation have played out differently today?

6. Why did Margie choose Lindsey and Sanjay as her baby?s adoptive parents? How did that decision help chance the course of her life?

7. Running from one?s past is a recurring theme in SUGAR AND SALT. We see it with Margot, running from her experiences in Texas, and Frank, living under an assumed name after dodging the draft. Do you think that they have successfully reckoned with their earlier lives by the end of the book? What does that look like for each of them?

8. Was Margot right to speak to Buckley Hunt for the *Texas Monthly* article? What were the potential risks and rewards of telling her story publicly? Would you have done it?

9. How does the Hunt family use their money and power to manipulate every aspect of Margot?s life? How do you think they would have justified their actions, even though their son was obviously a rapist and a criminal?

10. Margot doesn?t take offense when Jerome?s ex, Florence, says she doesn?t want her sons around a woman who had committed murder, saying ?...you?re a good mom, I imagine you?d do anything to protect your kids and I respect that.? What did you make of that response? Were Florence?s concerns valid?

11. At the end of the book, Margot tells Queen and Cubby that ?I guess I?m about as happy as I deserve to be.? What do you think she means? Do you think Margot finds the happy ending she deserves? What do you think the future holds for her, and Jerome?

12. On the front cover of SUGAR AND SALT, Susan Wiggs chose the line ?Everyone has a past. It?s who you are now that matters.? Do you agree? Why do you think the author picked that phrase for the cover?

Author Bio

Susan Wiggs is the author of more than 50 novels, including the beloved *Lakeshore Chronicles* series and the recent *New York Times* bestsellers THE LOST AND FOUND BOOKSHOP, THE OYSTERVILLE SEWING CIRCLE and FAMILY TREE. Her award-winning books have been translated into two dozen languages. She lives with her husband on an island in Washington State?s Puget Sound.

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