ReadingGroupGuides
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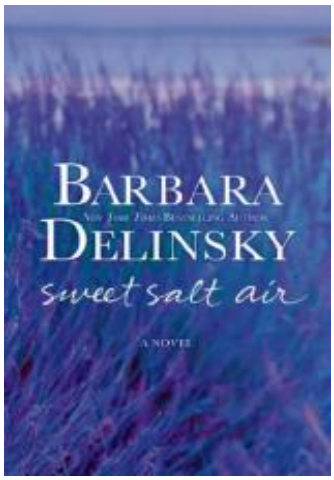
Sweet Salt Air

by Barbara Delinsky



About the Book

On Quinnipeague, hearts open under the summer stars and secrets float in the SWEET SALT AIR...

Charlotte and Nicole were once the best of friends, spending summers together in Nicole's coastal island house off of Maine. But many years, and many secrets, have kept the women apart. A successful travel writer, single Charlotte lives on the road, while Nicole, a food blogger, keeps house in Philadelphia with her surgeon-husband, Julian. When Nicole is commissioned to write a book about island food, she invites her old friend Charlotte back to Quinnipeague, for a final summer, to help. Outgoing and passionate, Charlotte has a gift for talking to people and making friends, and Nicole could use her expertise for interviews with locals. Missing a genuine connection, Charlotte agrees.

But what both women don't know is that they are each holding something back that may change their lives forever. For Nicole, what comes to light could destroy her marriage, but it could also save her husband. For Charlotte, the truth could cost her Nicole?s friendship, but could also free her to love again. And her chance may lie with a reclusive local man, with a heart to soothe and troubles of his own.

Bestselling author and master storyteller Barbara Delinsky invites you come away to Quinnipeague?

Discussion Guide

1. Quinnipeague is a fictional island, but based very closely on the many islands that dot Maine?s coast and are popular with summer visitors. Have you been to a seasonal island or beach community on vacation? How was Quinnipeague similar to these places you?ve visited? What characteristics make Quinnipeague unique? What interesting dynamics play out in the story because of the seasonal nature of Quinnipeague? What differences did you find between the characters who are ?locals? and those that are ?summer people??

2. One of the main plotlines is SWEET SALT AIR revolve around Charlotte?s and Nicole?s efforts to write a cookbook. What is the significance of food --- how it?s prepared, served, and appreciated --- in SWEET SALT AIR? What makes the island?s food special to the two women? Do they view food, and the process of collecting recipes and the stories behind them, differently?

3. Talk about the characters? lives off the island of Quinnipeague --- Charlotte, who lives in Brooklyn but travels constantly, and Nicole who is firmly rooted to her home in Philadelphia. What does each woman?s lifestyle reveal about her personality? Do their lifestyle choices seem in keeping with what the novel reveals about them?

4. Both Charlotte and Nicole are keeping secrets at the start of the novel that they have no intention of revealing. And yet, they both ultimately do. Do you understand why each woman kept her secret from the other? Do you think one was more justified in keeping her secret? What did you think of each woman?s reaction to the truth? Have you ever kept a big secret from a friend, only to reveal it later?

5. If you were Nicole, could you forgive Charlotte for what she did? Do you think there are some things in friendship that are unforgiveable? Do you think Charlotte has forgiven herself? If yes, what happened on the island that allowed her to forgive herself? If not, what do you think she still needs to do?

6. Nicole and Julian face challenges, but every marriage is tested at one time or another. What do you think is the hardest test? Illness? Infidelity? Money? Are we stronger for the suffering? In what ways?

7. Cecily Cole is a presence throughout the book, despite her death several years earlier. How do the locals see Cecily and her garden? How does Cecily?s spirit affect each character in the novel? How do Leo?s descriptions of Cecily as a mother affect your view of her? Do you believe in the kind of lingering legacy that the women discover in the herbs and food of Quinnipeague?

8. Discuss the role of SALT to the story in SWEET SALT AIR? Do you and your friends have the same taste in books? How do Charlotte?s and Nicole?s differing reactions to the book reflect their natures? How did you enjoy the experience of hearing about a book you could not read? Were you surprised when you learned who had written Salt?

9. Nicole is upset over Angie?s relationship with Tom. Do you feel that she?s justified? Have you ever witnessed a parent?s romantic involvement with a non- parent of yours? What emotions were involved for you? For your parent?

10. Leo has a ?bad boy? edge. Does this make him more attractive to Charlotte? Do you think a little rebellion is attractive? Leo has committed some crimes in his life, crimes for which he?s served time in jail. What is your sense of how Leo?s time in jail affected him? Has he changed? Does doing bad things make us bad people? And what about Charlotte, who?s committed no crimes, and yet, she?s done some terrible things? Would you characterize Charlotte as ?bad??

11. If you could ask the author anything about SWEET SALT AIR --- clarification of a plot point, a detail about a particular character, scenes from the cutting-room floor --- what would it be? (You may choose to contact Barbara Delinsky, via her website or Facebook, and ask her!)

Author Bio

Barbara Delinsky is the author of more than 20 *New York Times* bestselling books, including BEFORE AND AGAIN, THE SCENT OF JASMINE and LOVE SONGS. She has been published in 28 languages worldwide. A lifelong New Englander, Delinsky earned a B.A. in psychology at Tufts University and an M.A. in sociology at Boston College. She lives in Massachusetts with her husband, more books than she'll ever be able to read, two tennis racquets, and enough electronic devices to keep in close touch with her children and their families.

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