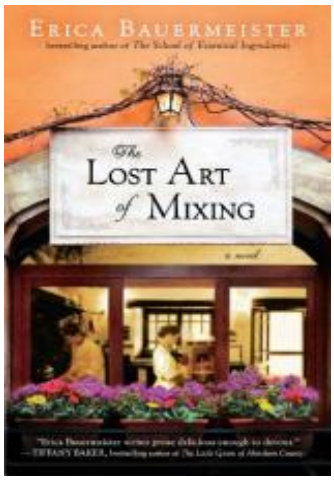
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The Lost Art of Mixing

by Erica Bauermeister



About the Book

National bestselling author Erica Bauermeister returns to the enchanting world of THE SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS in this luminous sequel...

Lillian and her restaurant have a way of drawing people together. There?s Al, the accountant who finds meaning in numbers; Chloe, a budding chef who hasn?t learned to trust after heartbreak; Finnegan, quiet and steady as a tree, who can disappear into the background despite his massive height; Louise, Al?s wife, whose anger simmers just below the boiling point; and Isabelle, whose memories are slowly slipping from her grasp. And there?s Lillian herself, whose life has taken a turn she didn?t expect?

Their lives collide and mix with those around them, sometimes joining in effortless connections, at other times sifting together and separating again, creating a family that is chosen, not given. A beautifully imagined novel about the ties that bind --- and links that break --- THE LOST ART OF MIXING is a captivating meditation on the power of love, food, and companionship.

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of the book, there is a quote by Aesop: ?Every truth has two sides.? What do you think is the importance of that quote to the novel as a whole?

2. At first glance, Al appears to be a staid accountant, comfortable with numbers and order, never doing anything unexpected. And yet, he engages in a secretive and odd behavior: masquerading as a published author at nearby bookstores. Why does he do this? Did you find this strange or understandable?

3. Consider the relationships between Isabelle, her children Abby and Rory, and her grandson, Rory. How do their

familial ties differ from relationships that are based on friendship or love, such as Isabelle?s bond with Chloe or Lillian?

4. In her family, Abby is regarded as the responsible one, a wet blanket who focuses on obligations instead of fun. Is this characterization fair? How does Abby see herself? What stereotypes or roles have been assigned to you that aren?t entirely accurate?

5. Chloe and Finnegan?s relationship is rife with false starts, progress forward, and then backward slides. What about their individual personalities prevents them from connecting at first?

6. Each chapter takes you deep into the perspective of a different character. How did this structure influence your views of the characters? Did your feelings about any of the protagonists change when you entered his or her point of view?

7. Think about the various rituals that take place in the novel?for instance, Chloe?s walk with the empty suitcase, or Isabelle?s birthday celebration. What is the importance of these rituals? What rituals do you practice in your own life, and what meaning do they hold for you?

8. What role do Finnegan?s blue notebooks play in his life? What do you think it means to him when he hands Isabelle her book to keep?

9. Tom?s character is struggling with a great loss, and his lingering sadness in many ways impedes his new relationship with Lillian. How did you feel about his emotional journey? What allowed him finally to move on?

10. In the novel, as in real life, a deeper issue often underlies a superficial conflict. What do lightbulbs mean to Louise? And to Al?

11. The author has referred to THE LOST ART OF MIXING as a series of dominoes, each character tipping another (or others) forward, often unknowingly. How does Louise and Abby?s near miss at the intersection factor into the lives of the other characters? What might this say about life in general?

12. Which was your favorite character in the book, and why? Whom did you relate to the most?

Author Bio

Erica Bauermeister is the author of NO TWO PERSONS, THE SCENT KEEPER, THE SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS, JOY FOR BEGINNERS and THE LOST ART OF MIXING. She is also the co-author of nonfiction works 500 GREAT BOOKS BY WOMEN: A Reader?s Guide and LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE GIRLS: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14.

She has a PhD in literature from the University of Washington, and has taught there and at Antioch University. She is a founding member of the Seattle7Writers and currently lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

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