

Sunshine Beach

BOOK CLUB KIT



Questions for Discussion

- 1** In order to renovate the Sunshine Hotel and Beach Club, Madeline, Avery, Nicole, and Kyra must help solve the mystery of what happened to Renée and Annelise's parents. What else do the characters learn as they renovate the club? Does each woman have to make peace with a certain part of her own past to move forward with changing her life?

- 2** Renée and Annelise suffered a brutal loss when they were children and have dealt with that loss very differently. Renée feels the Sunshine Hotel and Beach Club, the place where the loss occurred, should be torn down while Annelise doesn't want it touched. How do these different approaches to the hotel reflect how each sister has dealt with her loss? Do you think that's a result of their ages at the time of the incident, their personalities, or both? How does solving the mystery of their parents' deaths help the two sisters? How do they each change as a result of what is discovered? How does that change their view of the hotel?

- 3** Avery has to come to terms with the unexpected death of her mother, Deirdre Morgan. Do you think that is made more complicated, since she had just reconciled with her mother? Do you think Avery regrets not allowing her mother back into her life sooner?

- 4** When Steve Singer comes to stay at Bella Flora it changes his relationship with his ex-wife, Madeline, and his daughter Kyra. How does each relationship change? How do Kyra's feelings toward her father change the longer he lives in the house? What does she learn about him?

- 5** Maddie chooses to let Kyra reach her own conclusions about Steve. Why do you think Maddie handles it this way? Do you think it was the right strategy? How does Steve change through the book? Do you think he learns any lessons? How does Maddie and Steve's relationship transition throughout the book? What do they each learn about each other? As Kyra's view of Steve as a father changes, does it influence how Kyra feels about Daniel Deranian's parenting skills?

- 6** Do you think Kyra is still in love with Daniel? When she lets Dustin stay with his father on the movie set do you think she has any sympathy for Tonja? Why or why not?

- 7** At the end of the book Kyra takes a loan against Bella Flora to raise the money the women need to renovate the hotel and fight the network lawsuit. Her father and John Franklin are very concerned about the risk involved. Do you think Kyra is making a wise decision? Do you understand why she is willing to risk Bella Flora? Do you think she should have told Maddie, Nikki, and Avery the truth about where she got the money? Do you understand why she didn't, and why she didn't want to take a loan from Daniel? Have you ever taken a similar risk?

8 Nicole is struggling with how to tell Joe Giraldi that she is pregnant with his baby. Have you ever found yourself scared to reveal a secret that affected another person so closely? Do you agree with how Nicole handled the situation? Why do you think it was so hard for her to tell Joe? Why is Nicole so scared to trust Joe's love? Why is she reluctant to marry him? Do you think her feelings have changed by the end of the book?

9 Why do you think Nicole feels obligated to visit her brother Malcom Dyer in prison, after all he has put her through and after all the lies he's told her? Why do you think she wants to believe in him and to trust him? In contrast, why is it so hard for her to trust Joe?

10 Daniel Deranian and William Hightower have both been celebrities for a long time and they both encourage Maddie, Nicole, Avery, and Kyra to keep the paparazzi like Nigel Bracken interested and reporting on the women's activities at Bella Flora. They feel that relationship will help the women to promote and protect their television show, *Do Over*, and that it's a mutually beneficial relationship. Do you think that's true? What do you think about reality television stars who are famous simply because they're willing to have their lives filmed? What role do the paparazzi play in their celebrity status?

11 Madeline feels like she'll never be able to compete with the young, gorgeous rock-star groupies who hang on William Hightower. Do you think her fears are reasonable? Do you think women are under an enormous amount of pressure to appear young, thin, and beautiful no matter their age? Why do you think William values his relationship with Maddie? Could you relate to Maddie's insecurities?

12 Maddie and Kyra are navigating complicated relationships with high-profile stars. Maddie is romantically involved with the rock star William Hightower, and Kyra's son Dustin was fathered by Daniel Deranian, a major movie star. What difficulties are presented for each woman because she's involved with a famous man? How are their challenges similar and different?

13 At the end of each day, Maddie asks everyone to share one good thing to toast at sunset. Why do you think Maddie feels that tradition is so important? Does it help each character? Does it help some of the women more than the others? Do you have a similar daily ritual?

14 Avery, Kyra, Maddie, and Nikki each faced different challenges in the novel. Which woman's story resonated the most with you? Why? What do you think each woman learns throughout the course of the book? What causes the breakthrough for each of them?

Book Club Brunch

Writers often share their own quirks, fears, feelings, and personal preferences with their characters. Sometimes that means they get to eat things that we love—or don't—depending upon the situation.

In *Sunshine Beach*, Maddie has a recipe for egg soufflé that keeps guests coming back for more. It's been served at countless brunches and celebrations in her family and in mine. The recipe is an extremely simple never-fail rendition of this popular dish and is guaranteed to puff up just long enough to impress. Plus, it's filled with enough melted cheese to satisfy even Avery, who thinks a life without Cheez Doodles simply isn't worth living.

I serve it with fresh fruit and any bread from bagels to croissants. And for those with a taste for champagne, I find mimosas are the perfect accompaniment.

Oh, and did I mention there should be something chocolate for dessert?

Max Family Never Fail' Egg Souffle

INGREDIENTS

- 6 eggs
- 10 slices white bread, crusts removed (I cut into cubes so it will fit in blender)
- 1/2 pound Velveeta cheese (any flavor or type)
- 3 tablespoons sharp cheddar
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 pound margarine (1 stick)
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder

INSTRUCTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- Melt butter and cheese in microwave (cut up in cubes for easier melting).
- Beat eggs and milk in blender. Add bread to mixture and blend.
- I usually add the melted cheese and butter to the blender then, plus the baking powder, and blend smooth.
- Spray casserole dish with butter flavored non-stick spray. Pour mixture into casserole. Bake uncovered for 1 hour. (Unless it needs to be fancy, I use the disposable aluminum foil casseroles!)

Note: You can mix ahead, wrap well, and freeze. Just make sure it's at room temperature again (and give it a last stir) before you put it in oven.

You can also mix ahead and refrigerate overnight for baking the next day.



The Beach I Grew Up On...

BY
WENDY WAX

I was one of those lucky people who grew up on a beach. In my case it was St. Petersburg Beach, that comma of land that curves into the Gulf of Mexico on the west central coast of Florida. It was beautiful all year round, but the summers were especially wonderful. We spent most days on Pass-a-Grille at the southernmost end of St. Pete Beach, at the Rellim Hotel, which was owned by family friends, where the moms played cards and the children, well, romped.

Some of my earliest memories include holding my breath. Family lore has it that I learned to swim before I could walk. I'm not sure if that's actually true, but I do remember standing on the edge of the deep end where I would wait until people were watching (I guess I've always loved an audience) and then throw myself into the swimming pool and swim underwater to the other end where I'd come up for air to adult gasps of relief. I could and did spend hours in the pool doing handstands and trying to talk underwater

clearly enough to be understood. Then there were the summersaults — how many you could complete

without having to come up for air was a matter of pride. I'm happy to report that it looks like not breathing while ingesting large quantities of chlorine has had no long-term effect.

Those long, hot summer days were spent eating ice cream sandwiches and racing across the sand between the hotel's freshwater pool and the salty gulf with occasional stops to build sand castles or dig for coquinas. Other days we'd cartwheel down the hard packed sand near the waters' edge for what seemed like miles.

During the school year, I went to the aptly named Sunshine Elementary, where we had a fish broil every fall and art class and P.E. sometimes took place on the beach. You can see documentation of all of this at the Gulf Beaches Historical Museum.

My mother used to say that people who lived there had 'sand in their shoes.' I thought she meant this literally; after all there was sand everywhere—and not just in our shoes!





It took me a long time to realize that she was referring to the pace at which everyone and everything moved—or didn't. I grew up assuming that everyone lived across the street from the beach under the shade of palm trees and spent hours perfecting their underwater summersaults. And by the time I'd finished high school, I couldn't wait to leave for somewhere more exciting. It took going away to fully appreciate how lucky I'd been to grow up in such an incredible place. I've searched out sandy spots around the globe, and never found a beach I liked more.

Which may explain why when I began writing *Ten Beach Road*, the story of three women who lose their life savings to a Ponzi scheme and are

left with only co-ownership of a derelict beachfront mansion, I spent a long time envisioning the house and about two seconds deciding on which beach it would sit.

The locations in *Ten Beach Road* and *Sunshine Beach* are a mixture of real Pass-a-Grille spots that I've loved all my life and fictional streets that may confound some of the locals. Bella Flora, the once-fabulous Mediterranean Revival style mansion at the heart of the story sits on the non-existent 'Beach Road' (actually 1st Avenue) at the southwestern tip of Pass-a-Grille. (This wasn't easy as I had to mentally move a condominium building so that Bella Flora could command its spectacular view of the pass and Shell Island.)

Most nights my characters Madeline Singer, Avery Lawford and Nicole Grant drag their weary bodies out back to toast the sunset and search for at least one good

thing to say about their day. In the process, they bond and become friends, working to reclaim their own lives even as they rebuild Bella Flora.



WENDY WAX, a former broadcaster, is the author of twelve novels, including *A Week at the Lake*, *While We Were Watching Downton Abbey*, *The House on Mermaid Point*, *Ocean Beach*, and *Ten Beach Road*.

authorwendywax.com



AuthorWendyWax



@Wendy_Wax