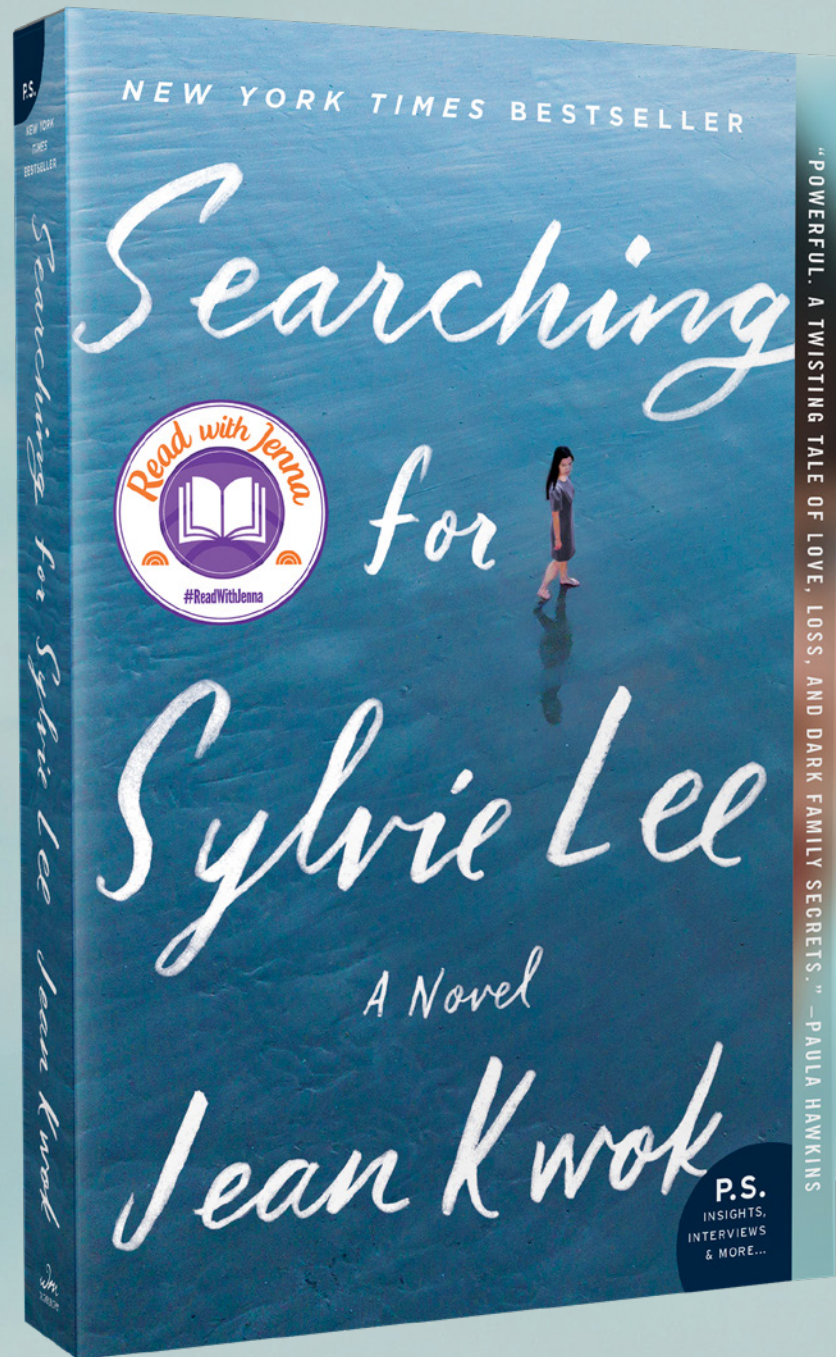


# BOOK CLUB GUIDE



HOST THE PERFECT BOOK CLUB EVENT WITH JEAN KWOK'S

*Searching for Sylvie Lee*

# An Instant *New York Times* Bestseller

A Read With Jenna Today Show Book Club Pick

An Emma Roberts Belletrist Book Club Pick

“Powerful . . . A twisting tale of love, loss, and dark family secrets.”

—Paula Hawkins, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Girl on the Train*

## A NOTE TO BOOK CLUBS

So, you've selected Jean Kwok's *Searching for Sylvie Lee* as your next book club read. What's next? This brilliant new story is a poignant drama that untangles the complicated ties binding a Chinese immigrant family's two sisters and their mother, exploring what happens as secrets emerge after the eldest daughter, Sylvie, goes missing. Filled with everything you need to host the perfect book club event, this guide includes discussion questions, recipes, an author Q&A, and much more!

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION ONLINE

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Use the book hashtags #ReadWithJenna #SylvieLeelsMissing #SearchingforSylvieLee

# BEHIND THE BOOK WITH JEAN KWOK

When we moved from Hong Kong to Brooklyn, New York, my older brother Kwan and I lost our parents—not to death but to immigration—and so we meant more to each other than ever. Our Ma and Pa had transformed, now more lost and confused than we were, and as the youngest of seven siblings, quicker to learn English than our elders, Kwan and I were charged with guiding our parents through a complex new culture and language we could barely navigate ourselves.

There are few photos of us from that time because we could not afford a camera, but one stands out in my memory. I was five years old, toothless and exuberant, sitting at fifteen-year-old Kwan's feet with a bowl of rice and chopsticks in my hands. I would not learn to use a knife and fork until I was a teenager. Kwan's expression was thoughtful, one hand resting protectively on my shoulder. He had already started working at the clothing factory in Chinatown after school.

Kwan was, however, brilliant. He painstakingly crafted a way out of that cycle of grime and exhaustion, and in so doing, led the way for my escape as well. One night, I woke upon the mattress on the floor where I slept. Kwan had returned from his restaurant job and laid a small, wrapped brown package next to me. It was a present. To this day, I am amazed that he did not give me a toy or a piece of candy, but something that would change my life. It was a blank diary and he said, "Whatever you write in this, will belong to you."



From that moment on, I began to write: about my confusion in this country, my loneliness as an awkward, homely Chinese girl amidst my Nike-wearing, classmates—and, after Kwan was accepted into MIT and left for college, about how much I missed him.

I lived for the moments when his orbit brought him home, always bringing me gifts—thick red MIT sweatshirts, books about Einstein and quantum theory, a computer to take the place of the manual typewriter I used, contact lenses to replace the thick glasses I desperately needed but never wore out of vanity.

Then, in November of 2009, Kwan disappeared. I had moved to the Netherlands to be with the man who would become my husband and received a panicked phone call from my family. Kwan had not come home for Thanksgiving. He was the most responsible person we knew. An invisible hand clutched my heart. Something must be wrong.

I quickly took over the search, contacting his work and friends, and discovered he had gone to Texas to purchase a small plane. Flying was his passion and he had clocked more than 1,600 hours of flight experience. I hacked into his email and finally found the right airport. Kwan had taken off . . . then the plane had vanished.

I broke down, sobbing to strangers, the police, politicians, cell and credit card companies, the FAA, anyone who might help us find him. We narrowed the search area to a hundred-square-mile expanse of mountains. My family raced there, driving around aimlessly, calling his name into the woods. A week after Kwan disappeared, the Air Force and search-and-rescue teams found his body. His plane had nicked a tree and he had died upon impact.

*Searching for Sylvie Lee* was born from my love for my tragic, brilliant brother. Even though I know he is gone, my heart will never stop searching for him.

—Jean Kwok, Author

# IN CONVERSATION: DEBORAH KALB WITH JEAN KWOK

**Deborah Kalb:** You write that your missing brother was the inspiration for your new novel. Can you say more about that, and how you came up with the idea for your character Sylvie?

**Jean Kwok:** When my dear older brother Kwan didn't come home to Brooklyn for Thanksgiving, we all knew something was very wrong. I was already living in the Netherlands with my Dutch husband at the time. I remember receiving that phone call from my family and feeling like I was suffocating. I kept trying to take a deep breath but couldn't seem to get any air.

Kwan was the most brilliant, competent, resourceful person I knew. How could he be missing? He was the person who would know what to do, the one we would all call in an emergency. That feeling of terror, of needing to step up and take charge to try to save someone I loved, was the emotional impetus behind *Searching for Sylvie Lee*.

From there, of course, golden girl Sylvie was born, as was her younger sister Amy. When dazzling Sylvie flies to the Netherlands for a final visit with her dying grandmother and disappears, it is up to timid Amy to pull herself together and try to find her beloved sister.

Once I created the characters, however, they began to take on their own life and explore their own journeys, which delighted me.

**DK:** The novel takes place primarily in the Netherlands, where you currently live. How important is setting to you in your writing?

**JK:** In this novel, I realized that the three settings—the Netherlands, New York City and Venice, Italy—were all practically characters of their own because they each symbolize such different things to each narrator. For Sylvie, who was given away to her grandma in the Netherlands as a baby because her parents were too poor to keep her, the Netherlands is home. It's the place where no one had any expectations of her, where she wasn't required to become a driven high achiever. However, when Amy lands in the Netherlands, poor country mouse Amy feels bewildered and terrified by this foreign and ghostly landscape. And Ma calls the Netherlands "a landscape of tears" where she was forced to leave her baby behind. So each setting is rich with symbolism and emotion because of how each character feels about it.

**DK:** The story is told in alternating chapters by Sylvie, her younger sister Amy, and Ma. Did you write the book in the order in which it appears, or did you focus more on one character before turning to the others?

**JK:** I always write my novels from beginning to end but *Searching for Sylvie Lee* was especially fun and challenging because Sylvie, Amy and Ma are all thinking in their own mother tongues. The reader gets to see Ma from Amy's English-speaking point of view, for example, where Ma can only

utter a few sentences in broken English. However, when Ma's chapter opens, Ma's inner dialogue is in her native language of Chinese, and the reader realizes that Ma is so much more intelligent and profound than her own daughter can ever know. Finally, Sylvie's narration is in Dutch allowing the reader to experience the Netherlands like a native speaker through her.

I am fluent in all three of these languages so I needed to mentally shift gears before writing each chapter. I was of course also trying to develop character and theme, propel the story forward, delineate each setting, etc. at the same time. This was pretty challenging.

While I did write the book from beginning to end, I went back and edited each character's narration separately. For example, I would read only Ma's chapters and make sure that her voice was clear and consistent throughout.

**DK:** What do you hope readers take away from the story?

**JK:** I hope that readers will be entertained by a gripping page-turner but even as they're reading to find out what happened to Sylvie, I also hope that they'll pick up some other ideas along the way, like what it must be like to be Ma, or any other immigrant who doesn't fully speak the dominant language. I hope they'll realize that someone they meet on the street, who might only speak broken English, could be a completely different person in their own language.

**DK:** What are you working on now?

**JK:** I'm very excited about my next novel, which I'm hoping to finish very soon. When the book opens, we are reading a letter from a woman who is begging someone she loves to give her a second chance after she's been involved in a murder. We then rewind to when the narrator first arrived in New York City as a young naive Chinese immigrant, desperate to create a new life for herself. We don't find out until the very end of the novel who actually gets killed or whom she's asking for forgiveness.

**DK:** Anything else we should know?

**JK:** Only that *Searching for Sylvie Lee* was inspired by the real-life disappearance of my brother but turned into an exploration of the many ways language and culture can divide us, and the impossibility of ever knowing someone, especially the ones we love best.

**Deborah Kalb is a writer, editor, and book blogger. To learn more, visit her website at [deborahkalbbooks.blogspot.com](http://deborahkalbbooks.blogspot.com).**

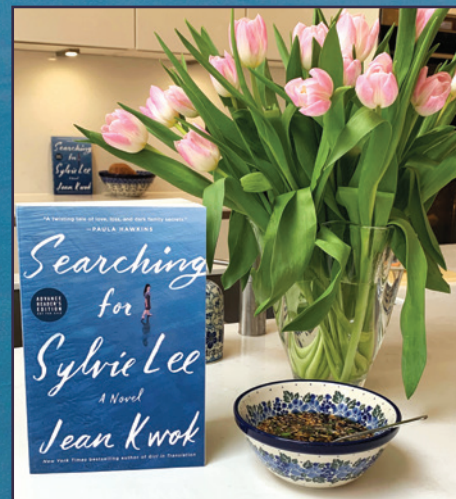
# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do the members of the Lee family deal with being measured against stereotypes, language barriers, and others' perceptions? Have you ever felt like an outsider?
2. Discuss the relationship between Amy and Sylvie. How do the siblings both understand and mystify one another?
3. How is this immigrant family like others you've seen or read about? What about their experiences do you think are universal or unique?
4. How does Kwok represent the different languages in each chapter? Did any idioms or word orders surprise you or make you think? Why do you think Kwok chose to depict language this way?
5. This novel says a great deal about the influence our families can have on us. How did Amy and Sylvie's different upbringings shape them and their choices? Did anything about your own upbringing strongly influence you?
6. Did your perception of Ma change when you read her chapters? How did she appear through other's eyes in comparison to how she sees herself? Do you think others see you the way you really are?
7. Do you think any of the characters in the novel are reliable narrators? Can any narrator be truly reliable, or are we all colored by our perceptions and misunderstandings?
8. What is the price of the American dream? Who pays for it? How does the lifestyle in Europe compare?
9. Amy and Sylvie perceive the Netherlands differently. How do their impressions of the landscape and the people—especially Filip and Lukas—demonstrate their own characters?
10. Has reading this novel deepened your understanding of the implications of casual racism, even toward well-integrated people? Did any instances in the novel surprise you? Have you ever encountered situations like this in your life?
11. Different men love Sylvie in this novel. How did their love differ, and why?
12. Why do you think Helena resented Sylvie? How deserved do you think it was?
13. There are so many secrets that the characters keep to themselves. What do you wish they had shared with each other, and how might this have changed the plot? Are secrets always bad, or are they sometimes necessary? Have you ever kept secrets from people you loved?
14. Do you think the novel's title, *Searching for Sylvie Lee*, has multiple meanings?

# RECIPES

Book club gatherings take many forms: some meet at a restaurant inspired by the book's location; some hosts prefer to cook an entire meal; and many book clubs gather around an assortment of appetizers provided in a pot-luck fashion. With Jean's blessing, this collection of recipes has been designed by Jennifer Kular of The Well Travelled Kitchen.

If you follow Jean on social media, you know that Jean burns everything so she gave Jennifer free reign. Jean, Jennifer, Jean's husband Erwin and two friends, Katrina Middelburg and Paola López, tested out the recipes in a massive and delicious cooking session. The dishes are inspired by the locations in which *Searching for Sylvie Lee* takes place. New York, Amsterdam, and Venice have provided the backdrop. Hints of Indonesia come through because of this connection to The Netherlands. From savoury to sweet, you'll find something for everyone, inviting you to a taste of the American, Dutch, Indonesian, Italian, and Chinese world of Sylvie Lee.



CREATED BY  
**JENNIFER  
KULAR**



## Veg and Dip: a Classic

Prep time: 30 minutes (+ time for the dip to develop) • Serves: 10-12 people

### INGREDIENTS:

500ml (2 cups) full fat Greek yogurt  
2 cloves fresh garlic, crushed  
1 Tbsp dried dill

1 Tbsp fresh thyme, from 4-5 sprigs  
Juice of half a lemon  
Freshly ground black pepper to your taste

### DIRECTIONS:

Combine all ingredients for the dip in a small mixing bowl, mix well, and set aside in your fridge for a few hours; overnight is even better. Take the dip out of the fridge 20 minutes before serving and place alongside a selection of cruciferous vegetables.

Serve with a selection of freshly prepared "dippable" vegetables such as carrots, celery, broccoli, red/green/yellow peppers, cauliflower, zucchini, green beans, cherry tomatoes..... Quantities to be determined depending on your number of guests.

## Welcome Drink: The Sylvie.... A Sparkling and Surprising Cocktail!

Getting together with friends to connect and chat about *Searching for Sylvie Lee* is a special occasion that calls for a special signature cocktail. The vodka and lemonade combination is a refreshing one, further lightened up with a bit of fizz from the sparkling water. A whisper of orange from the Blue Curaçao, along with the subtle suggestion of blue gently settling in the glass, makes this a gorgeous signature drink that is as delightful to drink, as it is to look at! If you have some lime and a few blueberries to add as a garnish, all the better!

### INGREDIENTS:

Ice—enough to fill half of a champagne flute or wine glass  
45 ml (1-1/2 oz.) vodka  
125 ml (1/2-3/4 cup) lemonade  
(depends on the size of your glass)

Splash of sparkling water  
Dribble of Blue Curaçao  
Lime, blueberries to garnish

### DIRECTIONS:

Fill a champagne flute or white wine glass half full with crushed ice. Pour in the vodka, lemonade, and sparkling water, and give it a gentle stir. Slowly and gently drizzle in a bit of the Blue Curaçao and allow it to settle onto the bottom of the glass. The Curaçao will eventually sink toward the bottom, leaving a gradation of colour. Garnish with a slice of lime, and some blueberries, if you have them. Proost! Salut! Cheers!



# RECIPES

## Sweet Potato and Shiitake Dumplings with a Soy Sauce Dip

Prep Time: 45 minutes • Cooking Time: 10-15 minutes • Total Time: 60 minutes • Makes: 2-3 dozen

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Describing Grandma: "...where were the strong hands I remembered, the ones that guided me home after school each day and stirred the flour for wontons and dumplings?"*

Making your own dumplings is not as daunting as it may seem. A little time-consuming until you get the hang of it, once you try your hand at a couple of them, I hope you'll agree that this is an appetizer easily made at home. Dumplings are one of those dishes that are great as an appetizer, but if you're like me, I would happily also eat them as a main.

### INGREDIENTS FOR DUMPLINGS:

1-2 Tbsp light olive oil for frying the filling  
2 small shallots, finely diced  
150 g (small-medium) sweet potato, coarsely grated (1-1/2 cups)  
135 g (about 2 cups) shiitake mushrooms, finely chopped (remove stems and discard before chopping)  
100 g baby bok choy, sliced cross-wise into 1 cm strips then diced (1-1/2 cups)  
2 green onions, green part only, sliced into thin rings  
2 cloves garlic, grated or finely chopped  
5 cms (2 inches) of ginger, peeled and finely chopped  
2 Tbsp soy sauce or tamari  
2 tsp toasted sesame oil  
2 tsp light olive oil

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE DUMPLING FILLING:

If you bought frozen dumpling wrappers, remember to take them out of the freezer and set on the counter to thaw, about an hour before you start.

Begin by prepping the vegetables and have them ready to add into the frying pan, one by one. In a large frying pan over medium heat, warm the oil and add in the chopped shallots. Stir these around for 2 minutes, until they begin to soften. Next, add the grated sweet potato, and soften for another 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms, and cook until they release their water at which point you want to add the bok choy, green onions, garlic, and ginger. Give this mixture a good stir while all ingredients soften and meld together (about 4 minutes.) Then, add the soy sauce, sesame oil, olive oil, and black pepper. Incorporate this into the veg mixture, remove the pan from the heat, and set aside until it's cool enough to handle when you make the dumplings.

### DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING AND FOLDING THE DUMPLINGS:

Using a generous tablespoon of the mixture, drop this onto the wonton wrapper that you have wet around the edges with a bit of water, then fold over the dough and make a crescent-moon shape and pinch the edges of the dumpling together, making sure to squeeze out any potential air bubbles. When your dumplings have been pinched, I suggest setting them aside on pieces of baking or waxed paper so they don't stick to the surface. (At this point, you can freeze the dumplings to use another time. From frozen, it would be easier to boil the dumplings until they float to the top, and finish them off in a bit of oil in a frying pan.)

### COOKING THE DUMPLINGS:

Heat 1 Tbsp of light olive oil in a large, (preferably non-toxic, eco-friendly) non-stick pan on medium heat. Try not to crowd the dumplings. I suggest doing these in batches. If your dumplings are touching each other, they may stick together. Give them some space.

Add the dumplings, one by one, flat side down, and allow to cook for 2-3 minutes, until they start to crisp up on the bottom. Check that this is happening by using a pair of tongs to gently lift them and have a peek. When the bottoms have turned a medium brown and are starting to look crispy, it's time to add about 1/4 cup of hot

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
Round wonton/dumpling wrappers—these can be found at an Asian supermarket, in the frozen section.  
2-3 Tbsp oil for frying the dumplings  
1/4-1/2 cup of water for steaming

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE:

125ml (1/2 cup) low sodium soy sauce, or tamari  
125ml (1/2 cup) red wine vinegar  
2 Tbsp maple syrup, or honey  
3 cloves garlic, crushed  
2 Tbsp minced ginger (about 5cm, or 2 inches)  
2 tsp toasted sesame oil  
1 tsp sesame seeds

Measure all ingredients into a bowl, mix, and set aside

water to your pan, and then top with a lid so the dumplings can steam. BEWARE: oil and water do not mix! This can be a tricky moment. To avoid getting splattered by the hot oil, I urge you to have your lid at the ready, partially covering the dumplings in the pan. Add the water at the far side of your pan, and top it with the lid to allow the dumplings to steam for another two minutes. Check on the dumplings while they are steaming. After two minutes, remove one and cut it open to check for doneness. They should be ready. Transfer the cooked dumplings to a serving platter and enjoy with the dipping sauce!

\*\*If you'd like to add some spice to this dip, shake in some red pepper flakes, sriracha, or a few rings of chopped hot red pepper.



# RECIPES

## Chicken Satay with a Spicy Peanut Dipping Sauce

Prep Time: 45 minutes • Marinating Time: 2 hours • Cooking Time: 15 - 20 minutes  
Total Time: 3 hrs (includes marinating time) • Serves: 8

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Amy is in Amsterdam and she speaks about the leftovers from Helena and Willem's restaurant. "Their enormous fridge is packed with spicy beef in black bean sauce, grilled shrimp, and pork skewers in hot peanut sauce."*

A former Dutch colony, Indonesia's dishes have made an impact on cultural foods here in The Netherlands. Satay is one of many dishes you can find on the Dutch dinner table. Without a doubt, the Dutch love their "pindakaas," (peanut butter!) This sauce makes a beautiful accompaniment to the satay.

**TOP TIP:** When preparing this dish, first make the marinade and place the meat in there to absorb all of those lovely flavours. While this is happening, you've got time to make the peanut sauce so it's ready to go once the skewers are cooked.

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE CHICKEN SATAY MARINADE:

4 skinless boneless chicken breasts  
125ml (1/2 cup) soy sauce or tamari  
125ml (1/2 cup) freshly squeezed lemon or lime juice  
1 tbsp maple syrup  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 thumb of ginger, grated  
1 tsp ground turmeric  
1/2 red chili, finely chopped—remove the seeds and membrane if you want less heat  
24 +/- wooden skewers (20cm; 8 inch), soaked for at least 30 mins in water

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE SPICY PEANUT DIPPING SAUCE:

1/2 Tbsp coconut oil  
1 shallot, finely chopped  
1 thumb of ginger, minced  
(double this if you want a more intense ginger flavour)  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 small red chili pepper, finely chopped;  
(for lower heat, seeds and membrane removed)  
1 Tbsp maple syrup  
1 tsp soy sauce or tamari  
1 Tbsp hoisin sauce (or kecap manis—a sweet soy sauce)  
80ml (1/3 cup) chunky peanut butter  
1 400ml (13.5 oz) can full fat coconut milk



### DIRECTIONS FOR THE MARINADE:

To begin, make the marinade by placing all prepped and measured ingredients into a bowl or container that will hold the chicken strips as they marinate. Set this aside while you prepare the chicken skewers by soaking them in water during the time the meat is marinating.

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE SPICY PEANUT DIPPING SAUCE:

Throughout the process, keep tasting the sauce. You may want to add more garlic or ginger, or more peanut butter. Heat the coconut oil over a medium-low heat. Add the chopped shallot and ginger, and sauté for two minutes, until they start to soften. Next, add in the garlic and chili pepper and cook for another minute. Add the rest of the ingredients, and allow the peanut butter to melt. Finally, stir in the coconut milk and heat the mixture through. Your sauce is ready to serve!

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE CHICKEN SATAY:

While the skewers are soaking, prepare the chicken by first placing each breast between two pieces of waxed paper, and using a rolling pin, flatten them to about a 1 cm (1/2 inch) thickness. Next, cut each breast into three or four strips and then cut these strips into pieces that are about 5 cm (2 inches) in width. Place these chicken strips into the marinade and allow to sit for about two hours.

When the chicken has been marinated, remove the skewers from the soaking water and start threading the chicken pieces onto the sticks. I did a bit of an accordion weave on mine and tried to space out the chicken so it wouldn't be clumped together. (If the chicken pieces are too thick, or too close together, they will take longer to cook.) As you finish each skewer, place it on a plate, ready to cook.

These are best made in a grill pan, or on your grill. But if you don't have either of those, a regular frying pan will do. Over medium heat, heat the pan you have on hand with a bit of oil to prevent sticking. Once warm, place the skewers on the heat and cook until they are brown on one side. (Try not to over-crowd the pan as this will prevent the chicken from browning to a crispy outside.) Flip the skewer, and cook through on the other side. Depending on the thickness of your meat, the skewers will take 4-5 minutes per side.

When all of the skewers are cooked, present them with the peanut sauce and enjoy! Truth be told, the Dutch would eat the satay with "patat" or, French fries. You can also serve this as a main dish, and add steamed rice and a green salad to keep it on the heart healthy side.



# RECIPES

## Sweet Potato Rounds with Goat Cheese, Lemon, and Thyme

Prep Time: 20 minutes • Cooking Time: 25-30 minutes • Total Time: 50 minutes • Serves: makes about 30 bites

**TOP TIP:** When baking vegetables, if you want them to crisp up on the sides, make sure they aren't touching each other on the tray. If they do touch, this will encourage them to steam, and they won't be able to get crispy!

### INGREDIENTS:

1-2 medium sweet potatoes  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste  
250g (1 cup) soft goat cheese, room temperature

4 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves removed from the stems  
Grated rind of 1/2 a lemon, yellow outer flesh only  
1-2 Tbsp water (scant)  
Freshly cracked black pepper  
Chives, for garnish

### DIRECTIONS:

Heat your oven to 200C (400F.) Prepare a baking tray with a piece of baking paper or Silpat mat. Scrub the sweet potatoes and dry them well. Now, slice them into rounds that are about .5cms or 1/4 inch wide. Place these on the baking tray with a drizzle of olive oil, some salt and pepper, and massage this onto the sweet potato rounds. Evenly space the rounds, being careful not to let them touch each other. This will ensure crispy tops and bottoms. Pop this into your pre-heated oven, and bake for 15 minutes, checking for doneness. If at this stage the rounds are crisping up on the bottom, flip them, and allow to cook for an additional 10 minutes on the other side. They may take as long as 20 minutes on the first side. That's fine, just know that when you turn them over, they will just need some crisping up on the second side.

While the sweet potatoes are cooking, you can prepare the topping. In a medium bowl, tip in the room temperature goat cheese, thyme leaves, grated rind, and pepper. Begin to mix this together with a fork, and add a bit of water to bring it to a spreadable consistency. It's now ready for your sweet potato rounds, once they are out of the oven and have cooled. Once cooled, spread on top, about a teaspoon of the goat cheese mixture and top with a piece of fresh chive, or more thyme leaves. Flat-leaf parsley works well here, too. Arrange on a platter and you're ready to go!



# RECIPES

## Chicken Meatballs with a Spicy Peanut Dipping Sauce

Prep Time: 30 minutes • Cooking Time: 10-15 minutes • Total Time: 45 minutes • Makes: 2 dozen

When I was making the mixture for the Chicken Dumplings, it dawned on me that this would also make a great meatball, making this appetizer, gluten free. If you don't want to use chicken, substitute turkey, beef, or pork for equally good results. You could also let this mixture do double duty by doubling the recipe and using half for dumplings, and half for meatballs.

I like the Spicy Peanut Dipping Sauce that accompanies the Chicken Satay recipe, so I have included it here as well. I think you'll find it makes a delightful complement.

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE MEATBALLS:

500g ground \*chicken (about 1 lb)  
2 green onions, finely chopped  
2 cloves of garlic, crushed  
2 thumbs of ginger, finely grated (5cm, or 2 inches)  
1 small carrot, finely grated  
1/2 of a hot red pepper, finely chopped  
(seeds removed if you want to lower the heat)  
fresh black pepper, to taste  
1 Tbsp soy sauce or tamari  
1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil  
1 egg yolk  
50 g (1/2 cup) gluten free oat flour  
(or 1/2 cup oats that you've blended into flour)  
\*can substitute turkey, beef, or pork

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE MEATBALLS:

Place the ground chicken in a large mixing bowl. Prepare the rest of the ingredients by chopping, grating, and measuring. As you are doing the prep, add each ingredient to the bowl and when all ingredients are there, mix together with a large spoon, even better, get in there with your hands to make sure all is combined. Have a plate ready and begin to roll the meatballs. About a tablespoon or so per meatball, and this recipe should yield about 24. If you find the mixture too sticky, add in a bit more of your oat flour, but not too much, or the meatballs will be dry.

Heat a large frying pan over medium heat, and add a tablespoon or so of light olive oil or coconut oil and place the meatballs in the pan. Try to avoid having the balls touch each other as this will prevent them from browning on all sides. Depending on your heat, and the size of your pan, the meatballs will need turning every 2-3 minutes until they are browned and cooked. As this recipe calls for chicken, you want to make sure they are thoroughly cooked.

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE PEANUT DIPPING SAUCE:

1/2 Tbsp coconut oil  
1 shallot, finely chopped  
1 thumb of ginger, minced  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 small red chili pepper, finely chopped; seeds and membrane removed for lower heat  
1 Tbsp maple syrup  
1 tsp soy sauce or tamari  
1 Tbsp hoisin sauce (or kecap manis—a sweet soy sauce)  
80ml (1/3 cup) chunky peanut butter  
1 400ml (13.5 oz) can full fat coconut milk

When all sides are evenly browned, remove the meatballs from the pan and place on a paper towel-lined plate to absorb some of the fat. You can serve these immediately, or set aside in the fridge and reheat them when needed by tipping them back into the frying pan and gently heating for a few minutes over a low flame.

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE SPICY PEANUT DIPPING SAUCE:

Throughout the process, keep tasting the sauce. You may want to add more garlic or ginger, or more peanut butter. Heat the coconut oil over a medium-low heat. Add the chopped shallot and ginger, and sauté for two minutes, until they start to soften. Next, add in the garlic and chili pepper and cook for another minute. Add the rest of the ingredients, and allow the peanut butter to melt. Finally, stir in the coconut milk and heat the mixture through. Your sauce is ready to serve! Add a sprinkle of chopped peanuts on top, to dress up the presentation.



# RECIPES

## Asian Noodles with Roasted Asian Pork Loin

**Prep Time: 15 minutes • Cooking Time: 30 minutes • Total Time: 6 hr 45 minutes (includes marinating time)**  
**Serves: 6**

The thing I like about this recipe, is that the dressing and veg can be prepared ahead of time so when you're ready to serve it up, it only takes the amount of time you need to cook the noodles to pull the dish together. Here, I have the noodles paired with a marinated and oven roasted pork loin, which complements the noodles perfectly. I suggest getting the pork prepared, and in the oven, and you can carry out the recipe for the noodles, while the meat is roasting.

Pork tenderloin is one of the easiest cuts of meat to cook. It crosses several cultural borders, which means it will take on a myriad of flavour combinations, and still turn out well. In this recipe, traditional Asian flavours of slightly salty soy, warming sesame, pungent garlic, and just enough ginger so you know it's there, combine to make a marinade that elevates the taste of the pork.

Top tip: make the dressing in the bowl in which you will serve the noodle dish and you can add the vegetables to it as you prepare them. When the noodles are cooked, they can be tossed on top so everything can be mixed together and you save on your washing up!

## Roasted Asian Pork Loin

**Prep Time: 15 minutes • Cooking Time: 30 minutes • Total Time: 6 hr 45 minutes (includes marinating time)**  
**Serves: 6**

### INGREDIENTS:

1 kg (2 lbs) pork tenderloin, fat trimmed off  
80ml (1/3 cup) lite soy sauce or tamari  
60ml (1/4 cup) toasted sesame oil  
2 Tbsp hoisin sauce  
2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce  
2 Tbsp maple syrup (can also use brown sugar)

3 scallions, chopped into .5cm rounds  
4 cloves garlic, crushed  
2 Tbsp grated ginger  
1 tsp freshly grated black pepper  
\*\*2 Tbsp sriracha or Asian chili paste, if you want to add some heat

### DIRECTIONS:

Measure into a shallow dish that will hold the tenderloin while it marinates, the soy sauce, sesame oil, hoisin sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and maple syrup, and give it a stir. Add the scallions, garlic, ginger, black pepper, and chili sauce, if you're using it. Stir all of the ingredients together and place the pork into the marinade being sure to turn and coat all sides of the meat. Place a lid on this container and allow to marinate in the refrigerator for six hours, or overnight. If you remember, check on the marinade and turn the meat a few times to make sure it's evenly coated.

When it's time to cook the pork, take it out of the fridge about 30 minutes before you want to pop it in the oven. Heat the oven to 225C (425F), take the pork out of the marinade and place it on a foil-lined, rimmed baking dish. Roast for 25-30 minutes. The internal temperature should be 65-70C (145-160F) when cooked. When the pork is finished roasting, take it out of the oven and allow it to rest for 10 minutes before carving. This will ensure the juices have time to redistribute so you'll have a juicy piece of tenderloin! Serve alongside the Asian Noodles.

## Asian Noodles

**Prep Time: 20 minutes • Cooking Time: 10 minutes • Total Time: 30 minutes • Serves: 6-8 as a side dish**

### INGREDIENTS:

450g (1 box) spaghetti or egg noodles  
100g snow peas (about 1 cup)  
1 sweet red pepper, thinly sliced  
125ml (1/2 cup) water chestnuts  
125ml (1/2 cup) fresh basil leaves, chiffonade  
75ml (1/3 cup) chopped green onion  
(green parts only)

### FOR THE DRESSING:

75ml (1/3 cup) rice or white wine vinegar  
75ml (1/3 cup) hoisin sauce  
3 Tbsp toasted sesame oil  
3 Tbsp light olive oil  
3 Tbsp soy sauce or tamari  
2 Tbsp minced ginger root  
1 tsp ginger powder  
2 tsp dry mustard powder  
2 tsp maple syrup  
3 cloves of garlic, crushed  
2 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds—for garnish

### DIRECTIONS:

First, make the dressing by whisking together all of the ingredients, and set this aside.

Fill a large pot with water and bring it to the boil. While it is coming to the boil, start prepping the snow peas, red pepper, water chestnuts, basil, and green onion, and put them in the large

serving bowl with the dressing. When the noodles are done, drain them and transfer into the large bowl where you've made the dressing. Toss together the noodles with the dressing and veg, top with toasted sesame seeds, and you're good to go! For a complete meal, serve this with a roasted loin of pork. If you'd like to kick this up a notch, add some chopped fresh chili pepper for a bit of heat.

# RECIPES

## Sweet and Sour Chicken with Steamed Rice

Prep Time: 35 minutes • Cooking Time: 25 minutes • Total Time: 60 minutes

Serves: 8

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Amy arrives at Sylvie's apartment in Brooklyn Heights and describes Sylvie's terrible cooking skills saying "... they live on take-out sweet and sour pork..."*

### INGREDIENTS:

4 chicken breasts, cut into bite-size chunks (150g or 6 oz per person)  
1 lime  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
pinch of sea salt, freshly cracked black pepper  
2 Tbsp arrowroot starch  
\* oil for frying  
2 sweet red peppers (can use yellow or orange)  
seeds removed and cut into bite-size pieces  
2 medium onions, cut into bite-size pieces, and separated 2 fresh red chillies, chopped into thin rounds (seeds removed if you want to lower their heat)  
1 bunch of asparagus, bite-size pieces  
200g (about 2 cups) tender stem broccoli  
1 tin of baby sweet corn, drained (those perfect little cat-size corn cobs)  
1 450g tin of pineapple in its own juice, drained, chopped, and juices reserved for the sauce  
1 mango, peeled and cut into 3cm chunks

### DIRECTIONS:

First, make the sauce by draining the juices from the tinned pineapple into a bowl. Add the soy and fish sauces, vinegar, 2 tbsp arrowroot, honey, and whisk together until combined. Set this aside for later, along with the pineapple and chopped mango.

Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces and place these in a bowl with a pinch of sea salt, a crack of black pepper, 1 Tbsp arrowroot powder, and the juice from the lime. Add the crushed garlic and toss everything all together until the chicken pieces have been evenly coated. Set this aside while you prep the veg. There's no need to put this in the fridge; it's better to cook the chicken when it's not fridge cold.

Now, prepare the vegetables. Clean and chop the veg to your desired shape (bite-size is ideal.) They should all be relatively similar in size so they cook in the same time. Set these aside on a plate to have at the ready while you are cooking. Peel and chop the ginger and garlic; add these to a corner on the veg plate.

You're now ready to cook! Start by preparing your rice. 2 1/2 cups of dry rice to 5 cups of water is a standard measure for eight people. Measure this out into a medium size pot and cook the rice as per your package instructions. Do this while you are making the stirfry. You can do this in two large frying pans, or, use one frying pan and a wok, if you have one.

In the first pan, use a drizzle of oil to coat the bottom of the pan, over medium heat, add the chicken pieces and cook, stirring often, until they are no longer pink inside and starting to brown on the outside. This will take 8-10 minutes. When done, set this aside; you'll be adding it to the vegetables in a few minutes.

In the second pan, (a wok if you have one) add a bit of oil to coat the pan and then tip in the chopped peppers and onions. Stir these around for 2 minutes and add in the chillis, asparagus, broccoli and baby corn, and stirfry for another minute. Now add the pineapple, ginger, garlic, and snowpeas. With continued stirring, your goal is to gently cook the veg and fruit, just through to warming. Tender-crisp is how you'd like the veg to stay. Cooking all of this,

7cm (3 inches) ginger, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
100g (about 1 cup) snow peas  
\*oil for coating the pan before frying  
125ml (1/2 cup) (scant) boiled water  
reserved juice from the tinned pineapple  
60ml (1/4 cup) Tbsp lite soy sauce or tamari  
75ml (1/3 cup) rice (or white) vinegar  
1 Tbsp fish sauce  
2 Tbsp arrowroot starch  
60ml (1/4 cup) liquid honey  
A little extra water on hand to loosen the sauce should you need it  
Bunch of fresh coriander for garnish  
Lime wedges, for a dash of extra flavour at your plate  
400 grams of basmati or jasmine rice, prepared as per packet directions

should take about 6 minutes total. If at any time you find the veg is sticking to the pan, use a bit of hot boiling water to loosen it from the edges. When the vegetables are cooked, add the mango, and the sauce you made with the juice from the pineapple and stir everything around until well combined and the sauce begins to thicken.

Add the chicken to the pan with the vegetables, and warm it through as one dish. Serve alongside some fluffy rice, sprinkle with chopped coriander and add a wedge of lime for extra zing.



# RECIPES

## Pappardelle with Asparagus, Lemon, Sundried Tomatoes, Pecorino, and Pine Nuts

Prep Time: 20 • Cooking Time: 6-8 minutes • Total Time: Approx. 30 minutes

Serves: 4

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Filip, Sylvie, Lukas, and Estelle are at a restaurant in Venice. "I took a bite of my tagliatelle with artichokes and pecorino and sighed..."*

**TOP TIP:** When you bring your asparagus home from the market, cut off the bottom 3 cms, and place the asparagus, tips up, in a wide glass or jar, with about 3 cms of water in the jar. Store this in the fridge and it will keep fresh for a few days.

### INGREDIENTS:

500g (1lb) pappardelle pasta  
1 bunch, 500 grams of asparagus, peeled into strips with a vegetable peeler  
125ml (1/2 cup) sundried tomatoes, sliced into thin strips  
125ml (1/2 cup) fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced

juice and grated rind of one lemon  
75g (1/2 cup) grated pecorino Romano cheese, a little extra for garnish  
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
freshly cracked black pepper  
sea salt to taste

### DIRECTIONS:

Begin by filling a large spaghetti pot with water, and setting it on the stove to boil.

Next, prep the asparagus using a vegetable peeler to peel it into long strips. Top tip: after you make the first run with the peeler, turn the asparagus spear onto the flat side - this will stabilize the veg while you peel it. When you have peeled all of the veg, place it in a bowl and set aside. Into another large bowl you'll be using to serve the pasta, slice the sundried tomatoes, and basil. Now grate the rind of the lemon, and then squeeze in the juice. You can add the grated pecorino, being sure to set a bit aside as garnish.

As soon as the water boils, add the pappardelle and cook as per package instructions. A minute before the pasta has finished cooking, add the peeled asparagus. You want to blanch this for one minute only! When your pappardelle has reached an al dente stage, reserve about a half cup of the pasta water and drain the pasta and veg in a colander. Tip this onto the sundried tomatoes, basil, lemon and cheese in the large bowl. Add half of the reserved pasta water, (more if you need to) olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste, and gently toss until the ribbons of asparagus have integrated nicely alongside the pappardelle. Top with pine nuts, more pecorino, and fresh pepper, and enjoy every bite!



# RECIPES

## Flourless Triple Chocolate Brownie

Prep Time: 15-20 minutes • Cooking Time: 25 minutes • Total Time: 45 minutes

Serves: 12-16 squares

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Sylvie and Amy are baking brownies. "...but since Ma had never used our oven, she had never learned to bake. I decided we would make brownies from a mix."*

Gluten free and chocolate all in the same dish? Fantastic! The thing that's great about this dessert is that you may already have the ingredients on hand. Add a dollop of ice-cream or whipped cream on the side and you'll have a delightful balance of flavours. Enjoy every bite!

### INGREDIENTS:

125g (1/2 cup) unsalted butter  
100g (4 oz) 72% dark chocolate bar, broken into bits  
150g (3/4 cup) granulated sugar  
3 eggs  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract  
50g (1/3 cup) cocoa powder, sifted  
pinch of salt  
50g (1/2 cup) toasted walnuts, coarsely chopped (optional)  
35g (1/4 cup) chocolate chips (optional)  
Powdered sugar or cocoa powder for dusting, if you wish

### DIRECTIONS:

While the oven is heating to 180C/350F, melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat. When it has melted, add in the chocolate, and stir until it is melted and incorporated with the butter. Set this aside on another burner to cool down a bit.

Prepare a 20x20 cm (8x8 inch) pan by coating it with a bit of butter and then lining it with baking paper. I find using two pieces of baking paper works well for this. First line the pan in one direction, with a strip of paper long enough to have a bit of overhang over the edges. Then line it in the other direction, again with some overhang. Lightly butter this paper as well, just the bottom.

In a large mixing bowl, tip in the sugar and add the cooled chocolate and butter mixture. Add the vanilla. Using a whisk, incorporate these ingredients. Now add the eggs, one at a time, whisking after each addition. (Make sure the chocolate/butter is not hot because you don't want to cook the eggs!) Now it's time to add the cocoa and salt, and give it another, more gentle go, with the whisk. When all of the cocoa powder has been incorporated successfully, stir in the nuts and chocolate chips and pour the batter into your prepared pan.

Bake for 20-25 minutes. I always like to check on my baking a few minutes before it's supposed to be done, just to make sure. When you see the top of the brownies start to look like they've formed a thin crust on top, test the centre with a wooden toothpick; it should not be soggy-wet, but come out with a bit of crumbly batter attached.

When the brownies are ready, remove the pan from the oven and allow to cool on a wire rack for about 20 minutes. At this point, you'll remove the brownies from the pan using the overhang from the baking paper. Place them back on the wire rack and allow to cool completely. When cool, dust with powdered sugar or cocoa powder, transfer to a cutting board, and cut into your desired number of squares.



# RECIPES

## Dutch Apple Pie

Prep Time: 45 minutes • Cooking Time: 75 minutes • Total Time: 2 hours

Serves: 8-12

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Filip and Amy go to a café with a striped green-and-white awning. “Diners sit at tiny wooden tables laden with meat pies, club sandwiches, thick slices of apple pie, and tall glasses of layered espresso and foamed milk.”*

The Dutch have their own way of making apple pie. No two shops make it exactly the same. In my experience, the Dutch like their apple pie with a pastry bottom, which is then packed with fruit and held together in a deep-dish pan. This is often topped with a streusel-like, crumbly topping.

### INGREDIENTS:

180g (1-1/2 cups) all-purpose flour  
45g (1/2 cup) oat flour  
200g (1 cup) packed, light brown sugar  
2 tsp cinnamon powder, separated  
225g (1 cup) unsalted butter, chilled, and cut into 8 equal pieces  
2.2kg (about 12) Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and cut into thin slices  
2 Tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice  
25g (1/4 cup) gluten free oats, to mix in later for the crumble top  
500ml (2 cups) heavy cream, whipped (for serving)

### DIRECTIONS:

In a large bowl, mix together the flours, brown sugar, and 1 teaspoon of cinnamon. Next, add the bits of butter and cut them into the mixture by using a pastry cutter or an electric mixer and blend until it comes together in pea-size crumble. Press 2/3 of this mixture onto the bottom and up 3cm of the sides of a 23cm (9 inch) springform pan.

While the oven is heating to 180C/350F, peel and core, then slice the apples into a large bowl. (Should any liquid accumulate, pour it off.) When all of the apples have been sliced, drizzle with lemon juice and the other teaspoon of cinnamon and toss all to coat evenly. Place them into the prepared springform, being sure to fit them comfortably into the base. Given the quantity, they may mound higher than the edge of the pan - this is fine, as they will

shrink when you bake the pie. Now is the time to add the extra 1/3 cup of oats to the mixture for the crumble topping, and sprinkle this remaining crumble on top.

Line a cookie sheet with baking paper, place the pan on top, and bake for 75 minutes, or until the top starts to turn golden brown. At this point, remove the pie from the oven, run the blade of a knife around the edge, and place the cake tin on a wire rack to cool completely before releasing from the springform. Serve at room temperature, in the traditional Dutch way, with a bit of whipped cream on the side!



# RECIPES

## Chinese-style Egg Tarts

Prep Time: 30-60 minutes • Cooking Time: 25-30 minutes • Total Time: 60-90 minutes  
Serves: 12

### BOOK REFERENCE:

*Book reference: Amy describes Sylvie. "Like me, Sylvie adores all sweets, but unlike me, she never gains an ounce. I have watched her eat one egg tart after another without any effect on her elegant hips, as if the sheer intensity of her will burns the calories, consuming everything she touches."*

**TOP TIP:** Make sure the warmed milk is not too hot when you pour it over the egg yolks. Be really careful with this. If it's too hot, you'll begin to scramble the eggs!

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE PASTRY:

200g (1-3/4 cups) plain flour, plus extra for dusting  
110g (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, chilled and cut into pieces  
55g (1/4 cup, plus 1 Tbsp) white sugar  
1 egg

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE PASTRY:

Measure the flour into a large mixing bowl, and add the butter. Use a pastry cutter to get the blending started, then use your hands to bring the texture to a state that looks like breadcrumbs. Now add the sugar and stir to combine, break in the egg and use your hands to combine the mixture so it forms a soft dough. If you find your dough is too sticky, add a bit more flour. When combined, tip the dough onto a work surface dusted lightly with flour and shape the dough into a ball. Then form it into a disk, wrap it in cling film and put this in the fridge to chill for 30 minutes.

Heat the oven to 200C/400F and roll out the pastry onto a lightly floured counter to about a 4mm thickness. Using an 11cm (4-1/4 inch) round cutter, cut out 12 discs to line individual tart tins. (I used tins with removable bottoms, that were 10cms (4 inches) across the top.) The pastry can overlap, so you can tidy it up and finish off the edge by taking away the excess pastry. Place the individual tart shells onto a baking sheet. This will help you have an easier time of pouring in the custard and transferring the tarts into the oven.

### INGREDIENTS FOR THE CUSTARD FILLING:

700ml (3 cups) full fat milk  
8 egg yolks  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract  
90g (1/2 cup) white sugar  
freshly ground nutmeg

### DIRECTIONS FOR THE CUSTARD FILLING:

In a separate bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar until pale and creamy. Pour the lukewarm milk onto the egg mixture, and stir well. When combined, pour the custard into a measuring cup with a pouring spout, and fill up each tart case very close to the top. Finish these off with a grating of fresh nutmeg.

Place the baking sheet with the tarts, in the oven. Bake for 15 minutes and check their progress. If you see that they are starting to brown on top, turn down the heat to 180C/350F for the final few minutes. You will be able to tell if the tarts are cooked if there is a slight dome forming on top of the custard.

When the tarts are cooked, remove the tray from the oven and allow to cool for 30 minutes before removing them from the moulds. Fingers crossed, the tarts will be baked through, and no soggy bottoms! Serve the tart as is, or with some fresh fruit on the side.





# JENNIFER KULAR

After teaching English and Art in my hometown, Toronto, I decided to check out the life of an international teacher and made Budapest, then Amsterdam, my home. During my 24 years overseas, I have had the incredible fortune to travel far from my own kitchen, bringing back what I've learned about new cultures and culinary specialties. This past year, I chose to take a sabbatical to recharge my artistic batteries, travel, and spend more time cooking. I've had the pleasure of helping out in a commercial kitchen, setting up a weekly Saturday market stand, catering brunch to groups of 50, cooking and creating menus for a neighbourhood café, and being a private cook for a local family. The opportunity to work with Jean presented itself and has been a most memorable culinary experience. I am honoured that she trusted me to produce a diverse and delicious menu that book club members would want to make when discussing *Searching for Sylvie Lee*. Recipe development is where my creative energy soars! Truly, any day that I wake up and know my time will be spent in the kitchen, is a great day for me. As a seasoned teacher, it brings me joy to share with others; if I can make someone else's time in the kitchen a little easier, my job is blissfully done. I do hope you enjoy these dishes as much as I loved creating them. I believe food brings people together. May your table be abundant with good friends, good food, good books, and happy conversations.



## *How can people get in touch with me?*

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# ABOUT JEAN KWOK

**JEAN KWOK** is the award-winning, *New York Times* and international bestselling author of *Searching for Sylvie Lee*, *Girl in Translation* and *Mambo in Chinatown*. Her work has been published in 20 countries and taught in universities, colleges and high schools across the world. She has been selected for many honors including the American Library Association Alex Award, the Chinese American Librarians Association Best Book Award and the *Sunday Times* EFG Short Story Award international shortlist. She has spoken at many schools and venues including Harvard University, Columbia University and the Tucson Festival of Books. A television documentary was filmed about Jean and her work.

Jean immigrated from Hong Kong to Brooklyn when she was five and worked in a Chinatown clothing factory for much of her childhood while living in an unheated, vermin-infested apartment. In between her undergraduate degree at Harvard and MFA in fiction at Columbia, she worked for three years as a professional ballroom dancer. Her beloved brother Kwan passed away in a tragic plane accident and was the inspiration behind *Searching for Sylvie Lee*. Jean is trilingual, fluent in Dutch, Chinese and English, and studied Latin for seven years. She lives in the Netherlands with her husband, two sons and four cats.



Photo credit: Chris Macke