

Brunch
AT
Bittersweet
Café

A
SUPPER CLUB
NOVEL



A Note from Carla Laureano

While I do my best to write accurate and realistic fiction, I took some dramatic liberties with the birth of Bittersweet Café. Opening any kind of eatery is an arduous process that can take nine to eighteen months or even longer. In fact, with Denver's recent rapid growth, restaurant space is at such a premium that potential restaurateurs often take years to select the right location. But pages of phone calls with contractors and city planners make for pretty boring fiction, so I let Melody and Rachel take advantage of their relationship with the author in order to speed things up a little (okay, a lot).

Also, a number of my favorite Denver settings were reworked for *Brunch at Bittersweet Café*. The corner storefront on Old South Pearl, where I set Gibraltar Mediterranean Bakery and later Bittersweet Café, is actually home to Duffeyroll, a Denver cinnamon-bun institution. I also borrowed the location of Bistro Barbès, an excellent European/North African restaurant, for my fictional Soyokaze. ChoLon Bistro, which inspired the interior design of Paisley in *The Saturday Night Supper Club*, makes an uncredited appearance as itself (menu and all) as the Asian restaurant where Melody brings Justin after their bookstore date. Last, Noelle Patisserie in San Francisco was inspired by the real-life Inner Sunset bakery Tartine, founded by baking superstars Chad Robertson and Elisabeth Prueitt.



My Pastry Chef Heroine: A Look at Brunch at Bittersweet Café's Melody Johansson

By Carla Laureano

Melody Johansson, the protagonist of *Brunch at Bittersweet Café*, turned out to be a surprisingly difficult character to write, despite the fact that she was so much fun. When I introduced her in the first book, I alluded to her bohemian attitude and her unconventional education, not really knowing what that was going to mean in the second book. She was a pastry chef extraordinaire who could whip out difficult confections without a second thought; while she was admired in the first book, the other characters took her ease with pastry for granted.

When I started writing the second book from her perspective, I realized that her job was a good echo of her personality. In the restaurant world, pastry chefs are often looked down on by line cooks and chefs as being somehow inferior; pastry is the “soft science” of cooking, less serious and important than what’s turned out from the “hot line.”

Melody is an intelligent, well-read, and surprisingly deep character who hides her wounds and fears beneath a flighty, cheerful confection of a personality. She has hidden depths at which only those closest to her would ever guess, just like few understand the real skill and knowledge required to create her elaborate desserts. Melody hid her true depths so well in the first book that it took even me a while to get beneath the surface and understand what truly makes her tick.

Read the full article: <https://www.crazy4fiction.com/2019/02/18/my-pastry-chef-heroine/>

Discussion Questions

1. Melody has struggled to settle down or commit to a direction for her life, always wondering if something better might be just around the corner. Are you more inclined to put down roots or keep your options open? How has that affected your life?

2. If you came into an inheritance or sudden financial windfall, with the stipulation that you use it to pursue a cherished dream, what would you do?

3. Melody finds comfort by revisiting some of her grandmother's favorite desserts and handed-down recipes. Are there specific recipes that tie you to loved ones or to cherished memories?

4. As Rachel and Melody begin to plan their bakery-café, the pieces fall into place without much effort, making Melody think it must be God's doing. Have you experienced something similar? What did it teach you about God's timing?

5. Justin attempts to control his attraction to Melody because he's sure they can't have a long-term relationship. On the surface, that seems very responsible and logical. How can our need for order and control affect our ability to see what God is doing in our lives?

6. How do Melody's past mistakes color her approach to relationships? In what ways does her caution seem wise, and where does it hold her back?

"A terrific read from a talented author."

Francine Rivers on *Brunch at Bittersweet Café*

Discussion Questions

7. Both Justin and Melody bear the consequences of shaky relationships with their parents and a lack of communication. How do both come to realize they might've misinterpreted past events? How does your relationship with your parents affect how you see the world and others?

9. Justin believes in God but feels he's been let down—that the tragedies and difficult circumstances he and his loved ones have endured are proof God doesn't care. Have you experienced similar doubts? What would you say to Justin in response?

8. Ana and Rachel fear Melody is making a bad choice in dating Justin, but they voice their worries in a way that comes across as harsh and judgmental. As Melody's friends, did they have a responsibility to express their concerns? How should they have handled the situation?

10. Melody eventually comes to understand that what she saw as faith was closer to wishful thinking. How would you define faith? Is there a difference between trusting in God's blessings and trusting in God Himself?

"A warm portrait of taking chances."

Foreward Reviews on Brunch at Bittersweet Café



BAKING EMERGENCY SUBSTITUTIONS

..... DRY INGREDIENTS

Baking Powder 1 tsp	=	1/2 tsp cream of tartar + 1/4 tsp baking soda
Baking Soda 1/4 tsp	=	1 tsp baking powder
Iodized Salt 1/2 tsp	=	3/4 tsp kosher salt
Kosher Salt 1/2 tsp	=	1/4 tsp iodized salt
Cake Flour 1 cup	=	1 cup all-purpose flour, remove 2 Tbsp flour and add 2 Tbsp cornstarch

..... WET INGREDIENTS

Buttermilk 1 cup	=	1 cup milk + 1 Tbsp vinegar or lemon juice (let sit for 10 mins) OR 1 cup yogurt
Whole Milk 1 cup	=	1 cup skim or low-fat milk + 2 Tbsp melted butter
Heavy Cream 1 cup	=	1 cup whole milk + 1 Tbsp melted butter
1 Egg	=	1 Tbsp ground flaxseed + 3 Tbsp water (let sit for 5 mins) OR 3 Tbsp mayonnaise
Butter 1 cup	=	1 cup margarine OR 1 cup shortening OR 7/8 cup vegetable oil

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Brunch at Bittersweet Café / CARLA LAUREANO

Baking Emergency Substitutions Chart

Inspired by Melody to start baking? If you find yourself whipping up some tasty pastries and suddenly realize you don't have a key ingredient, use this nifty baking emergency substitutions chart to help you out. Hang it on your fridge or post it somewhere in your kitchen for easy access.



