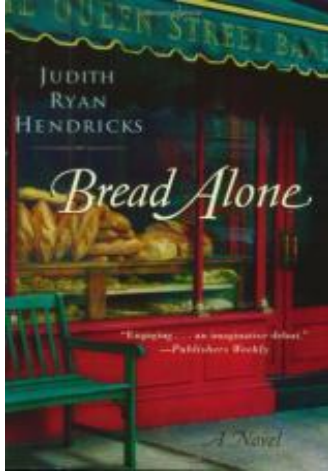


Bread Alone: A Novel

by Judith Ryan Hendricks



About the Book

The painstaking process of mixing, kneading, and baking bread may not seem an apt pastime for a woman as acerbic and impulsive as Wynter Morrison. Since graduation from college she has bounced from job to job and man to man, finally ending up as a trophy wife in a posh Los Angeles suburb. She drives a nice car, eats at elegant restaurants, dresses in beautiful clothes, and rubs elbows with high society. But it soon becomes clear that she's been floating through this life. She's happier in jeans than in Chanel, likes walking in the rain more than sitting in traffic, and would rather tear into a hot loaf of sourdough than pick at a fancy salad.

It takes a hurtful wakeup call from her husband to make Wynter aware that their life together is not working. It also takes more than a few self-destructive drinking binges, tantrums, and harsh words for Wyn to realize that the people who truly love her aren't always going to tell her what she wants to hear. Finally, it takes the pain, and then comfort, of solitude to show Wyn that she can be beautiful even in a flour-covered apron; that she can turn an empty shack into a home; that settling into an easy relationship can feel like a "mink padded cell"; that her father wasn't the prince she thought he was; that she and her mother are two different people; and that she can find peace and satisfaction in a job where she is needed and appreciated.

Bread Alone is a novel every woman can savor and learn from. It's filled with recipes for happiness, as well as for delicious foods, and it's made even more irresistible by a secret ingredient: a headstrong, sharp-witted heroine who's as rewarding and real as a loaf of truly good bread.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think Wynter let her marriage to David devolve into a state in which the two were barely communicating with each other? Why didn't she try to improve the relationship earlier?

2. Why does David's request that Wynter move out come as such a shock? Why does she try so hard to keep their relationship together?
3. How did Wynter's revelation about her parents' marriage change her views toward her father and her mother? What effect might the knowledge of her father's affair have had on her decisions regarding her divorce settlement and on her relationships with Gary and Mac?
4. Wynter bakes bread as a panacea for heartache and depression. Why do you think she finds this process so therapeutic? Do you have any rituals or hobbies you turn to when you are feeling blue? Why and how do they help you?
5. During Wynter's apprenticeship in France she receives some advice from Jean-Marc, the bakery's owner: "You do not tell the bread what to do. It tells you. You know from the way it looks, the way it feels, the smell, the taste. How warm, how cold. How wet, how dry." How might Wynter apply this knowledge to her life?
6. Wynter holds back from telling CM that her marriage to Neil is a mistake. Why do you think she doesn't say anything to CM? Do you think she would have been as perceptive about that relationship while she was still with David?
7. Hendricks ends her novel with the promise of romance for Wynter. If the novel hadn't ended this way -- if, for instance, Wynter had found Mac in the cabin with another woman -- how do you think Wynter would cope? How would it change your feelings about the novel?
8. How would you describe the process of baking bread as a metaphor for life?

Author Bio

I was born in Silicon Valley when it was known as the Santa Clara Valley, or, more poetically, the Valley of Heart's Delight, because it was a lovely, bucolic place known for its orchards and sleepy small towns. Which means if you have any mathematical ability at all, you can figure out that I'm older than I act.

I had a boringly happy childhood in a middle-class suburban family with my parents, who recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary, and my younger brother. My mother instilled in me a love of reading, and I branched out from there into writing, although it took me a while to get serious about it.

The first thing I remember writing, when I was about 7 years old, was a story about a family whose Christmas tree went missing. That was followed by a few plays coauthored with my best friend, Lynn Davis, and performed in her garage to a captive audience of intimidated younger kids. The plays were mostly outer space/cowboy stories?don't ask. In junior high it was gothic romance thrillers, and high school was given over to bad poetry about the varsity basketball team.

I graduated from James Monroe High School in Sepulveda, CA, and went on to a checkered college career encompassing many schools and numerous changes of major. When I graduated with a degree in journalism from Georgia State University, I immediately began to drift from one job to another?journalist, substitute teacher, public relations specialist for the phone company and a public television station, advertising copywriter, airline computer

instructor, and travel agent.

Then, fortuitously, I landed at the McGraw Street Bakery in Seattle, WA, where I fell in love with the rhythms of baking. From that experience came **Bread Alone**, published in the U.S. in 2001. **Isabel's Daughter** (June 2003) grew out of my love for and fascination with the Southwest. **The Baker's Apprentice** (April 2005) is a sequel to **Bread Alone**, and my new book, **The Laws of Harmony** is due out in February 2009.

Because I was raised to be modest, I'm too shy to say, "My novels have been translated into 11 languages and distributed in more than 15 countries worldwide." So I let my husband, Geoff, type that part in.

We now live in Santa Fe, NM, with Blue, who is half corgi, half blue heeler, all comedian. When I'm not laughing at her, I'm baking bread or working on my fifth book.

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