

One Italian Summer by Rebecca Serle

Martin County Library System Book Club Kit:

One Italian Summer by Rebecca Serle

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Book summary

When Katy's mother dies, she is left reeling. Carol wasn't just Katy's mom but her best friend and first phone call. Even Katy's husband can't seem to get through to her—she is lost without her anchor. Her mother was her true north.

To make matters worse, their planned mother-daughter trip of a lifetime looms: going to Positano, following the very same route Carol did as a young woman. Katy has been waiting years for Carol to take her, and now suddenly she is faced with embarking on the adventure alone. But as soon as she steps foot on the beautiful Amalfi Coast, buoyed by the stunning cliffsides, delectable food, and charming hotel staff, Katy begins to feel her mother's spirit.



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And then Carol appears for real—in the flesh, healthy and suntanned...and thirty years old. Katy doesn't understand what is happening, or how. But over the course of her time in Italy, Katy gets to know Carol in this new form, and soon she must reconcile the mother who knew everything with the young woman who does not yet have a clue.

One Italian Summer is Rebecca Serle's next great love story, a transcendent novel about how we move on after loss, and how the people we love never truly leave us.

Source: Author's website (rebeccaserle.com)

Meet the Author

Rebecca Serle is an author and television writer who lives in Los Angeles. She is the author of seven novels and codeveloped the hit TV adaptation of her YA series *Famous in Love*. She received her MFA from the New School in NYC. She loves Nancy Myers films, bathrobes, and giving unsolicited relationship advice.

Source: Author's website (rebeccaserle.com)





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Discussion Questions

1. The novel begins with “Carol’s rules to live by” (page 1). How does this set up the story and both Carol’s and Katy’s characters?
2. Katy describes her mother as “the great love of [her] life” (page 3). How does their relationship change over the course of the novel?
3. When Katy married young, Carol told her, “You have so much time. Sometimes I wish you’d take it” (page 6). How does this sentiment recur throughout the story?
4. Katy finds herself in something of a time slip, as if she has “stumbled into some kind of magic reality where we get to be together. That time here does not only move slower but in fact doubles back on itself” (page 81). How does time operate in this novel? Why do you think the author made the choices she did to allow Katy and her mother to take their trip to Positano in the end?
5. Observing Carol, Katy understands that she is “watching her becoming” (page 89). How does the Carol in Positano differ from the one Katy presented as her mother at the beginning of the book? Do you see glimpses of a younger Carol in the one the reader only hears about?
6. Positano itself acts as a character in the novel, “full of very real magic” (page 101). What makes Positano distinctive? What is its draw for each of the characters, both locals and tourists?
7. A large subplot focuses on the struggles of Hotel Positano and Italy itself, a place out of “some era that is unmarked by modernity” (page 142). What did you think of Adam’s plan to purchase the hotel? How do the local characters interact with Adam, Carol and Katy?
8. Adam admits that he’s “really good at travel and less good at what happens when you stand still” (page 152). How do each of the characters grapple with their own restlessness?
9. Reflect on how mythmaking—in reference to Capri’s rocks of Faraglioni and the Amalfi Coast’s Path of the Gods—plays a role in this novel, especially in Katy’s relationship with her mother.



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10. In Katy's final interaction with Carol as a young woman, Carol asks, "Did I leave you?" And Katy responds, "No, you never did" (page 226). What was your reaction to that scene?
11. Much of this novel is about belonging—where and if we belong to whom. Katy notes at the end of the novel that "I do not belong to anyone" (page 239). Does that ring true to you?
12. What did you think about the two major twists toward the end of the novel—one about Katy's mother and one about time? Did either of those surprise you?

Source: Reading Group Guides. ([readinggroup guides.com](http://readinggroupguides.com))



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Recipes

Amaretti Cookies

(A chewy Italian cookie made with simple ingredients that you probably already have at home.)

- 5 egg whites
- Pinch salt
- 4 1/2 - 5 cups almond flour
- 1 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 tsp. Vanilla extract
- 1-2 tsp. Almond extract (I prefer 2 tsp).
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar



Separate 5 egg whites into a bowl and then add a pinch of salt. Using an electric mixer beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Set that aside and sift 5 cups of almond flour with 1 1/2 cups of granulated sugar into a bowl. Add about 1/3 of the almond flour mixture into the egg whites and fold it in gently with a spatula. Add 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract and 2 tsp. of almond extract. Then quickly fold it in. Add the second third of the almond flour mixture to the egg whites and gently fold it in again. Sift in the remaining third of almond flour mixture and fold it in one last time. At this point, the cookie dough should have a thick paste like texture.

Scoop out mounds of the cookie dough and place them into a plate of granulated sugar. Roll the scoop of cookie dough into the sugar, then take it into your hands and round it into a ball. Drop the ball into a bowl of powdered sugar and evenly coat it.

Place the cookies onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and lightly press each cookie with your hand. Bake at 325 degrees F. for 20-25 min.

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Source: "Amaretti Cookies." Simply Home Cooked, 2023.
(simplyhomecooked.com/amaretti-cookies)

Caprese Salad Recipe

- 1 1/2 lbs Ripe tomatoes, (3-4 medium) sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 12-16 oz. Fresh mozzarella, sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1 bunch Fresh basil, (1/3 cup basil leaves)
- 3 Tablespoons Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- 1/2 tsp. Sea salt, or to taste
- 1/4 tsp. Black pepper, or to taste
- 2 Tablespoons Balsamic glaze, or added to taste (optional)



Start by layering slices of tomatoes on a serving platter. Tuck slices of cheese between each tomato so both are visible then tuck whole basil leaves between the cheese and tomatoes. Arrange the slices so you can see every layer. Season generously with salt and pepper, drizzle over with extra virgin olive oil and drizzle with 2 Tablespoons balsamic glaze or add it to taste.

Source: "Caprese Salad Recipe." Natashas Kitchen.
(natashaskitchen.com/caprese-salad-recipe/)

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