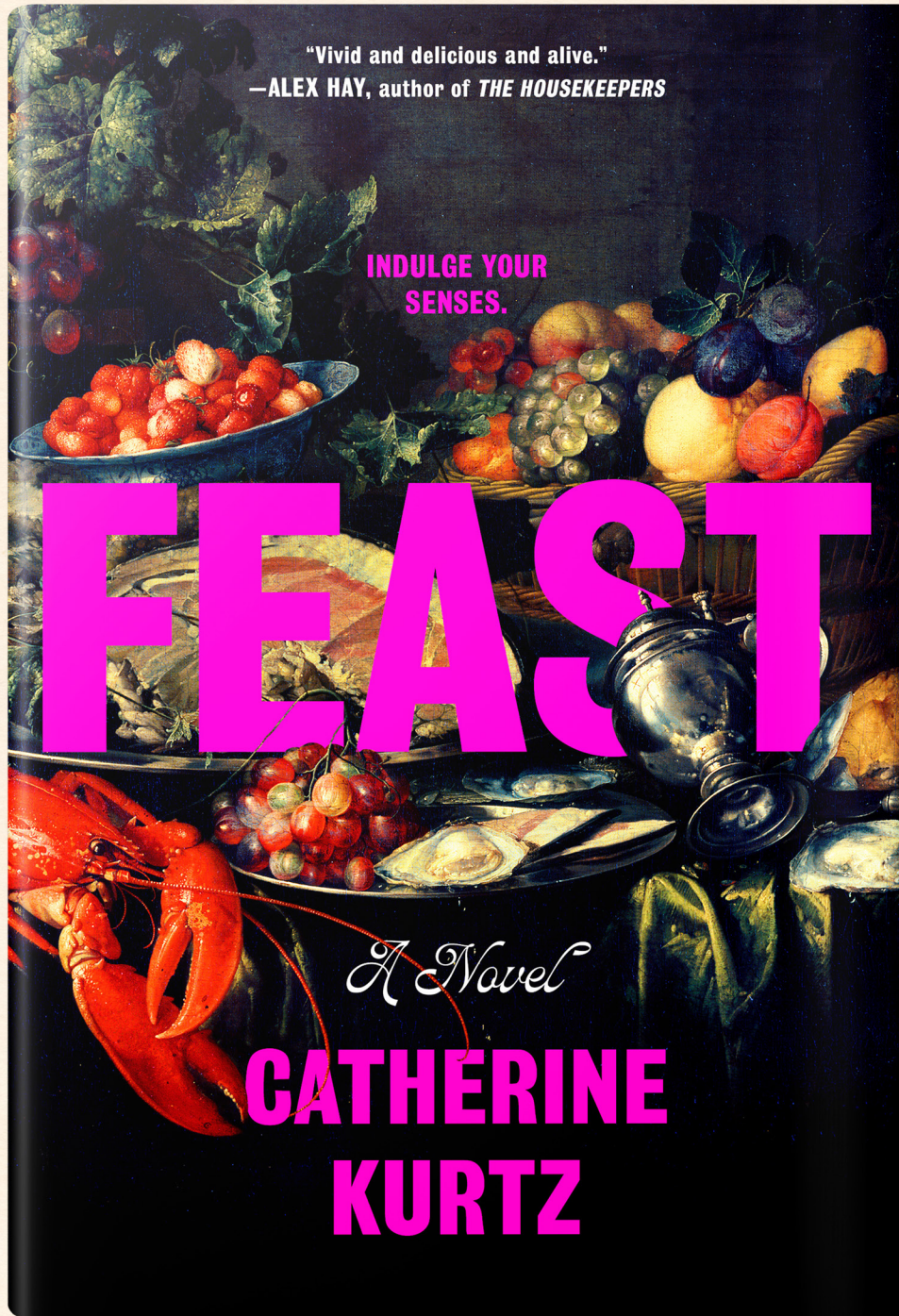


Book Club Kit



BERKLEY

DEAR READER,

***Feast* is the story of a girl born with a remarkable sense of taste.** She can taste the particular earth in which a peach grew, the sunshine that nurtured it. But this gift, and her mixed-race origins, set her apart. Born into the inhospitable streets of London in the 1880s, what will the world make of her, and what will she make of it?

I am an artist, a painter, and have always had that need to express myself. I am also a chocolate expert; I taste it, teach others how to taste, and judge it. I write about it and lots of other food besides. I am very much awake to my senses, I always have been. I notice things. It is part of how I live, and how I express myself. It is also part of what I am driven to express. Food is a universal experience, in all its complexity—the joy of it, the pull toward it, the different things food, appetite, and feeding others means to each of us.

Fiction is a place that allows us to tell emotional truths, to be full and bold with them, as we live deep within our characters. Like my character Minha, I am mixed-race, and I wrote *Feast* to explore what it means to be an unconventional woman in a man's world, and at a time when bigotry and misogyny feel ever-present. I wanted to speak honestly about navigating life's dangers, what might happen, and about ultimately thriving in all one's unique complexity and difference.



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Happy reading,

Catherine Kurtz

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.

Minha is aware of her sense of taste—and smell, which is the greater part of flavor—from her infancy. What is your first food memory? What are your earliest memories overall, and how do they reflect who you know yourself to be as an adult?

2.

Minha's sense of taste is exceptional, an amplification of what we might think of as being highly sensitive or intense. Do you think those things are a blessing or a curse?

3.

If taste is Minha's superpower, what is yours?

4.

A search for belonging is a common experience of mixed-heritage people. Why do you think that is, and how is that reflected in Minha's story?

5.

There are certain food motifs in the story—bread, peaches, strawberries, hops. What foods would tell the story of your life?

6.

When Minha meets Alexandre, he is very dependent on her. Why do you think being needed in that way has such an immediate impact on Minha? And what do you understand about the difference between power and strength in the way they each behave across the novel?

7.

Friendship plays an important role in the novel, whether from a family member such as Minha's grandfather or from the baker Camille. What role can friendship play in navigating acceptance of self and recovery from trauma?

8.

Much of the novel is set in the fairy-tale Château de Bellefalaïse, which beguiles Minha at first sight. What place have you fallen in love with and found magical? Which places are important in the novel, and why?

9.

There are certain objects in the novel—Minha's grandfather's knife, the scarf her father gave her mother—that are almost talismanic for her. Do you have an object or objects that serve you in a similar way?

INDULGE YOUR SENSES FURTHER



Watch

Babette's Feast (1987)

The Taste of Things (2023)

Ratatouille (2007)

Jiro Dreams of Sushi (2011)



Read

Perfume

by Patrick Süskind

The Mixed-Race Experience
by Naomi Evans and Natalie Evans

The Safekeep

by Yael van der Wouden

The Marriage Portrait

by Maggie O'Farrell

