

COOKING FOR GHOSTS

Reading Group Discussion Guide



MATCH THE HISTORICAL EVENT mentioned in the story with the actual year it took place. One is filled in for you. All other answers are on last page of Reading Discussion Guide:

1. The song, “Some Enchanted Evening” by Rodgers and Hammerstein, first comes out. a. 1938
2. Old Spice aftershave for men is introduced to the public. b. 1918
3. Raggedy Ann dolls were marketed along with the children’s book. c. 1940
4. The *RMS Queen Mary* becomes a warship called “The Grey Ghost,” carrying more than 15,000 allied troops. d. 1949
5. Winston Churchill drafted the Atlantic Charter as a passenger aboard the *Queen*. e. 1942
6. During a storm at sea, the *RMS Queen Mary* is hit by a rogue wave and nearly capsizes. f. 1949
7. The film, “The Poseidon Adventure,” inspired by that same storm, is filmed on the *Queen Mary*. g. 1941
8. Actors Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston announce the breakup of their marriage. h. 1971
9. The *RMS Queen Mary* is docked in Long Beach, CA., and is turned into a floating museum. i. 1998
10. The twelve-year singer, Jackie Evancho, releases her version of “Some Enchanted Evening” on her album, “Songs from the Silver Screen.” j. 2012
11. The Russian submarine, “*Scorpion*” is brought to Long Beach to be berthed beside the *Queen Mary*. k. 1967

12. First Lady of California, Maria Shriver, holds her Women's Conference in Long Beach for the first time. 1. 2004
13. A child passenger named Jaclyn Torin drowns in a swimming pool aboard the ship. m. 2007



TRUE or FALSE? (Answers on the last page of the Reading Discussion Guide)

1. Raymond Thuilier was a true-life chef.
2. When Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, was Governor of California, he supported a universal health care plan for the state.
3. Tourists visit the *RMS Queen Mary* to see if they can catch a glimpse of the spirit of little Jaclyn Torin, who is believed by many to haunt the old, abandoned swimming pool aboard the ship.
4. There are truly Indian spices that are known to cause hallucinations and/or a hypnotic state.
5. The progressive village of Kambalwadi, outside of Kolhapur, India, exists as described in the story.
6. Sarita's classmate, Kathy Knight, was named after a particularly vicious murderess, Katherine Mary Knight.
7. The names of the author's sons, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren are hidden in the story.
8. The character "Lee" is named for a real-life minister in Texas, a friend of the author's, who championed the right for gays to marry.
9. Although not aboard the *Queen Mary*, the real body of a WWII soldier was actually found more than sixty years after the soldier went missing in action.
10. "Terror Fest" is an actual event that was held on the *RMS Queen Mary* in 2004.
11. The Princess Diana Exhibit and the Haunted Encounters Tour mentioned in the novel are made up by the author.
12. The book, *Queen Mary* by James Steele, being read by Sarita, is made up by the author.
13. The *Queen Mary*, now a floating museum docked in Long Beach, California, is actually haunted.



ANSWERS TO 'MATCH THE HISTORICAL EVENT' QUESTIONS

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 7. h |
| 2. a | 8. m |
| 3. b | 9. k |
| 4. c | 10. j |
| 5. g | 11. i |
| 6. e | 12. l |
| | 13. f |

ANSWERS TO 'TRUE OR FALSE?' QUESTIONS

1. Raymond Thuilier was a true-life famous chef —**TRUE**. And he did indeed train Wolfgang Puck. Chef Thuilier passed on in 1993, at the age of ninety-six. In 1954, Mr. Thuilier's Baumaniere won Michelin's three-star rating, which it kept for 35 years. "It is not only what is on the plate that matters," Mr. Thuilier once said. "It is the environment, the welcome. A grand Bordeaux in a bad glass is no longer a grand Bordeaux." To read about his starred restaurant in France, L'Oustau de Baumanière, click [here](#).
2. When Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, was Governor of California, he championed a universal health care plan for the state. — **TRUE**. Although the date he announced this was in 2007, not in 2004 as in the novel. Read about it [here](#).
3. Tourists visit the *RMS Queen Mary* to see if they can catch a glimpse of the spirit of little Jaclyn Torin, who is believed by many to haunt the old abandoned swimming pool aboard the ship. — **TRUE**. The ship holds [Ghosts and Legends Tours](#).
4. There are truly Indian and other spices that are believed to cause hallucinations and/or a hypnotic state.— **TRUE**. Some of the spices that Cristiano might have used in the shrimp recipe could have been labeled by Rohini as: *Rauwolfia Serpentina*, *Jaiphal*, *Javitri*, *Khus Khus* and *Ashwagandha*. In English those spices are: snakewood, nutmeg, mace, poppy seed, and ginseng, respectively. Bay leaves and valerian also have some hypnotic properties. Read about more hypnotic spices [here](#).
5. The forward-thinking village of Kambalwadi, outside of Kolhapur, India, exists as described in the story.— **TRUE**. Read about the village and all its progressiveness [here](#).
6. Sarita's classmate, Kathy Knight, was named after a particularly vicious murderess, Katherine Mary Knight.— **TRUE**. Read about her, if you dare, [here](#).
7. The names of the author's sons, daughter-in-law and grandchildren are hidden in the story.— **TRUE**. Can you find them?

8. The character “Lee” is named for a real-life minister in Texas, a friend of the author’s, who championed the right for gays to marry and attend his church. —**TRUE.**
9. Although not aboard the *Queen Mary*, the real body of a WWII soldier was actually found more than sixty years after the soldier went missing in action.— **TRUE.** This has happened more than once. One of the most heartbreaking stories, most similar to the soldier’s story in the novel, is [here](#).
10. “Terror Fest” is an actual event that was held on the *RMS Queen Mary* in 2004. —**TRUE.** Currently renamed [“Dark Harbor”](#) this fun-scary event takes place annually aboard the ship.
11. **FALSE**
12. **TRUE and FALSE.** A beautiful historical photo history of the ship, by James Steele, does indeed exist. The story Sarita reads from it about Dolores Simpson is made up by the author.
13. The *Queen Mary*, now a floating museum docked in Long Beach, California, is actually haunted.
ANSWER: What do YOU think?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If you were one of the partners in The Secret Spice Café, which woman do you think you’d find most challenging to work with? Which do you think you’d enjoy working with? How do you think the past shaped the personality traits and behaviors of Angela, Cynthia, Jane, and Rohini? Can you relate to any of them or to any of their views/predicaments? How do these four women change throughout the course of the story?
2. What did you find most surprising about this story? What seemed predictable? What’s left hanging that you think the author might bring over to Books II and III of the series? What clues do you think this story contains for what might happen in the rest of the series?
3. If you’ve read any of this author’s previous work, what theme(s) do you think are prevalent in all of it? Did any event in the story lead to a new understanding or awareness of some aspect of your own life, or your own personality which you might not have thought about before?
4. How does the title **COOKING FOR GHOSTS** and the setting on the *RMS Queen Mary* enhance the story?
5. In your opinion, does Shrimp Rohini induce a hypnotic state?
6. Review the titles for Part One and Part Two. In Part One, who is the widow? Who is the witch? In Part Two, who is the killer? Thinking about all the characters and their actions, who might be the “Witch” mentioned in the title of Part One, yet also be the “One More Killer” mentioned in Part Two’s title?

7. What character might be considered a godlike or “Christ figure” in the story? What are some of the actions or surroundings of this character that justify your choice?
8. Two of the characters in the story hear “a voice.” Is the voice they hear the same voice, or are the voices different? If you answered that they might be different, what do you think sets the voices apart?
9. What did you learn about owning and running a restaurant that you hadn’t known before reading about The Secret Spice Café?
10. The characters make some rather noteworthy ethical and moral choices. Given the situations, did those choices seem realistic to you? Could you see yourself doing what any of the characters did? What might you do differently?
11. In *Cooking for Ghosts*, it’s pointed out that the character, Jane, speaks in a northern English accent, but each of the other characters have their own voice that conveys where they come from and what they’ve experienced. What particular tone, vocabulary, and slang did you pick up on that differentiated one character from another? What did those individualities tell you about each of them?
12. To what does the final line of the novel refer?
13. What is significant about the number “13” in the novel?



MORE FUN LINKS:

1. **Video:** Interview with author Patricia V. Davis, as she talks about her paranormal experience aboard the *RMS Queen Mary* that inspired her trilogy of novels set aboard the magnificent ocean liner.
2. **Video:** The story of June Allen, one of the first war brides to make the five-day journey across the Atlantic on the *RMS Queen Mary*. At the time of her journey in 1946, she was an eighteen-year-old newlywed traveling with her infant son. She hadn't seen her husband, an American Army MP, since he left for the invasion of Normandy almost two years prior.
3. **Video:** In the famed 30th Infantry Division, American George Schneider fought in all five major European campaigns of WWII. Seventy years after surviving the largest war in history, he returned to the ship that brought him home in 1945: the *RMS Queen Mary*.

4. **[Video:](#)** The story of Ralph Rushton, a crew member aboard the *Queen Mary* during her golden years. Ralph returned to the ship for the first time in over 50 years in 2014.
5. **[Videos:](#)** *RMS Queen Mary* Hauntings captured on video. Documented Paranormal Investigations.
6. **[Video:](#)** The remarkable Jackie Evancho singing her full version of “Some Enchanted Evening,” a few notes of which were sampled in the *Cooking for Ghosts* book trailer
7. **[Video:](#)** Interview with director Deepa Mehta as she talks about the life of deprivation and humiliation an Indian widow must suffer that inspired her film, “Water.”
8. **[Article:](#)** “The Ongoing Tragedy of India’s Widows” at **Women Under Siege**
9. **[Photos](#)** of the Famous People Throughout History Who Sailed on the *RMS Queen Mary*
10. **[Photos](#)** of the Cargo Hold where Sarita and Emilio Hid
11. **[Photos](#)** of Jackie’s Swimming Pool as it Looks Today
12. **[Photos](#)** that inspired the novel, including wedding cakes like the one Angela made
13. **[The Secret Spice Café Book Series Facebook Page](#)** Here you will find contests, Angela and Cristiano’s Recipes (submitted by readers) and updates on the next books in “The Secret Spice Café” Series

Videos of June Allen, George Schneider, and Ralph Rushton by [Job Hall](#). The paranormal investigations videos are filmed by various visitors to the ship. *Cooking for Ghosts* book trailer and Author Interview videos were produced and edited by [Niko Volonakis](#).