

Judith R. Hendricks

Bread Alone

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Q: How did you learn to bake bread?

A: Even though I worked in a bakery, I never made bread there. I learned to make bread by reading and experimenting, beginning in the '70s. When I first graduated from college, I lived in New Orleans for a few years and I got very into cooking—mostly gourmet, very complicated, almost ritualistic recipes. Baguettes were the bread of choice then. When I moved to Texas, I simultaneously discovered the women's movement, which was trying to get women away from being kitchen slaves, and the trend towards whole/natural foods. I began baking the kind of bread that Wyn describes when she talks about "throwing every grain they could find into the mix." It was healthy bread, but some of those loaves were regular little bricks. On a trip to France I discovered what I now think of as "real" bread in all its glory. I came back and started trying to recreate it. I just kept reading and experimenting—and of course, books on bread kept getting better as bakers rediscovered the old ways to make artisan bread.

Q: Where did you get the title from your book, and why?

A: One of my favorite bread books is *Bread Alone*, by Daniel Leader and Judith Blahnik. I think that was always in the back of my mind. Also, the Bible verse, "Man doth not live by *Bread Alone* . . ." Deuteronomy 8:3. I used it kind of ironically because for a while, Wyn does live by *Bread Alone*, and that's what gets her through.

Q: Like Wynter, you have worked at a number of diverse jobs. Have you settled on writing as a career? Do you have any advice for readers who are looking for ways to make their lives more satisfying?

A: In spite of the fact that I've had a gazillion different day jobs, I've always been a writer. I had never written fiction, but I've written and sold nonfiction, and I've always kept a journal. The great thing about writing *Bread Alone*, was I finally discovered why I had a gazillion different jobs—it's because I was searching for what I was supposed to do, and in some ways, getting ready to do it. Now that I know I want to be a novelist, I plan to do that until I'm pushing up daisies.

My advice to anyone who wants to make her life more satisfying is two-pronged: First, don't settle for a life you don't love. Keep searching for whatever it is that's going to make you glad to get up in the morning. Second, once you discover what you love, don't let anything stop you from pursuing it.

Q: Can you describe the experience of writing and publishing your first novel? Are you making any plans to publish anything more?

A: When writers describe the experience of writing and publishing a first novel, about half say it's like giving birth and the other half say it's like riding a roller coaster. I would have to say it's more like giving birth while riding a roller coaster. And I wouldn't trade the experience for anything. The best part has been getting to meet so many interesting—and genuinely nice—people. I'm very happy to say that William Morrow has bought my second novel, tentatively titled *Ysabel's Daughter*. The story takes place in New Mexico and it deals with a young woman searching for her mother and ultimately finding herself.