



The Baker's Apprentice

By Judith R. Hendricks
ISBN: 9780060726188

Introduction

Judith Ryan Hendricks, who Booklist has said "calls to mind Barbara Kingsolver in her affinity for wise women and the power of close female friendships," continues the saga of the Queen Street Bakery in *The Baker's Apprentice*.

Wynter Morrison -- first introduced in the bestselling *Bread Alone* -- has found contentment in a life very different from anything she ever imagined: making bread on the night shift, learning the fine points of running a bakery, and exploring the possibilities of a relationship with Mac, her on-again, off-again love interest.

But Mac's failure to deal with issues in his past creates friction, Wyn's soon-to-be-ex husband is turning their divorce into guerrilla warfare, and she is reminded of how quickly life can reverse direction

without warning.

Mac's abrupt departure is a shock, but conflicts at the bakery and her friend Tyler's tragic loss afford Wyn little time for brooding. Then letters from Mac begin to arrive, casual and distant at first, but gradually becoming more personal and revealing.

In his absence, Wyn finds she not only learns more about Mac but also about herself, as she becomes Tyler's mentor, passing on the wisdom and healing power of bread making. Her new self-awareness and resiliency will be tested when the Queen Street Bakery's existence is threatened, as well as when Mac returns and she must decide whether there is still a place for him in her life.

From critically acclaimed author Judith Ryan Hendricks comes the next chapter of the Queen Street Bakery, where questions are answered and old friends are revisited.

Discussion Questions

1. The dictionary defines apprentice as one who learns by practical experience, a beginner, a learner. The word has as its root the Latin verb apprehendere, meaning to grasp or seize. How does this relate to the story and to whom does it apply?
2. Maggie is both abrasive and pathetic. How does she affect the other women at the bakery? What makes her different from Tyler, who can also be abrasive and pathetic?
3. Mac finds an escape in music. What do some of the other characters use to block unpleasant realities?
4. Wyn takes a kind of perverse pride in being different from her mother. But do they share any traits? Are there any parallels in their lives?
5. Wyn likes to believe that the crossed wires in her relationship with Mac are all due to his inability to communicate, but are there times when she is less than forthcoming about her thoughts or feelings? How has a disastrous first marriage shaped her attitudes and perceptions?
6. As one thing after another goes wrong for Mac, he resurrects his old dream of escaping to Alaska. How would the story's outcome have been different if he'd gotten there?
7. The people that he meets in Beaverton, Y.T., are an odd collection of souls who all seem to have secrets in their past. How do they impact his struggle to come to terms with his own history?
8. In her senior class, Tyler would have been voted most likely to ... ?
9. Wyn isn't particularly family oriented. What is it about Tyler that gets to her?
10. Two themes of *The Baker's Apprentice* -- bread as a metaphor for life and reconciliation with the past -- were also dealt with in *Bread Alone*. Compare the ways that these themes (or others) play out in both books.

About the author

Judith Ryan Hendricks is the author of the novels *Bread Alone* and *Isabel's Daughter*. She lives in Sante Fe, New Mexico, and Salt Spring Island, British Columbia.