



Bread & Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table with Recipes

Shauna Niequist

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As a follow up to her two bestselling books, *Bittersweet* and *Cold Tangerines*, author and blogger Shauna Niequist returns with the perfect read for those who love food and value the community and connection of family and friends around the table.

Bread and Wine is a collection of essays about family relationships, friendships, and the meals that bring us together. This mix of Anne Lamott and *Barefoot Contessa* is a funny, honest, and vulnerable spiritual memoir. *Bread and Wine* is a celebration of food shared, reminding readers of the joy found in a life around the table. It's about the ways God teaches and nourishes people as they nourish the people around them. It's about hunger, both physical and otherwise, and the connections between the two.

With wonderful recipes included, from Bacon-Wrapped Dates to Mango Chicken Curry to Blueberry Crisp, readers will be able to recreate the comforting and satisfying meals that come to life in *Bread and Wine*.

Bread & Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table with Recipes Details

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Shauna Niequist

From Reader Review Bread & Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table with Recipes for online ebook

Lindsay - Traveling Sister says

4 stars! I've written it before and I'll write it again – Shauna Niequist is a woman I wish I could be friends with! How does she do it? How does Shauna write such relevant things about life, marriage and motherhood that she seems to have literally taken right out of my personal experiences? She writes from the heart, speaking such simple yet deep words of wisdom and encouragement. I feel that being a mother of young children makes me the ideal reader for Shauna's books – we are going through the same phases of life and it is so nice to read about similar hopes, struggles, dreams and experiences.

I absolutely adored Shauna's previous two novels, *Cold Tangerines* and *Bittersweet* – they are both on my Favourites list. I actually feel slightly guilty giving this book anything less than 5 stars as I just love Shauna and everything she represents. While a lot of Shauna's writing involves food and memories revolving around sharing meals with family and friends, I found this book was a lot heavier on the cooking/recipe aspect than her previous two. On one hand, I love that Shauna opened herself up even further by sharing her most treasured recipes, however, I'm not an adventurous cook nor do I personally enjoy reading about cooking and/or recipe instructions (I LOVE eating though, so this is something Shauna and I definitely have in common!) so this slightly took away from the experience for me. I think the focus on cooking and recipes will be a great benefit and enjoyment for a lot of readers though.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book and cannot wait to start Shauna's next book! I'll end with one of my favourite quotes from this novel.

“We live in a world that values us for how fast we go, for how much we accomplish, for how much life we can pack into one day. But I'm coming to believe it's in the in-between spaces that our lives change, and that the real beauty lies there.”

Dana says

The books that I love the most make me want to write – they make me swim in words and images, and beg me to jump in. They call me to tell stories, to grab a notebook and try to make a little sense of the messy world around me with my fingers and a pen.

Shauna Niequist's new book, *Bread & Wine*, made me want to write and cook. Write and make grocery lists. Write and mince garlic, splash olive oil, and bake bread. And of course, it made me a little hungry too.

Like a good meal, I had no desire to race through this book. I enjoyed reading it in morsels, digesting the stories, tearing up at the essays that resonated deeply with me. Maybe because we're in the same place in life – mothers of little boys – I felt a kinship not just with the author, but with the community of women who gather around her table, with the cooking club she meets with each month. And I loved ending the chapters with a recipe – playing it through in my mind, thinking of when and why I might try it out.

I'm not trained in any way but trial and error, but I love the kitchen. I love to experiment, to feed others. My grandma has shown me, my entire life, how you fill people up when you get them together and say, "Come

on, let's eat." Shauna's book made me want to keep cooking – to make dinner a priority even when the baby is stuck to my legs and my preschooler and first grader are begging for snacks. It made me want to send out more invitations – to invite friends over to eat, to maybe even start my own cooking club – a group of women willing to experiment in the kitchen together. This book made me want to keep telling stories, and to invite more people in, to see entertaining and dining not as something you do to impress or get it right, but to make people feel welcome, loved, and filled in the belly and the heart.

Nicole Chase says

I think I want to be Shauna Niequist when I grow up.

This was so wonderful. Not-quite-just-a-cookbook and not-quite-just-a-memoir, *Bread & Wine* celebrates the way the act of eating together provides a common thread through our lives, a setting where the most real moments of love and friendship can be shared, and a tangible, taste-able bond to the memories we hold dear. Shauna reminds me that we are Bread and Wine people, made for communion not just formally on Sundays, but in little ways whenever two or three are gathered. This was such a perfect winter book, full of warmth and comfort, like a rich meal for the mind and heart.

I want to try out the recipes, to throw open my doors and invite people over to eat... and to give a copy of this to those people in my life who have shown me firsthand that sometimes hospitality and love are made to be eaten.

Cindy Rollins says

I went into this book with some high expectations (Carol Baker loved it) and some low ones (I am not a Zondervan target audience either). I do not read cooking blogs and while I would love to travel it doesn't happen often. All that said, I truly enjoyed reading about Shauna's life and I am looking forward to trying the recipes. There were even a couple passages that mirrored things I had written about in my book which I found fun even though I would have never considered Shauna a kindred spirit, in the usual sense.

I found the book transparent enough. It is difficult to be transparent while respecting other people's boundaries. It is a fine line which she handled tactfully.

While I will probably not read another of her books for a while yet since cooking is not my thing, I will definitely be exploring more Nigella Lawson per her recommendation.

Christine Hoover says

I love Shauna's writing style (including in this book) and really loved her first two books. However, this one was my least favorite. I'm still trying to figure out why. Maybe because I don't love to read about food. But I do love to read about messy community and friendship, which the book is basically about. Still, her life is at times unrelatable to me, with her constant talk of travel and dinner parties and spending summers at the beach.

Alexis Neal says

A defense of messy hospitality--of honest friendship, transparent love, and lots and lots of delicious food.

At the back of this book, author Shauna Niequist lists some of her favorite writers, including bestselling author Anne Lamott and author, former *New York Times* restaurant critic, former *Gourmet* editor, and reality TV show judge (!!!) Ruth Reichl. I'm not surprised. Their influence is clear. If Ruth Reichl and Anne Lamott had a less-talented baby, and that baby wrote a book, this could be that book. That's not a dig, either--Lamott and Reichl are incredibly skilled writers; to be described as less talented than these ladies is no insult. Niequist does not rise to their level, it's true, but she writes in that tradition, and as she has a pleasant--and occasionally charming--style, the book is, by and large, an enjoyable read.

When you write a book in the Reichl-Lamott vein, you must face up to a very important fact: with a memoir like this, you (the author) are the book. Your personality and your writing become so conflated as to be all but inseparable. A likable author results in a likable book. An obnoxious author ... well, you get the idea. In order to really like a book like this, you absolutely *must* like the author (or at least, the author as presented in the book). Sometimes, I really liked Niequist. She has a messy house! She stresses over people seeing the mess! She has lazy days and sometimes doesn't shower or change out of her pajamas! She thinks in food! She's like me! (Really, this is usually what it comes down to--a relatable author is a likable author, and the more she is *like* me, the more she will be liked *by* me. Narcissism at its finest.)

However, if you're anything like me (which apparently is my criteria for determining your relative awesomeness), you may also find yourself hating Niequist. Ok, ok. Not *hating* exactly--not in the 'a pox upon your house' kind of way. But when she starts talking about her many, many trips overseas (did you know they have amazing food in Spain? or France/Italy/Germany/the UK/Israel/Kenya/Australia/etc.?) and the merits of exposing kids to international travel at an early age; her Le Creuset collection; the week-long 'culinary boot camp' she attended in Chicago; or that time she ran a marathon, well ... the Green Eyed Monster in me can't help resenting her. It turns out that Niequist is the daughter of one Bill Hybels, the founder of Willow Creek Church. So of *course* she's been everywhere. And she's an author married to a musician, which means that she doesn't have to deal with the costs (or, to be fair, the benefits) of a 9-to-5 job outside the home. So *of course* she can take a week-long cooking course. Not that it's all tea and cookies--while she works out of the home a lot of the time, she also has to deal with the crazy time demands of looming deadlines, as well as the exhausting book-promotion travel that comes with being a successful published author. So, I mean, I get it. Her life isn't perfect. But it does include some blessings that the average wife and mother may not enjoy. Which is probably (at least in part) why she got a book deal--'average harried housewife' doesn't make for an enthralling book jacket blurb.

All of which is not to say that Niequist is a bad person, or even a bad writer. I just think her writing might resonate more if she played up the 'everywoman' aspects and kept the 'awesome life experiences that you, the reader, will likely never enjoy, bwa ha ha ha ha' to a minimum. (Ok, ok. She didn't gloat about it. I told you: envy.) She's a good writer, especially when relating her weaker moments, so it's a shame to see her alienating her readers (well, this reader, anyway), even if only occasionally.

As for the substance of the book ... there's not a lot, honestly. What substance there is, I quite like. As someone who struggles quite a bit with the sins of perfectionism and fear of man (compounded by a tendency toward introversion), I can easily talk myself out of opening my home to others, arguing that it's

too messy, I'm waiting until I have time to honor my guests with the appropriate amount of preparation, I need to bless them with really *amazing* food, etc. Niequist reminds me that welcoming people into my life--in all its mess--is itself an act of love that blesses others. I don't have to wait until I can entertain *perfectly*--until I have the perfect house, the perfect kitchen, the perfect menu. I can (and should) throw open my doors and break bread (and drink wine) with friends *now*. Even if the bread is a frozen pizza, and the wine comes out of a box (because let's face it, I know *nothing* about wine).

One other 'complaint'--well, more of an observation, really. Niequist self-identifies as a Christian. She and her husband have served in ministry roles at several churches (including Rob Bell's Mars Hill and Bill Hybels' Willow Creek), and she talks openly about meeting up with former small group members. The title itself is a reference to Communion--the sharing of bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's death on the cross in our place, to pay the debt for our sins so that we might enjoy eternal life with God. Unfortunately, this symbolism is mentioned only briefly in the opening pages and the closing chapter. The symbolic meaning itself is alluded to, but the Gospel is not clearly presented. And the rest of the book is such that any compassionate theist would likely not disagree. The community Niequist describes is beautiful and appealing, but she and her friends seem bonded by their love for one another; any deeper bond as a result of their kinship in Christ and their shared inheritance in the Gospel as those purchased by the blood ... well, I didn't see it. Not that I expect Niequist to clobber her readers over the head with the Gospel on every page. But I would have liked to see a more uniquely Christian take on community and hospitality.

A minor nitpick: Niequist clearly favors stories with happy endings--there are tales of heartache here, of miscarriages, illness, frustrated desires, etc., but they end with recovery, health, long-awaited children, and satisfaction. Undoubtedly, these stories sell better, and are much easier to tell. But God isn't just the God who gets us through the Valley of the Shadow of Death to the joy on the other side; sometimes, we have to camp in the Valley for what seems like forever. Sometimes, we don't see the other side until we're, well, on the Other Side. Those kinds of stories are harder to tell--stories of barrenness that do not end with a giggling baby, stories of illness leading to death, stories of deep desires continually frustrated. But God is in these stories, too. He remains sovereign. He remains good. So I wish Niequist had included a few 'unhappy endings' among her many stories of joy and victory. A Christian's response to thwarted desires and hope denied is one of the strongest testimonies to the Gospel--it sets us apart from a world that sees religion as a means to an end. For Christians, Christ and His glory--and not our desires--*are* the end, and we continue to praise Him even when He denies us our deepest desire. Because our greatest need has already been met. He has satisfied us with Himself, and has given us a greater Gift than we could ever ask or imagine. It is this knowledge that enables us to remain faithful in the face of hard times.

Bottom line: This is an enjoyable book that encourages readers to be more hospitable and to bless their friends and neighbors with food, even if they (the readers) are not Martha Stewart. It's not a terribly theologically *dense* book, but not every book needs to be a theological treatise. Niequist doesn't set out to write *The Theology of Food and Hospitality*--she simply encourages us to be transparent in our hospitality and to enjoy the community of shared meals and shared lives. On those terms, this book is a success.

Also, practically speaking, she totally inspired me to bring Bacon-Wrapped Dates (p.171) to an Easter lunch (though I used a different recipe, on account of needing something dairy free), and I fully intend to start my own Cooking Club, because that sounds awesome.

I received this book for free from the publisher in exchange for this review.

Beth says

I am an unabashed fan of Shauna Niequist. I fell in love with her writing the first time I read *Cold Tangerines*. I've since read that book multiple times and have lent it to several friends. *Bread and Wine*, though somewhat of a departure, as it did focus primarily on food, is written in a similar vein. The chapters are vignette style and each are followed with a recipe that featured somehow in the vignette. I tried to savor it slowly, but I ended up gobbling them quickly. Some were sweet, some were savory and some required a pause between bites.

I don't know Shauna, but through her words I feel like I do. She shares her heartaches and joys and presents them all with a vulnerability that was so relatable. I wish she was my sister, my neighbor, my friend. I've come to understand that she can have quite the fabulous life, but you know what? She never once name drops or rubs it in your face. She enjoys her life & lives it to the fullest with humility.

I am not an advanced cook by any means, but this book has given me courage to try. I love how she tied this in with the kitchen and food and family. Get in the kitchen, get messy, create something fabulous, create something not-so-fab, just try it. And the same goes for life – be present, get messy, be glamorous – just be there. Don't be a bystander in your own life.

I read this on my Kindle (it was on sale & Shauna Niequist – so, duh, I HAD to buy it, haha), but I will definitely own a real copy of this book.

Jen says

It's been awhile since I've been immediately captured by a memoir -- I laughed and cried, the latter more often than the former. I very much appreciated the honesty with which she wrote about her own struggles and some of the struggles of the people in her life. Messy truth, FTW!

I also read this book with a great deal of envy -- both for her table and the people sitting around it.

I love that she's combined memoir with food writing. She's not the first, of course. Molly Wizenberg's *A Homemade Life: Stories and Recipes from My Kitchen Table* does this delightfully well, as does Jennifer McGruther in *The Nourished Kitchen: Farm-to-Table Recipes for the Traditional Foods Lifestyle Featuring Bone Broths, Fermented Vegetables, Grass-Fed Meats, Wholesome Fats, Raw Dairy, and Kombuchas* and even Julie Powell's *Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen: How One Girl Risked Her Marriage, Her Job, and Her Sanity to Master the Art of Living*, which I suppose paved the way for these foodie memoirs.

I borrowed this book from a friend, but, as the author suggests, I'm planning to reread this, cooking along the way. And while I'm rereading, I'll be marking a few of the passages that make me laugh and cry and think.

On emotional eating:

p. 35 -- Why couldn't I be one of those people who forgets to eat? Or who can't eat a bite when she's stressed or sad? When I'm stressed or sad, I eat like a truffle pig, hoping that great mouthfuls of food will make me feel tethered to something...

On friendship:

p. 57 -- She told me ... this was the point in friendship when sometimes two friends walk away from each other for a while, because the pain and the awkwardness and the tenderness was too great. She said she thought we could do better than that. And then she handed me two pairs of safety goggles.

A pair of contradictory truths:

p. 84 -- Approximately one million and one people had suggested to me that when I stopped thinking about it and worrying about it, it would happen... It's like telling someone who's drowning to relax and let the water do its work.

p. 136 -- But if the last few years have taught me anything at all, it's that the very things you think you need most desperately are the things that can transform you the most profoundly when you do finally decide to release them.

And a couple laughs because it's SUMMERTIME:

p. 229 -- Probably my friends are not actually counting the days till summer to see if I've finally turned into a supermodel.

p. 231 -- I'm not going to hide. I'm not going to bow out of things I love to do because I'm afraid people won't love me when they see my underbutt.

Ha! Underbutt. Why have I never heard that term before?! I love it.

Brittnee says

Beautiful! I've been in the habit of making meals out duty and I haven't enjoyed the process. I LOVED how she thinks about meal making, how it's a way to show love & connect. But this book isn't just about cooking, it's about relationships & God & so much more. I really, really enjoyed it!

Shannon says

I read the introduction to Bread & Wine at the pool one day last week. I cried right there poolside, in the heat, sweating a bit, wanting to cool off in the water, but compelled to read a few more words. I knew immediately that I was going to love this book and I wasn't wrong.

There's much to love: Niequist's writing style is casual yet compelling. I nodded along as I read about hunger and shame and how they intertwine in her heart. I wanted to nod along as she jumped in to run a marathon, despite life circumstances that would have justified waiting a year. My mouth watered as I read about blueberry crisp, watermelon feta salad and breakfast cookies (which I plan to make this week).

It doesn't hurt anything that, like the author, I love opening my home and table to others. I'm more of a casual entertainer - come as you are, bring what you have, your presence is what matters. But all too often, I let life interfere with my desires to host small gatherings. This book reminded me what a gift food is - in the way it reminds us of our humanity, in the way it unites us all, in the way it points us back to our Creator's provision of Bread and Wine.

The short chapters in this book make it a perfect summer read and many of the recipes nearly beg to be crafted in your own kitchen, for your very own family. It would also make an excellent book club selection - easy to read, but with themes that merit exploration and discussion with those you love and trust. I will warn you I found this book convicting - do I give enough thought to my food? do I make the time to enjoy my family's moments around the table? am I surrounding myself with friends who encourage me to be a better, deeper me? But a book that can gently prompt these questions instead of hitting me over the head with them is one worth reading. I think you'll find it the perfect mix of entertaining, revealing and thought-provoking - a perfect summer companion.

Mazzou B says

Not quite a cookbook, not just a memoir but a unique glimpse into the life of an enthusiastic and hospitable woman, I found the book Bread and Wine to be an enjoyable read. Personally, I thought Shauna's writing style delightful. Of course, I may be a little biased on account of the fact that the author has that unique weakness as I for such elite foods as bacon-wrapped dates, figs, chocolate, cheese and such. However, regardless of personal tastes, my impression was that Shauna possesses that unique talent which, through humorous writing, makes even her oddities appear as charming as they must seem to those who know and love her. Simultaneously, the reader is drawn into the ups and downs of the life of this friendly, warm-hearted person.

I must add that I question the religious beliefs of the author, and therefore suggest this book not as reading matter to enhance your spiritual life, but rather like many of our favourite heart-warming cookbooks and magazines to give joyful ideas for your hospitality endeavours and friendships.

Lastly, in this book the author does not concern herself with health aspects. (apart from the fact that she has a good view of cheese, wine and such) Nevertheless, the several recipes included seemed passing nourishing. :) I can't wait to try bacon-wrapped dates or her Indian-inspired dishes.

As a follow up to her two bestselling books, Bittersweet and Cold Tangerines, author and blogger Shauna Niequist returns with the perfect read for those who love food and value the community and connection of family and friends around the table.

Bread and Wine is a collection of essays about family relationships, friendships, and the meals that bring us together. This mix of Anne Lamott and Barefoot Contessa is a funny, honest, and vulnerable spiritual memoir. Bread and Wine is a celebration of food shared, reminding readers of the joy found in a life around the table. It's about the ways God teaches and nourishes people as they nourish the people around them. It's about hunger, both physical and otherwise, and the connections between the two.

With wonderful recipes included, from Bacon-Wrapped Dates to Mango Chicken Curry to Blueberry Crisp, readers will be able to recreate the comforting and satisfying meals that come to life in Bread and Wine.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the BookSneeze.com® book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The

opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Lisamarie Landreth says

Those of you that watch our monthly book chats know Shauna Niequist is my favorite author. I sing her praises like a canary because she's shaped my worldview and inspired my identity as a writer more than any author. In her third work, she once again delivers a deeply profound, yet completely accessible memoir on building a life that says "welcome, there's a seat at my table for you."

Annagrace K. says

Let's be honest: I am rarely Zondervan's target audience. In fact, I can't remember the last thing I read from this publishing house. So it was no small surprise when I LOVED this book. Yes, the author's obvious privilege and life of travel and near constant opportunity could feel pretty distant from most of us mothers and our quieter lives filled with fewer choices. Many readers have mentioned this as a serious drawback. I don't read memoirs to find someone exactly like me, though. I love getting drawn in to someone else's unique story, as long as their voice feels real and there is a certain amount of vulnerability. Shauna's voice rings true. This is her life and she is writing it down and I don't need it to be like mine to see her pain, beauty, openness and enormous heart. In addition, I LOVE food--the making, sharing, eating, and cleaning up after it. All the things that go into feeding people. I love community--real relationships that weather change and heartbreak and babies and divorce and illness and hold tight with great love. This is mostly a book about that and it is beautiful and true.

Kathryn says

Well, I think I am becoming a Shauna Niequist super fan. She writes so warmly, so clearly, so honestly and often she has feelings just like me. I'm now listening to her podcasts, which are excellent, by the way, and have her book *Bittersweet: Thoughts on Change, Grace, and Learning the Hard Way* waiting for me at the library. This book would be a lovely gift to give to a friend.

Natalie says

I had great hopes when I picked up this book. I am a tremendous foodie who ADORES having people in her home for long, delicious dinner parties, flavored with good food and even better conversation. I was so disappointed in this book, however, because the narrator was haughty. You know how some people are namedroppers? Well, this author is a destination dropper. I found her constant references to multiple trips, both domestic and foreign, to be completely off-putting. I felt the same way I did when I first read Gwyneth Paltrow's website Goop. In one post, Paltrow recommends a \$95 white T-shirt as a must-have staple for every American woman. Niequist speaks this unrealistically as well, encouraging us (dare I say, preaching to

us?) to take our children to foreign countries, the tremendous need to expose them to other cultures. While I agree with her that these are indeed amazing experiences, not every family has this type of disposable income. Just one mention to this monetary concern would have made her much more likable to me. Instead, we read of lake houses, yacht clubs, spontaneous plane trips several times a year, etc. It got quite tedious.
