“Husbands and wives collaborate,” says Lizzie, “hiding even from themselves who is calling the shots and who is along for the ride.”

I am delighted to present Siracusa, hopefully to enchant and chill in equal measure. My novel follows two couples and a child on vacation in Italy. Michael, a famous writer, and his wife, Lizzie, a journalist, travel with their friends from Maine—Finn, Taylor, and their daughter, Snow. Told Rashomon-style with alternating points of view, the couples stumble upon lies and infidelities past and present. “From the start,” says Taylor, “it was a conspiracy between Lizzie and Finn to be together.” Snow, ten years old and precociously drawn into the adult drama, becomes a catalyst for catastrophe.

Siracusa should provoke intense opinions and discussion because, while it has the pacing of a psychological thriller, it’s also an exploration of marriage, motherhood, friendship, and the meaning of travel. I hope you will find it a lens to examine your own relationships.

Of course you can’t visit Siracusa without pasta and something delicious to sip at an Italian café. After many attempts I figured out the recipe for the fantastic pasta I had on my first trip to Siracusa, and included as well as a recipe for the perfect aperitif, the aperol spritz.

Ciao and enjoy.

—Delia
RECIPE SPAGHETTI WITH TOMATOES & SAND

I had this delicious pasta my first night in Siracusa and described it to my friend Susan Myong Territo, who is a fantastic cook, and she re-created it. The “sand” is toasted bread crumbs. –Delia Ephron

TOMATO SAUCE INGREDIENTS

• 1 ½ pounds grape or cherry tomatoes
• 3 teaspoons minced garlic (2 large cloves)
• ¼ cup chopped parsley, plus 2 tablespoons for garnish
• ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
• ⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper
• ½ cup pasta water
• 1 teaspoon salt: ½ teaspoon for tomatoes, plus extra salt for pasta water

DIRECTIONS

Prepare sand first. In a bowl, combine bread crumbs, grated cheese and salt. In a small frying pan, heat olive oil on medium heat. Add the bread crumb mixture to oil and stir until bread crumbs are golden. Taste and add more salt if you think it needs it. Place in bowl and set aside.

Bring a large pot of water to boil. While waiting for water to boil, cut tomatoes in half, mince garlic, and chop parsley. Once the water comes to a boil, add salt to season the water and drop in spaghetti. Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Spaghetti should be very al dente.

Set a 12” sauté pan on medium heat. Add ¼ cup olive oil to the pan, and when warm, add minced garlic and crushed red pepper, stirring until slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and salt and stir to evenly coat. Cook tomatoes for 2 minutes and turn burner off.

Remove pasta from the cooking water and add it to the pan with the tomatoes, along with a ½ cup of pasta water. Toss well to coat.

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Then add ½ cup of the sand, grated cheese and chopped parsley and gently toss pasta to distribute evenly. Place the pasta in a large serving bowl and serve immediately. Garnish with more grated cheese, parsley, and sand.

TIPS

• Pecorino romano cheese is creamier than parmesan cheese. Use pecorino if you can find it.
• Parmesan cheese works well too. It will have a bit sharper cheese flavor.
• Add more crushed red pepper if you like your sauce spicy.
• Add more or less garlic depending on your flavor preference.
• Make the sand a couple hours ahead of time.

RECIPE APEROL SPRITZ

The aperol spritz is an Italian classic—refreshing, with just a hint of bitterness on the finish.

This spritz is perfect before dinner alongside pasta and is especially divine in the summertime, al fresco. Mix up a few for your book club, and you won’t run out of conversation.

INGREDIENTS

• Ice
  • 3 oz prosecco (we recommend Mionetto Prosecco Brut)
  • 2 oz aperol
  • 1 splash club soda
  • Orange slice

DIRECTIONS

Load up an old-fashioned glass with a few cubes of ice.

Pour in prosecco, aperol, then soda.

Top with your orange slice, and enjoy!
DELIA EPHRON is a bestselling author and screenwriter. She has written novels, including *The Lion Is In* and *Hanging Up*; humor books for all ages, including *How to Eat Like a Child* and *Do I Have to Say Hello?*; and nonfiction, most recently *Sister Mother Husband Dog* (etc.). Her films include *You’ve Got Mail*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *Hanging Up* (based on her novel), and *Michael*. Her journalism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Vogue*, and *Vanity Fair*. Her hit play *Love, Loss, and What I Wore* (co-written with Nora Ephron) ran for more than two years off-Broadway and has been performed all over the world. She lives in New York City. For more information on *Siracusa*, visit deliaephron.com

Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *SIRACUSA*, we respectfully suggest that you wait before reviewing this guide.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Siracusa* is written from the distinct perspectives of four characters—Lizzie, Michael, Finn, and Taylor—each of whom has something to hide. Would the book be different if Snow narrated a section? How does this choice to omit her define the way the story unfurls?

2. “I had been looking forward to the erotic anonymity of hotel rooms. I had hopes. Our vacations had always been sexy.” What does each character hope to gain from his or her time in Siracusa? Do their motivations change as the story progresses?

3. Finn and Taylor have vastly different approaches to parenting (and protecting) Snow. In your opinion, who is the more loving parent? Do you think having a child changed Finn and Taylor’s marriage? If so, how?

4. “I was jealous of Michael. That was new, and hard to admit, the result of my own shelf life expiring earlier than expected.” How do Lizzie’s feelings about her creative life change over the course of the novel? Do you believe Michael respects Lizzie as a writer?

5. Lizzie and Finn’s past romantic relationship has evolved into a friendship with an erotic charge. Do you think they would be happier together than they are with their spouses? Why or why not?

6. Taylor is a mother and Lizzie is not. What are their attitudes toward each other about mothering? Is either of their perspectives more valid than the other?

7. Finn seems to revel in his surroundings more than the others. What, if anything, do we see change in Finn as a result of the trip?

8. From Michael’s infidelity to Finn’s clandestine smoking, every character in the book betrays and is betrayed, in ways both big and small. Who do you think is most at fault? Who, in your mind, is the villain of this story?

9. K. Kathy. Katarina. Michael’s mistress pays the price for their affair. Were you surprised by her fate? Who is most responsible for what happens to her?

10. At the end of the book, Lizzie has come into her own as a writer and as a woman. What do you imagine is next for her? For the others?

11. In *Siracusa*, travel becomes the ultimate catalyst for drama, forever altering the lives of six people. Has a trip ever changed your perspective on the world, or your own relationships?
1. Before their trip, Lizzie read through *City Secrets Rome*, an expert guide curated by members of the American Academy in Rome.

2. “To experience the Trevi Fountain in all its glory, watch *La Dolce Vita*,” Lizzie says while wandering through Rome.

3. Lizzie is reading *To Each His Own* by Leonardo Sciascia, a Sicilian detective novel.

4. “You can almost taste the gelato,” *People* magazine wrote about Siracusa. Gelato was, in fact, first sold to the public in 17th century Sicily.

5. “Ortigia is the jewel of Siracusa, dating back to 700 B.C. . . .” (from *Siracusa*)
6. “In 212 B.C., the Romans knocked all the trees down and used it for lumber to build warships and they never replanted anything. So Siracusa is paved with stone. It’s really a stone paradise.” –Delia Ephron

8. The Red and the Black by Stendhal: Author Michael names his alter ego, Julien, after the protagonist of the classic French novel.

9. Anyone who’s seen The Bad Seed—a film about a preternaturally sinister 8-year-old—feels like they’ve already met Finn and Taylor’s daughter, Snow.

10. “You’ll take a lover, I’ll take a lover…” While writing, author Delia Ephron found herself listening to Stephen Sondheim’s “We’re Gonna Be Alright,” from the musical Do I Hear a Waltz?