

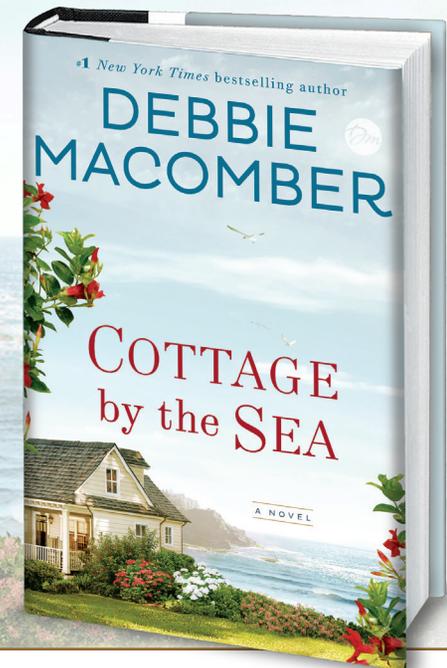
# DEBBIE MACOMBER

## COTTAGE by the SEA

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BOOK CLUB KIT

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## Dear Friends,

My book, *Cottage by the Sea*, was inspired by a major landslide in Oso, Washington in 2014. Having such a tragic and life-changing event happen so quickly, randomly, and so close to home left a mark on my heart. As I followed the subsequent news stories surrounding this tragedy and the loss of forty-three lives, I began to put myself in their shoes, particularly those who were left behind to mourn. The depth of loss and grief must have been incredibly difficult for these families. From this, I began to build a plot around a lone survivor who wasn't home when a mudslide took her entire family.

As a writer, I couldn't help wondering about family members who weren't at home at the time—those who escaped death only to be left behind. My heroine lost her entire family and is now alone in the world, seeking out a place she can call home. And isn't that what we're all searching for—home?

I hope you enjoy *Cottage by the Sea*, and that it brings you hope for reclaiming the light after darkness.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debbie Macomber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debbie Macomber



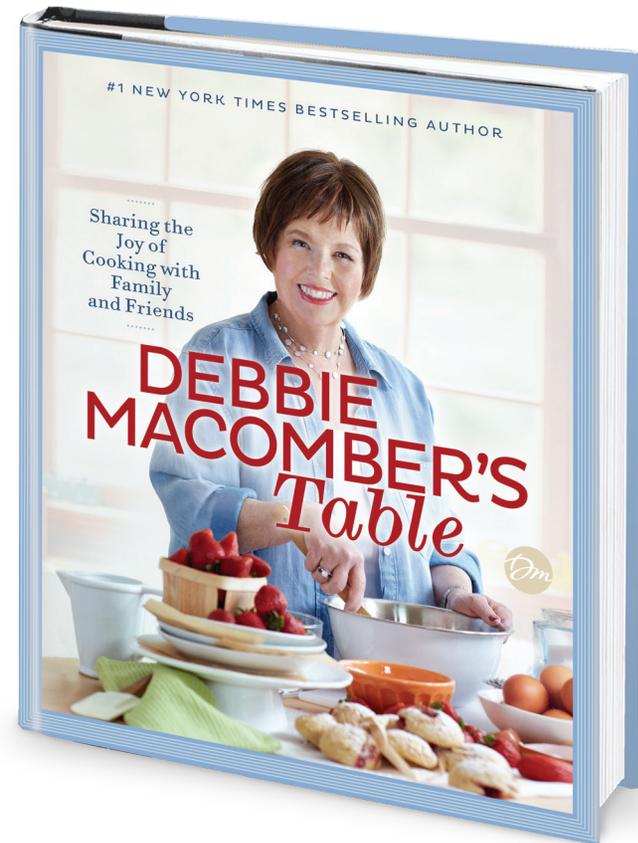
# Discussion Questions

1. After losing her family, Annie is guilt ridden, often recalling her final conversation with her mother. Have you ever experienced regret or a sense of loss? What helped you to overcome it?
2. Seeing Annie for the first time in thirteen years gives Keaton quite a shock, as he never thought he would encounter her again. Have you ever reconnected with someone from your past, intentionally or by chance? Did anything about him or her surprise you?
3. Annie comes to see Keaton as something of a gentle giant. Though Annie is more extroverted, she grapples with secrets of her own. Discuss how and why Annie and Keaton both struggle to open up to each other. Do you agree that opposites attract?
4. Oceanside becomes Annie's safe haven, a peaceful place where she slowly begins to rebuild her life. Is there a place—a vacation spot, perhaps—that holds similar meaning in your life?
5. Gardening is a way for Annie to feel close to her mother, while also allowing her to share her bounty with the community. Do you have a particular hobby or interest that you find therapeutic? How does it make you feel?
6. Annie has a gut feeling that Britt's home life is volatile. Though she knows it may be dangerous, she visits anyway, but falls into hostile territory when Carl arrives. How could she have approached the situation differently to minimize the damage? Have you ever had a hunch about something that you were not sure how to deal with?
7. Was Annie right to tell Gabby, Steph, and Trevor about her conversation with Dr. Bainbridge before telling Keaton? Do you think Keaton responded appropriately when he learned the truth?
8. Mellie's agoraphobia (fear of the outdoors) and hoarding are ways for her to hold onto the past in order to protect herself from future heartbreak. Do you identify with Mellie in any way?
9. Why do you think Mellie and Preston are so compatible, regardless of their shared stubbornness?
10. Britt and Jimmy eventually choose Becca and Lucas, who have struggled to have a child, as Grace's adoptive parents. The four agree that the adoption may remain "open," so that Britt and Jimmy can be a part of their daughter's life. Discuss the decisions made by both couples.
11. Annie is ultimately able to make Oceanside her home, despite the fact that she has lost her family. How do you define "home"? What makes your home special?
12. How do you envision Annie and Keaton's future together?



## Bring Debbie Macomber's Table to your event!

From zucchini and jalapeños to tomatoes and green beans, Annie's garden is bursting with fresh flavors. Bring flavors reminiscent of *Cottage by the Sea* to your book club using recipes from the cookbook, *Debbie Macomber's Table*. Your host can prepare the full menu or, for more fun, each member can prepare and bring one dish to the gathering. Discuss the book over food and you might just find yourself transported to a certain seaside cottage. . . .



# Suggested Menu

## APPETIZERS AND SIDES

Cameron's Garlic and  
Bacon Green Beans, PG. 112

Warm Goat Cheese and Roasted  
Cherry Tomato Dip, PG. 45

Debbie's Zucchini, PG. 117

Gratitude Bread, PG. 9

*With blueberries and raspberries, this would be  
a tasty treat from the Bean There coffeeshop*

## SALAD

Broccoli Apple Cheddar Salad, PG. 67

## ENTRÉE

Turkey Lettuce Wraps, PG. 87

## DESSERT

Wayne's Whiskey Bacon Brownies, PG. 153

*Reminiscent of Annie's Your Man Done You Wrong brownies*

## DRINK

Lavender Lemonade, PG. 166

*The same drink Annie serves Keaton on a break  
from helping with her garden*

