

The Recipe Box By Viola Shipman *Reading Group Questions*

1. *The Recipe Box* is inspired by the author's grandmothers' beloved recipe boxes. Do you have a recipe box? What memories does it convey, and what does it mean to you?
2. *The Recipe Box* is also inspired by the author's treasured family recipes. What are your favorite family recipes? Why are they so beloved? Do they have a history? If so, what is it? Does your family ask for the same foods to be made on certain holidays/occasions? If so, what are they and why?
3. In *The Recipe Box*, the author writes, "*You bake for someone because it is a way of connecting generations ... an act of love.*" Why is food and cooking such a great generational and emotional connector? Why are they so important in our lives and the lives of our families?
4. Do you still bake with family? Teach younger generations how to bake? What's that mean to you/them? Are we losing that connection?
5. Recipe cards – from the handwriting to chocolate-y fingerprints – have a history. But, today, we look online for recipes: From favorite food blogs to Food Network shows and Facebook videos. Do you have family recipe cards? Do you think we are sacrificing history for convenience today?
6. In the novel, the author didn't share how cooking and baking a recipe can go off the rails (in writing this book, the author tested all of the recipes many times, and once – while tired after being on book tour – added curry instead of cinnamon, and also once burned a crust and set off the smoke alarms). Share a funny story about a recipe that went horribly wrong.
7. A main theme in the novel centers on the importance of home and history. Sam – the main character – can't wait to move from her hometown and away from her family to start a new life and career. Many people today move from the areas in which they're raised for college, job opportunities, marriage. Do you think that "home" and "hometown" has changed since you were growing up? And has America changed since you were growing up? How? Why? Is this harming our small towns and family histories?

8. Another theme in the novel centers on Sam choosing – her father believes intentionally – the wrong men in which to surround herself, personally and professionally. Do you know women who do this, or have you ever stayed in a relationship or job too long for convenience sake or because you felt stuck? Why?
9. Sam's job working for a reality star turned celebrity chef is a nightmare. Have you ever had a nightmarish job? What was that like? Did you stay or quit? Did you ever have to stand up to a bad boss? What was that like? That said, Sam's father turns down a wonderful career opportunity to run his wife's family's orchard. Have you or someone you love ever said no to a great job. Why? What was that like?
10. Willo, the grandmother in the novel, is turning 75. Although the orchard and pie pantry that she owns and runs is celebrating her birthday with a big party, Willo is content with aging, feeling as if she's led a life "with few regrets." How do you feel about aging? Do you have regrets in life? What are they, and how did they impact you and your decisions? Do you think American society has difficulty embracing aging with grace?
11. What are your other favorite books that feature food? What are your favorite cookbooks? *The Recipe Box* is set on an orchard that has a U-Pick and Pie Pantry and is inspired by a place close to where the author lives. Do you have a favorite bakery, donut shop, or pie pantry close to where you live? Or a U-Pick orchard?