



## Summary

Every summer for the past ten years, six awe-struck bakers have descended on the grounds of Grafton, the leafy and imposing Vermont estate that is not only the filming site for “Bake Week” but also the childhood home of the show’s famous host, celebrated baker Betsy Martin.

The author of numerous bestselling cookbooks and hailed as “America’s Grandmother,” Betsy Martin isn’t as warm off-screen as on, though no one needs to know that but her. She has always demanded perfection, and gotten it with a smile, but this year something is off. As the baking competition commences, things begin to go awry. At first, it’s merely sabotage—sugar replaced with salt, a burner turned to high—but when a body is discovered, everyone is a suspect.

A sharp and suspenseful thriller for mystery buffs and avid bakers alike, *The Golden Spoon* is a brilliant puzzle filled with shocking twists and turns that will keep you reading late into the night until you turn the very last page of this incredible debut.



## **About the Author**

Jessa Maxwell is the author of *The Golden Spoon* and *I Need You to Read This*. She is also the author and illustrator of five picture books for children. Her comics and cartoons have been published in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times* and her writing has been published in *Slate*, *Marie Claire*, and many others. She now lives in Jamestown, Rhode Island with her husband, two cats and three-legged dog.

## Discussion Questions

- Talk about the characters, both good and bad. Describe their personalities and motivations. Are they fully developed and emotionally complex? Or are they flat, one-dimensional heroes and villains?
- What do you know...and when do you know it? At what point in the book do you begin to piece together what happened?
- Good crime writers embed hidden clues, slipping them in casually, almost in passing. Did you pick them out, or were you...clueless? Once you've finished the book, go back to locate the clues hidden in plain sight. How skillful was the author in burying them?
- Good crime writers also tease us with red-herrings—false clues—to purposely lead us astray? Does your author try to throw you off track? If so, were you tripped up?
- Talk about the twists & turns—those surprising plot developments that throw everything you think you've figured out into disarray.
  - a. Do they enhance the story, add complexity, and build suspense?
  - b. Are they plausible or implausible?
  - c. Do they feel forced and gratuitous—inserted merely to extend the story?
- Does the author ratchet up the suspense? Did you find yourself anxious—quickly turning pages to learn what happened? At what point does the suspense start to build? Where does it climax...then perhaps start rising again?

## Discussion Questions

- A good ending is essential in any mystery or crime thriller: it should ease up on tension, answer questions, and tidy up loose ends. Does the ending accomplish those goals?
  - a. Is the conclusion probable or believable?
  - b. Is it organic, growing out of clues previously laid out by the author (see Question 3)?
  - c. Or does the ending come out of the blue, feeling forced or tacked-on?
  - d. Perhaps it's too predictable.
  - e. Can you envision a different or better ending?
- Point to passages in the book—ideas, descriptions, or dialogue—that you found interesting or revealing, that somehow struck you. What, if anything, made you stop and think? Or maybe even laugh.
- Overall, does the book satisfy? Does it live up to the standards of a good crime story or suspense thriller? Or does it somehow fall short?
- Compare this book to other mystery, crime, or suspense thrillers that you've read. Consider other authors or other books in a series by the same author.