

Food for Thought and Delicious Discussion

In *Live & Let Chai*, the debut novel in Bree Baker's new Seaside Café Mysteries series, we follow heroine, Everly Swan's return to a small island town. We walk with Everly as she navigates what it means to come home again, works to clear her name of an unfortunate murder accusation and struggles to get a new business, founded on some very old recipes, off the ground. Add a mysterious cat, dangerous stalker and several hundred skeptical locals and it's easy to wonder if Miss Swan has bitten off more than she can chew.

1. In *Live & Let Chai*, Everly struggles with how much of her life is a result of destiny and how much is chance...or even choice. What do you think *really* brought Everly back to Charm? The break-up, certainly, but was it something more? Fate? Chance? Choice? Why?
2. Everly's great aunts are somewhat eccentric, and they have a few unconventional beliefs that Everly really struggles with. For example, Fran and Clara believe Swan women are cursed and any man they dare love will surely die. The aunts also believe that Swan women are bound to the island and bad things come to those who leave. *Like Everly*. Could any of these things be true? Are the ideas merely old superstitions or something more? Is there merit to the ideas they're holding onto? If so, what does that mean for Everly's future? Her happiness?
3. Family is an ongoing theme in this story, from locals who feel like family to the new detective in town. What are some ways we see the importance of family played out or brought to light? For example: Everly's choice of career, her relationship with the detective or her profound and sometimes unexpected moments of grief.
4. Another topic we see explored in *Live & Let Chai* is the idea of *belonging*. Everly was born and raised in Charm, but her return and re-acclimation (especially after the murder allegations are thrown around) is far from smooth. Why is that? She belongs there, doesn't she? We see Detective Hays in a similar predicament, although he has no history in Charm. Is this strange? Is it understandable? Is the old saying perhaps true? *You can never go home?*
5. During the first walk we take with Everly, she wonders if it's sand or salt water in her veins. She feels the pull and attachment to her island deep within her, as if it's literally a part of who she is. That fact alone could make one wonder how right the aunts are about the Swans' bond to this town, but it also begs the question: Does everyone feel a powerful attachment to *somewhere*? To "home?" Is there a place that resonates with your soul?

6. What do you think Everly's fascination with the wild horses symbolizes? Why? How about her attachment to the cowboys?
7. Any ideas on who the mystery gossip blogger might be?
8. How is Everly's new home a perfect fit for her? Is its history applicable? In what ways does her home reflect or match her character.