



# Season 6, Episode 16: 2024 Spreadsheets + Foodie Books to Create Your Thanksgiving Plate

Mon, Nov 20, 2023 • 56:13

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:11

Hey readers. Welcome to the Currently Reading podcast. We are bookish best friends who spend time every week talking about the books that we read recently. And you should know we won't shy away from having strong opinions. So get ready.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:24

We are light on the chitchat heavy on the book talk and our descriptions will always be spoiler free. Today we'll discuss our current reads a bookish deep dive, and then we'll visit the fountain.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:34

I'm Meredith Monday, Schwartz, a mom of four and full time CEO living in Austin, Texas. And sometimes I get a little book paralyzed.

**Kaytee Cobb** 00:42

And I'm Kaytee Cobb, a homeschooling mom of four living in Arizona, and I'm finally getting to wear pants and snuggle with fluffy blankets, but only early in the mornings. This is episode number 16 of season six. And we are so glad you're here.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 00:55

It is so nice that it is finally getting cool enough for blankets and fires in the fireplace. But only in the mornings. Certainly I think probably but where we both live. I really love it when the seasons turn in. This is where we are with our with our reading,

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:12

thank goodness because it is mid to late November and we trick or treated in short sleeves this year. Yeah, we actually were

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:21

cold that night. And this was my first night with my own children not trick or treating because Jackson had a football game. But Jackson is also 12. And so we were kind of you know, it just kind of worked out that way. But now of course I have grandchildren and so I got to go trick or treating with Jeffrey so not even a year without trick or treating. I'm

**Kaytee Cobb** 01:41

very happy about you just plan that so perfectly. I couldn't believe it. I did. It's exactly exactly. You're gonna have like a 50 year run of like trick or treating every

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 01:52

night for 50 years. I could potentially do that. Depending how my other children time their progeny that could happen could work. Yeah. Oh, that

**Kaytee Cobb** 02:01

would be pretty amazing. All right, we're light on the chit chat. Let's let everybody knows that today. Our deep dive is about the foodie books that you might want to read after you get Thanksgiving dinner on the table. And I had a lot of fun preparing for this. So we're going to do something a little silly with this today. But first, we'll get started the way we always do with our bookish moments of the week.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 02:21

All right, Kaytee, I don't think there's any way that we can escape me forcing you to talk about what I can already see on your face. You know, I'm going to bring up we cannot not talk about the Juggernaut, the elephant in the room, the badly printed elephant in the room that is Iron Flame, the second, the second in the Imperium series, but it's the follow up to Fourth Wing came out on November 7. Obviously, this show doesn't drop until November 20. So it's been a couple of weeks for you who are listening. But as we sit here right now, it's just been a couple of days and I need to talk about it on a couple of levels. Kaytee, I just I feel like I can't not i for days on end. Poor Betsie and Lexy and Gloria they have dealt with me for days on end, having absolute apoplectic fits about all the problems that we're hearing about as far as indie bookstores period, but indie bookstores, specifically having these huge launch parties, these big midnight parties that they've worked so hard on, and then not having the books available to actually sell. That just breaks my heart. First of all, then we find out that there's all these problems in the printing of the books themselves. People finding out that there was this one woman she had, like she's reading it's page 34. And then the next page is page 83. Oh, Lord, and then it's like another 50 pages. And then it starts over again at page 83 And then goes on from there. I mean, these are just things that should not be happening. I mean, we've got seen upside down spines, we've seen the sprayed edges being not really that sprayed, I mean almost looking kind of dirty, instead of nicely sprayed. I just I'm so boggled. I'm not angry about it. I'm I mean, I'm angry about the problems that have happened, especially with the indie bookstores, and with readers who really want to get their hands on this book that all of us have. So been looking forward to, and then to have all these problems happen, and so many people be disappointed and I'll bet you that Rebecca Yarros herself is just so upset sleep. Yeah, I mean completely because none of these things are within her control, or her power to stop any of these things from happening. And yet here she is having to go do these events and do her social media and then people in the comment sections of those things are just understandably upset and fired up and it's just a mess. and it makes me crazy from a business perspective. And from a reader perspective, it just makes me absolutely crazy. So put all that together, I finally got my copy that I had pre ordered of both Iron Flame. And then the special edition of Fourth Wing, I finally got those things toward the end of this week. And all of a sudden, I'm completely paralyzed. And I feel no desire to pick up iron flame at all. Oh, no.

**Kaytee Cobb 05:28**

Well, I can tell you, Katie is about halfway through it, and she's loving it. She's very excited about it. Yes.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 05:33**

And I do have to say I'm very happy about the fact that everyone I have seen who's finished it or who's almost finished with it, is really loving it. So I do think that maybe some of my fears about it being a major sophomore slump, were unfounded. And I can't even tell you how happy I am about that. But I just think I gotta give myself a little bit of time, I got to let a little bit of this angst, get out of my system and kind of start it fresh, and just let it let it unfold before me because right now I just feel all knotted up about it, I'm

**Kaytee Cobb 06:06**

sure. Okay, well, I have something to add here in that I just recorded with Bunmi on Tuesday, which is the day that Iron Flame released. And we were already seen posts in the bookish friends group about it. And she from a publisher point of view said, almost everything with printing is automated. So when you see things like that, like the spine being printed upside down, or the spine being on like cockeyed with regard to the gold foil that's on it, or an extra signature where there shouldn't be one, it's almost always a result of human error. So that means somebody was walking down the printing press line, and maybe picked up a book to look at it and set it back down the wrong way with regard to the cover. And so that's how stuff like that happens. It rarely is because the machine itself screwed up. Otherwise, every book would be or it would be identical. Yeah, a giant mess of books would all have the same problem. And instead, you're seeing like this, Rando got this issue. And this Rando got this issue. And that's almost always because somebody was walking through there and messing with the printing line, basically. So I'm guessing that's because whoever was working at the printing press is very excited about this book, and should and has put their hands where they shouldn't have been, basically. So that's like, that's the publishing insider knowledge that I know about at this point, that it's probably not even the publisher itself that did wrong here, although they have under delivered and not ordered enough and rushed to print. But the actual, like issues you're seeing with the printing itself, where people are getting mistakes is because somebody in the publisher, in the actual printing house was touching things. I

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 07:43**

mean, it seems like a lot of that is happening, much more than any other book I've ever heard. Yeah, right. Because it would seem like well, I don't know, did this happen with Harry Potter? Maybe it did. And I, we just didn't have the kind of social media that we have now to find out about it. But I don't know. They're just something. Some is just not right in the state of Denmark with this with this book, and a lot of things around it. And it just when something doesn't make sense. It's not true. This is a Judge Judyism. And, you know, I wish that she was my mother. And so I just am really, I'm boggled. And I'm uncertain as to why all of this stuff is happening. But I need to just let it go. Because it has nothing to do with me just let it go. That's true,

**Kaytee Cobb 08:28**

also, but it could still, it could still be a thing that we need to talk about and work through, personally and professionally. Exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 08:37

I needed to talk about it just as an individual with you my bookish friends. So we just happened to be doing that on the mic. Alright, Kaytee, what is your bookish moment of the week, perfect.

**Kaytee Cobb** 08:46

Meredith, you already know my bookish moment, as well. It's that I got to start working on all things currently reading for 2024 this week. And that feels really good. I can kind of in my head about it and get nervous about all the work that's coming up for me. And then when I actually sit down and start messing with the indie press list, bookstores that we want to approach or the spreadsheet that we're going to release for 2024 I get so excited. In fact, I was like late preparing for this episode today, because I was inside my spreadsheet dancing around and in columns and rows. And it was so fun also yesterday to spend time researching and going on the websites and checking out the social media of bookstores all over the United States, reaching out to them having people respond right away with how excited they are. I just love that looking forward time of year that we're in right now. Because we want to hit 2024 Full speed on the ground both feet like ready to go right. And so it takes time and it takes work and in this case, six weeks of work to get to the point where January 1 We're like y'all Currently Reading is ready for this year and we are so excited for what we're going to bring you and so I'm in the weeds of it right now, but I know how much it's going to deliver or later. And so that had to be my bookish moment just how much Currently Reading has taken over my life this week, I guess.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 10:06

Yes, there is a lot going on. And you have a lot of irons on the fire. But I know so many people are excited. Of course, we're excited about what we're doing with indie press list. And then also yet the spreadsheet just the highlight of so many people's beginning of the year, because now is the time of year that we're really realizing how grateful we are. We've been using it all year long. Because as you get into November and December, man, those charts out graphs, those are those are coming together, you're really seeing what you're reading like this little your reading life is like so yeah, that you're doing a lot of great work. And every year you add more and more to the spreadsheet, more functionality, more usability more features. So I'm really, really excited about that. I'm

**Kaytee Cobb** 10:49

excited to like unreasonably so I signed off on our Patreon post on our Facebook posts, that I'm our resident freak and the spreadsheets and, and people were just very excited about that. And I'm, I'm wearing that badge with pride today.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 11:01

Yes, you need a t shirt and a mug that says freak in the sheets. I love it so much.

**Kaytee Cobb** 11:05

Absolutely. Okay, let's get into our current reads. What have you been reading lately? Okay,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 11:12**

so I am bringing an indie press list book, I know where we didn't intend to talk about indie press lists a lot. And it's from October. And I know we normally try to leave more time in between. But here's the thing, I think this book is going to be one of my top 10 books of the year. And so one of the things that we need to do is we need to give it a treatment on the show, so that when we have our best of episode, it will make more sense there will be more context. So I have to talk about Slewfoot by Brom, just Brom just Brom and that he doesn't need any more than that because he is that good. Alright, here is the setup. Our setting is Connecticut in 1666. We are in the middle of a village of Puritan settlers. Our lead characters Agatha, who is recently widowed, and through circumstances definitely not of her choosing, she has been outcast from the village. She has very few choices and scant chance at survival. But then, she comes into contact with an ancient spirit in the dark woods behind her home the wild folk called the Spirit Father and to them he is a protector, but the colonists call him Slewfoot and to them he is a fearsome devil to Agatha. He's her only choice, he's the only one that she can turn to for help. So Agatha and Slewfoot join forces, and they are helped in sometimes hindered by the wild folk. And they face a battle between pagans and Puritans in this battle for hearts and minds will leave a village on fire and awash in blood. All right, I had not even remotely heard of this book. Until I was chatting one night with Chiara and Betsie, two of my bookish friends. And they casually mentioned that they had just buddy read a book that was dark fantasy with magic, and witches and animals that had children's faces. Imagine the gigantic record screech happening because I was like, wait, wait, what? And I forced them to tell me much more. And I immediately sitting there in the room, I bought the book. And when it arrived, I started it like I dropped everything. And I started it. The cover is so beautiful and so dark. And it just beckoned me in in the most witchy magical way possible. And also, again, you have to buy the print edition here the author Brom also illustrates it. And it is gorgeous. The full color illustrations really help you sink into the story. So you can imagine then, how excited I was when this was a pick for October's Indie Press List from Novel Neighbor. They had no idea I had read it, I had no idea they were going to choose it. It was absolute book of serendipity. And I squealed with delight because I couldn't wait to share this book with all of our bookish friends. I love a Puritan story because Puritans are so easy to hate. And Brom brings us a village full of Puritans that from the first chapter I wanted to see get their faces eaten off. They are truly terrible, and they're perfect foil is our lead character Agatha. She is smart and independent and has lots of thoughts in her head. Just exactly what these Puritans do not like in their young women and the battle is set. This book is far less fairy tale and more dark, dark folk tale. There's magic, but it's quieter and more natural and organic in its origins. This isn't light, bright, shiny avatar. This is magic that lives in toadstools and beneath rocks and in the dappled sunlight low in the canopy. This is magic with some spirit and dirt in it and I was all for it. I should say because I want to be clear that this book is very violent, especially toward the end. So our HSP friends should tread really carefully. But Slewfoot is a masterpiece. It's incredibly evocative of its time. Remember, we're in 1666, but it's themes resonate today. If you'd like feminist rage, you get it here. I ended this book wanting to grab a large heavy stick and kick some Puritan booty. I loved it. This is Slewfoot by Brom.

**Kaytee Cobb 15:34**

A large heavy stick

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 15:37**

Anything to hand in the forest, Kaytee

**Kaytee Cobb** 15:40

Okay, but let's also talk about why it's so important to read it on paper, because it's so unique. It's so unique to pick up this actual book. It's not shaped like any other book on my shelf, right? It's like, it's like oversize, but not but it's paperback. So it's easy to hold. It's very interesting. And then it has these full color plates in the middle.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:01

Right full page illustrations. Yep.

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:04

Those animals with children's faces. So Oh, my God, I have to imagine what they look like. You can see what was inside of Broms head when he was thinking about them. I

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:14

loved that. But it's like they're done in oil paintings. Like, they're

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:18

like they should be hanging in like Versailles. But they're too creepy, right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:22

I mean, and then you see Slewfoot you see Agatha like you're up close. And it's like you're standing there next. And these, there's no question that the print edition, which of course we would love you to buy through novel neighbor, because they did recommend this book. It's so beautiful. It's so beautiful. And I'm doing a buddy read of another book that he wrote, and it's called Krampus. And it has this cover that is so scary that I had to put

**Kaytee Cobb** 16:49

it underneath a bunch of other books. You have to hide it in your house. Yes,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 16:53

but slue foot is just this perfect, perfect for this time of year. It's got all the Puritan colonist stuff going on. And it's just so so good. So

**Kaytee Cobb** 17:05

good. I'm so glad you brought that one. I also have a little bit of a creepy book, but like dial it down seven notches, because I'm going to talk about Tunnel of Bones by Victoria Schwab. Okay, so this is the second in a middle grade series that Meredith first brought us on the show a couple of years ago, I want to say now, this series is called the Cassidy Blake series, which is dumb, but it starts with City of Ghosts, which is great name. Yeah. In the series, we meet Cassidy Blake, which is why the series is named after her, but I don't like it. I think they should have called it the city of ghosts series. She is the daughter of world famous ghost hunting parents. They travel all over the world to find paranormal activity for their TV show, which is all well and good. But Cassidy is the one who can actually see ghosts and cross the veil into their world. I picked up the second in the series because I was going to

travel to Scotland, which is where the city of ghosts takes place the first novel in the series, but guess what? Remember when I said they traveled all over the world? Well, my time in Scotland was lovely. But this novel takes place in Paris, which is evident if you look at the cover of the book, and you realize there's an Eiffel Tower silhouette front and center. Good job que no worries though it was still an excellent addition to the series. Here's the setup. In Book Two, Cassie and her ghost best friend Jacob are in Paris where her parents are filming their TV show about ghosts and paranormal cities. That means their journeys take them underground to the catacombs which run below the streets of Paris and are filled with centuries of dead people. Cassidy loves visiting the city of lights and eating croissants and visiting the sights and seeing the Louvre Of course there are truly dangerous ghostly figures lurking in the city. And she awakens one on accident obviously. This ghost requires that she solve a mystery along with Jacob and a new acquaintance she meets within the city. Together the trio has to vanquish the spirit before it grows strong enough to do them real harm. While this book didn't match up with my travels this fall it did call me back to when I was a teenager being dragged around very willingly, I'll add by my own parents, including to the streets of Paris and the catacombs underneath the city. Victoria Schwab does a fantastic job transporting us to the musty and dank tunnels that are lined with ossuaries were the bones of the city's dead reside. I love this kind of creepy, middle grade genre which is right on the edge of what you can hand to every middle grader and hand to every adult. If you like being gently terrified by your books, gentle terror, like gentle terror, gentle terror, right? This entire series is the way to go. If you'd like a little more creep, you might pick up *The Night Gardener* or *The Screaming Staircase* or *100 Cupboards*. But if you want to read a story or a series together with your kids are you just not the reader who needs the full T T square experience? This is going to be the perfect fit for you. Well, I can say I enjoyed the first book in the series slightly more, this was still a solid entry. And I'm looking forward to picking up the third and final book in *The Cassidy Blake* series, which is called *Bridge of Souls*. And I'll probably do that next year. But right now I'm making a mental note that it takes place in New Orleans. So hopefully I can match up my place and my expectations a little better next time. This one is called *tunnel of bones* by Victoria Schwab.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 20:34

Oh, I like that she's going to different cities like different kind of haunted cities. That's really smart.

**Kaytee Cobb** 20:40

Yeah, I mean, I would have liked it to be in Scotland again. But it was great to go to Paris and I have not been to New Orleans. So I kind of want to make it a thing now. Like, is it dumb to travel to New Orleans? Just because I want to read a book there.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 20:54

No, absolutely not a reason to go. If you could, you could totally do a whole book his trip to New Orleans. I mean, I think you could probably do something great. There.

**Kaytee Cobb** 21:03

I write it off. Exactly. It's research.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 21:07**

All right. My second book this week is a real departure from Slewfoot. This is as far away as we can get. My second book this week is *Under the Influence* by Noelle Crooks. Here's the setup. After a series of low level jobs in the New York publishing world, Harper Cruz is out of money and desperate to make enough money to make her rent predictably, she just wants to be able to make it in New York and she would love to have a job where she had a sense that her input actually mattered. So when she stumbled across a job posting from an influencer, offering her triple her last paycheck and company culture, culture culture, she automatically submits her resume. At the start. Harper isn't familiar with self help guru Charlotte green, but her relentless optimism and charismatic can do spirit has created a cult like following of women across the country. And when Charlotte green selects Harper among 1000s of other applicants in less than 24 hours, it's obvious that Charlotte sees something that she likes. And despite the pressure to accept the offer very, very quickly, Harper decides to throw caution to the wind and become the newest member of what is called the Green House. And that means a move to Nashville and right into the heart of the glamorous world that Charlotte Green has built. In Music City. The green house is more than a workplace. It's a family think capital F and an exclamation point. And Harper soon find herself swept into this inner circle. You can see where this is going. At first, she loves working in such an inspirational environment with their surprise dance parties and daily intention setting and group bonding activities. But there's also very long hours and Charlotte's persistent demands for loyalty. And the deeper that Harper is pulled into Charlotte's world, the more Harper realizes that having it all comes with a price. All right, this book got a lot of hype when it came out because its author worked as a branding executive, for none other than Rachel Hollis girl, wash your face or washer. But what? Okay, yeah, what was her? What was her book,

**Kaytee Cobb 23:22**

it's Wash your Face.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 23:24**

And given what I know about the Rachel Hollis story, which I'm going to admit, I have done a couple of deep dives on this book. Certainly hews really closely to what people say happened in Rachel Hollis this company, and it was under the influence was definitely an interesting read. It's very juicy, and it reads like someone with a chip on her shoulder. And if you're in the right mood, it's page turning as heck. The short chapters and near constant action are certainly another reason that I read this book in one sitting. And also I read it fast because it's a book that is in a pretty negative headspace. I wanted to shout over and over again to the lead character when she was thinking one thing internally, but then doing another thing externally, that drives this reader batty. The other reason that this book was only three stars for me is that it comes from a very specific point of view as it had to do with things related to work and work expectation. There's a lot of talk and complaining in this book about long hours, but I found myself thinking Come on, what did you think was going to happen? That's how these big companies get big. And also they offered you triple your salary. Did you not think there was going to be some sacrifice at the other end of this? She was just that Harper was just so incredibly entitled throughout the story. And also she was constantly complaining about certain things, but then also complaining about the opposite of those things. And that drives this reader really, really batty. So don't get me wrong, I was glued to this book the whole time. And I absolutely wanted to know what was going to happen. And I was very interested in the many details that we get about what it's like to



actually work for or be an influencer at this level. I knew it before but I definitely know it now. It's not a job that I want. It seems exhausting. I will say that if you love *The Devil Wears Prada* and stories like that, when you will find a lot to be interested in here. But between the whiny tone and the overly tidy ending, this one did not work for me. This is *Under the Influence* by Noelle Crooks. Have you heard about this one at all Kaytee

**Kaytee Cobb** 25:50

I had an eye because I was a bit looky loo about everything with Rachel Hollis, I was like side eyeing it. You know, maybe I do want to pick that up. But I'm so I'm really glad that you brought it to the show. Because those types of that narrative voice and that, you know, doing something outside of yourself that you disagree with inside of yourself. I hate that so much. So it would really blowing

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 26:16

past a million red flags moving across the country, for someone that you really haven't met and apparently have done no research on what they stand for. It's just things like this, that makes me just want to go no, no, no. But again, it was really page turning. So I want to you know, it was interesting. Well,

**Kaytee Cobb** 26:38

and it does seem like there are going to be readers who are thrilled to have a book like this. Like I can see this being a great book for even me if I'm in the space where I'm standing in the grocery store checkout line are about to get on a plane. And I'm looking at gossip magazines instead of novels, because I'm not in the right space to pick up a story that requires something of me where I just want to be like, You know what, like, tell me all the dirty. I just want the dirty. Yeah, give it to me. Yep. So I can see that being a really great fit for that situation. Right?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 27:11

And there's definitely a lot of Gen X that I'm bringing to my reading here. And so, you know, I'm seeing it through that lens too. So I want to be I want to read or Know thyself.

**Kaytee Cobb** 27:24

Yes, for sure. Okay, my next one is by an author I really love it's *The Wind Knows My Name* by Isabel Allende. So this was Isabel Allende's 2023 release. She's one of my favorite writers of a very specific historical literary fiction. That's like she has this perfect little niche. She's carved her spot and it's exactly Isabel Allende shaped, and she fills it very well. This one was excellent. It felt very much within her regular wheelhouse to me. So let's see what y'all think. We started in Vienna in 1938. World War Two, where we meet young Samuel Adler. He is a prodigy who plays violin like a teeny, tiny Angel. When his father disappears during Kristallnacht. His mother sends him on one of the last Kindertransport trains leaving Nazi occupied Austria. Jewish children were sent on these trains to the United Kingdom to help keep them safe as the war started to escalate. He boards alone with only his beloved violin and a single change of clothes for company. Our second storyline starts in 2019 in Arizona, Anita is the protagonist kind of of that one. She's seven years old, and she's blind. She and her mother board a train a different one, obviously from El Salvador fleeing for their lives to seek refuge in the United States. Their family is separated because there are new policies at the border, and Anita is blind and alone in a refugee camp

in Nogales. She is unable to see but she has a fantastical imagination, which allows her to mentally escape the horse around her. Thankfully, her case is assigned to Selena Duran. She's a young social worker who has been trying to get top law firms in the area to join in a pro bono Crusade for Justice for these families that are being separated at the border. These two stories will come together as they develop into this historical and contemporary novel. Isabel Allende had me fully believing that if I went to look up Anita Diaz, I might be able to find a girl who's now 11 years old, I might be able to travel to the city where Samuel Adler lives now as a very old man, by the end of this book, during the pandemic, and knock on his apartment door. These characters felt very real and fully drawn to me. It wouldn't surprise me in the slightest to run into them, and feel like we already know each other pretty well. In the same way I nd invites us to care about situations and connections that may not have touched our lives otherwise. I've lived on this southern border of the United States for almost all of my life. All but three years of my life. I've lived in either Arizona or New Mexico, but I've never visited my migrant camp. I've never have been inside a border facility for refugees. I've only seen small bits and pieces on the news. Even though this all happens in my own backyard. Isabel Allende's research and travels within this book gave me the opportunity to see inside those two very separate historical events with new eyes. And that's what makes me love historical fiction, especially ones that take place outside of a certain period of time. This novel allowed me to travel through time, and across half the world with her characters. And I really enjoyed it. So while it felt like, Yes, this is typical Isabel Allende, it was also exactly what I was hoping to get from her. This was *The Wind Knows My Name* by Isabel Allende.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 30:41

I mean, we talked about this before, there is something to be said for knowing what you're going to get when you pick up a book by an author. You know, what mood you're in, you know what they're going to give you. You know, you're in great literary hands. She's not going to not be great. Yeah. And so I mean, there's something to be said for that. We can call it predictable, but it's also reassuring In a

**Kaytee Cobb** 31:03

way yes. Yes. Like you're in safe hands. Yeah, like an insurance commercial. Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 31:09

All right. Well, safe hands. Also, here we are in a safe genre choice for me because we're back squarely in the mystery thriller genre here with *Kill Show* by Daniel Sweren-Becker. Here's the setup. Sarah Purcell is pretty sweet, 16 and white. So when she disappeared without a trace on a crisp April morning in Frederick, Maryland, the story completely predictably, becomes a national obsession. And even more interesting, it becomes the center of a very controversial television Docu series that follows her disappearance in real time. In real time, like within just a few hours of her disappearance, there is a crew on site. As our story opens, it's 10 years later, 10 years after the disappearance, and an unnamed reporter is writing an oral history of what happened. And so we get the clues a little bit at a time, but who can we believe who had an agenda? Who's hiding something? Author Sweren-Becker never lets you get confused. Every time the narrative changes the name and the occupation of the person telling this part of the story is identified for you. And everyone wants to talk. There are Sara's teenage friends, the detective, the reality show producer who made that Docu series, and to deal with the girl's parents, a TV critic and lots of other people in town at the time of the disappearance. The author uses them all to tell the story and also to comment on the larger issues of reality shows the people who watch them

and the people who produce them. Alright, Roxanna saw this book, before it even came out. And she sent me something saying, I feel like this is right up your alley, my friend. And she was absolutely right. This book isn't long, but it packs a punch. It is the riveting story of a missing girl. Yes. It's also a story of a family going through the unimaginable. It's the story of the police doing their best to try to find said missing girl. And it's the story of a female producer and her drive to both find the truth and make a viral hit television series. And it's that last part where this book really shines. It's a great what happened sort of book don't get me wrong on that. But it also brings to the table a very nuanced look into how true crime documentaries and reality shows are produced. And spoiler, they aren't always looking out for the victim and the victim's family. The way the book is constructed as an oral history is very, very interesting. We're getting more of these, and I love it. I love how from the start. You're getting the story, but you're also getting little asides. Have you going wait, what? What did they just say? And what does that mean? It was so interesting and perfectly paced. I read it in just a couple of hours. And it's not long, so you can just gulp it down. If you love to crime, you will love this. If you love behind the scenes of reality shows, you will love this. And if you love to be a fly on the wall as shocking things go down. You will absolutely love this. This is Kill Show by Daniel Sweren-Becker.

**Kaytee Cobb** 34:28

The very beginning of that setup or a lot of that setup reminds me of an article I read on NPR a couple years ago, I think at this point now, but it's about how you can plug in the parameters of your age, your ethnicity, your profession, and it will predict how many news stories will be made about you if you go missing. Oh, which is really interesting. And it depends on all those factors, right, but they can very accurately predict. Here's how much you'll be able to capture the country's like media attention and that very beginning of setup, I'm like, Well, of course, of course everyone cares about this young, sweet, beautiful white girl like yeah, of course she does and it would become this huge thing. Yeah, I'll make sure I send that link to Megan so she can put it in the show notes but it's super interesting. Ya

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:19

know, it touches on all of those things and then also the just the true crime Juggernaut and how much we want to be there and really know but what happened but what did they say? But how did they feel? It's really a very interesting book.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:35

Yeah, it sounds interesting. And I love oral histories. Yeah, if they're done well, like they can be done not so great, but I love them.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 35:44

Now this one is so good. I think this and Fantasticland are probably my two favorites and I know that other people are gonna say Daisy Jones and the Six which was fine it's just not my bag but the Fantasticland and Kill Show from our for me the best oral history books.

**Kaytee Cobb** 35:58

Well, for nonfiction, I'll go with Only Plane in the Sky. But sure, that's very that's a hard read. Yes. Okay, my third one this week is nonfiction. It's called Beyond the Wand by Tom Felton. This is so kitschy. I am so excited to talk about this. Most of us probably know but maybe not everyone that Tom Felton is an

actor who is most known for playing Draco Malfoy in all eight Harry Potter films. I picked up his memoir at Foyles in London, because I was at Foyles in London. And then I decided to read it shortly after I got home. This memoir follows his life from his birth into a family of rowdy brothers with parents who adored each of them and worked hard to make ends meet. He chronicles his first roles in commercials and in film, including when he was cast in the borrower's and war, this horrendous red wig, and worked alongside actors that he now realizes as an adult were giants in the industry, but he just didn't grok that at the time. He was like, well, that's just Jodie Foster no big deal. Right? You're like, no big deal. I 12 years old, when he auditioned for the Harry Potter franchise, he hadn't read a single book in the series, he went to a huge casting call with hundreds of kids. And his inherent 12 year old tween isness made him a really great fit for the part and caught the eye of director Chris Columbus immediately, I'd say about 60% or more of this book is about his time growing up as a wizard, because he's my age or a little younger. It's a huge part of his life. We're talking about eight years of the 35 at the time, he had lived on this earth. This is a huge budget, world renowned film, and he had to balance his life between trying to be a normal kid, and trying to be a world famous actor at the same time. And of course, that isn't easy. He shares stories from behind the scenes, pivotal moments with the phenomenal actors of the series. And the times he caused trouble on set, especially with Crabbe and Goyle. His to like trouble causing buddies in flutter in house. As the series comes to a close, he finds himself drifting a bit. He's being offered roles without trying out and then trying out for roles and getting no offers. He's trying to find his footing again, and starts really struggling with alcohol consumption. He's young, though, like I said, and this memoir feels a bit like what I like to call a messy middle memoir, in that he's hopefully got a lot of life still left to live, and many more lessons to learn. I don't think I have it in me to write a memoir right now at 39. Because hopefully, I've got a lot more to learn before I'm ready to distill it onto the page. But I really enjoyed taking a peek inside the life of a child actor who has become one of the more recognizable faces of my generation, which as a reminder, I'm a millennial, and absolutely loved looking through the photo inset included in this book, to really bring the stories to life, including him in that horrible red curly borrower's wig standing next to Jodie Foster. It was a delight. I loved hearing it in his voice. So I did of course pick up the audio but also enjoyed looking through those photos and rereading select stories out loud to my kids in my own voice, because I had the paper copy that I purchased at Foyles. So this was Beyond the Wand by Tom Felton,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:15

I was gonna say you had to have picked it up for some period of time just to hear of course, I would imagine that his Yeah, his voice would definitely add to the experience. Oh,

**Kaytee Cobb** 39:24

Draco we like yeah, like he's not as snide and icky as a person, of course, and people would be like, come up to him on the street and be like, Why can't you just stop being so rude to poor Harry? And he's like, Well, I'm an actor. Like, I'm not actually that person.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 39:42

It would be so hard to play a very famous villain because I just am not sure you ever, you know that you ever fully come out of that mode?

**Kaytee Cobb 39:51**

Yeah, I agree. I think it'd be. It'd be difficult for sure. Okay, those were our six current reads. And now we get to get into our deep dive. We which is hopefully going to make us hungry. We're going to talk about foodie books to read after you get Thanksgiving dinner on the table. And I'm excited about this deep dive. I was telling Meredith when we got started today that I gave myself some bumpers, so I have kind of a fun game to play with regard to these book picks. But that's partially because we did a foodie books deep dive on trope Thursday, a few months back that Bumi and I talked about our favorite foodie books. Yes. And at the time, I took a page out of Meredith's books, and I came up with a food metaphor for every book on my list. So I was like, this book is the perfect plate of pasta. And this one is perfectly seared scallops. And so I wanted to play with foodie books in a different way, because I had just done this other fun thing with it.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 40:45**

I love it. I'm so glad that you had this idea to do it this way. So, yes, I just want to draft on your genius for this deep dive. So that's gonna be fun. Let's hear what you got. Okay, so

**Kaytee Cobb 40:56**

with that in mind, what I've done is I've plated my Thanksgiving table, and I've picked a book to pair with each food on my plate. So so good. So it's a huge plate, obviously like Thanksgiving. You're going overboard, right? Yeah. First we're gonna start with the turkey. It's service show is the traditional portion of your Thanksgiving meal. I went with Animal Vegetable Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver, because it feels like a back to the land traditional foodie book to sit in the middle of your table. Substantial anchoring. Yes, yes. It's got lots of great recipes within it. She even talks about turkeys and how they don't even know how to mate anymore because the knowledge has been bred out of them. Oh, no. Which is really fun to learn about after you've just eaten turkey. Oh, my goodness. Yeah. Can you imagine that's terrible. These are I mean, these are words that are dumb enough, they can drown in the rain, because they're looking straight up at the sky. So it's a thing. Geeze. It's a thing. So it's chock full of recipes. It might they might inspire your next culinary adventures before you go to the turkey trot to walk off all the turkey you just ate.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 42:07**

I probably shouldn't even say it because I think it's gonna lose me. If anyone does the last few people who do like me, they're not gonna like me anymore, because I actually, I make the whole Thanksgiving dinner. But I don't do the turkey because here in Texas, I can go get smoked turkey from one of the most fantastic barbecue places. And I just order like 10 pounds of smoked turkey. And on Thanksgiving morning, we go and get it. And then I do all the sides. And I do all like Thanksgiving is my favorite meal of the year. So like I go really, really big with it even when it was just me Jackson and Johnny like the years where it was just us because of COVID or whatever. But I do this smoked turkey and it's for me a roasted turkey is never the start of the show. But smoked turkey is absolutely so anyway, nobody cares about this, but I just felt like I needed to in Turkey.

**Kaytee Cobb 42:56**

So I'm on board. I like it. The next thing on my plate and I don't know if this is the next thing on everyone else's plate is sweet potatoes. And yes, I'm going carb heavy because the regular potatoes

are coming later. Don't worry guys, my sweet potatoes have a little surprise in them that I mix chipotle peppers into my sweet potatoes who have a little kick to them. It's a little surprise. It's not just the brown sugar and mashed potatoes and butter that we're seeing in a lot of sweet potato casseroles. It's delicious. So for that reason, I'm going to recommend Taste by Stanley Tucci here because he throws in a few F bombs for spice. And I think that's the kind of unexpected delight of finding Chipotle in your sweet potatoes. Is you just like wow, they're standing to just cussing about people eating spaghetti wrong. Good job him. I love

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 43:42

it. Now I would add to this Arsenic and Adobo one of my favorite Yes, cozy mysteries. But that has certainly it's a great mystery just on its own. It's cozy. So you know take that for what it is. But it's got so much great food scription. So Filipino food is what we're talking about here. It made me so hungry the whole way through, but with just enough spice to be interesting. So this would be a good pairing there. Definitely.

**Kaytee Cobb** 44:08

That is a great option to go right there with it. Okay, my next thing on my plate is green beans. We got a little bit of crunch. If you're like me, because I cannot abide mushy brown beans from a can. They have no place on my Thanksgiving table, which makes them technically a little bit good for you because they're the green thing on your plate. But there's also probably condensed super butter and those bad boys. So I went with another messy middle memoir Notes From a Young Black Chef by Kwame Onwauchi yep, I am on the record as wanting more from this book because I wanted a follow up or a five years later. Here's what else I've learned and achieved but it's interesting and exciting to look inside the kitchen from a young black man's perspective. And it's not going to hurt you to put a little color on your plate or on your bookshelf so you could have the green beans and the black chef and both are going to add color to your life and your diet. That's what I had to go with that one.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:01

Yes, this is on my list too. For me. It's this book is all about the behind the scenes to starting funding and owning a young restaurant. And that was what I really really liked about notes from young black chef. So I absolutely recommend it if that part of the business of food is interesting to you.

**Kaytee Cobb** 45:21

Definitely. Okay, now we're doing the regular potatoes. They could be scallops, they could be mashed. They're your standard Idaho's, right. These are a staple no matter how you make them. So I feel like this spot calls for a true ode to the humble potato and the joy of eating as a whole. Because potatoes will sustain us through famine, even in the darkest of times. So I'm going with Food, A Love Story by Jim Gaffigan. Oh, yes. Who sometimes looks a little like a potato. And I think he would be happy with that.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 45:50

He would say that. He would say that. So yeah, I Yes. And do you know in my family, we do two kinds of mashed potatoes. We do classic mashed potatoes and we do something that might is from my sister in law that now we do every time called snowy mash. These are mashed potatoes with garlic and sour

cream. So they are much whiter than the regular potato and now everyone loves him so much people don't want to have to choose. So we do both.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:15

So so why not just do all snowy mash? That sounds delicious. Because

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:19

people also really love classic mashed potatoes. Okay, that's fair, because with snowy mash, you don't really want to as much put gravy on them. But you do have to have gravy on your classic measurement. Yes,

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:31

there has to be gravy for sure. Right? For our just comfort

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 46:35

food comfort food that is mashed potatoes, I have to add A City Bakers Guide to Country Living by Louise Miller. This is sweet, but it's also got a little bit of salt in it. This has amazing descriptions of food, a lot of baked goods, but it's just that comforting kind of feeling that you get from a classic mashed potato.

**Kaytee Cobb** 46:57

I love it. I think that's a great pick for that spot. Okay, so but because we need gravy with our mashed potatoes, we'll do gravy. Next. This is I'm calling this a little bit more high maintenance part of dinner, because you can't make it too early or it'll get all gross and congealed. Yep. And you can make it from a packet or a jar but I promise it's not gonna be as good as the real gravy that comes from the drippings. Which How do you do that? If you have smoked turkey that somebody else is making?

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:24

I'm not going to tell you

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:25

okay, because I just made a judgy comments I could

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:28

in can and Trader Joe's gravy. Okay. Well,

**Kaytee Cobb** 47:31

to me the real deal of gravy and drippings is the unvarnished truth. And that's Anthony Bourdain in Kitchen Confidential, which Meredith actually pressed into my hands a few years back at the beginning of the show, I think, yes,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 47:45

that is quite a read. That is an eye opening read, for sure. And for me, in this category, I think of all the books by Ruth, Reichl Ryko. We've never decided how to say her name. But again, we're talking about

the business of food. We're talking about getting food exactly right. Yes, she was reviewable, high maintenance, high maintenance. So for you know, both of those. Yes, I think we can really, really talk about the fact that we're striving for perfection in some areas of food, and certainly where Anthony Bourdain and Ruth, Reichl we're, we're working. Yeah,

**Kaytee Cobb 48:20**

I agree. I agree. Okay, we're gonna get a little Zippy here with our cranberry sauce. This is the sweetness and the acid on our plate cuts through the fat, the heavy, it brightens the dish. Right,

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 48:31**

right. We again, we have to have two kinds of cranberry sauce because we have to have the can candling we also have to have the homemade so it's all it's a lot.

**Kaytee Cobb 48:40**

It's a lot. Yeah. Well, you got people with strong opinions and you get a large table full of a lot of different foods, right? Yes. Okay, so I put in this category, Chef's Kiss by TJ Alexander. It's sweet and bright and fun. It's foodie and that it takes place in a professional kitchen as a cooking, show revamps for an internet audience because their regular standard audience has just been declining precipitously. It's got really great rep on the LGBT spectrum for that zip of orange zest if you like that little unexpected kick and your cranberry sauce.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:11**

All right. I have the perfect when to pair with that. And it's a book that I read a long time ago, but I think about it all the time. And it is wonderful. It's a wonderful backlist book. It's La Cucina by Lilly Pryor. Have you read this book?

**Kaytee Cobb 49:25**

I haven't, but I remember you talking about it long ago. Long ago. One of your presses.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz 49:30**

Yes, it is a little bit Chocolat, a little bit Like Water for Chocolate. This is the story of Rosa, who's an Italian woman who lives a big, full, sad and happy life. It's got great food, great sex scenes, and a perfect ending. It's got that zip and zest and spice that you're looking for. Oh, La Cucina is so good and it's got a gorgeous cover.

**Kaytee Cobb 49:55**

Oh, I love it. Okay, this is getting long, but I still have two more categor We're about to go. Okay, the next one you're gonna love Meredith. It's our it's our bread. It could be crescent rolls. It could be biscuits, it could be dinner rolls, Hawaiian rolls, I put Legends and Lattes here by Travis Baldry. When I flex here, when I saw him in person this past week, he was asked if he got hungry, writing his books, as hungry as we do reading them. And he mentioned he's probably hungrier because he writes in his sound booth that he records audiobooks in with no snacks and no distractions, so he can't even assuage that hunger a little bit. So being really not hungry when you read legends and lattes or his new



release Bookshops and Bonedust is probably a pretty good plan. But if you can't pull that off, buttery baked goods are the way to go. They're going to be your best friend.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 50:45

Absolutely. Well, this is perfect because what I would pair with this is another cozy fantasy book, which has become a series. It's called The House Which by Delemhach another single word, single word, author. This book is so sweet. It's got all the cozy fantasy that we love about legends and lattes and the house, which is a this guy who is a fantastic chef and he is hired to work in the kitchen. And so he uses some of his natural abilities and some of his magical abilities, and he makes the most delicious things in his kitchen. So that that would be a perfect pairing with legends and lattes. Yes, those two

**Kaytee Cobb** 51:23

are friends for sure. I'm positive. All right, and we have to finish off our meal with dessert. I'm gonna say choose your own adventure, but we assume there's some kind of sweet treat there's going to be pie probably. But I am pairing Black Cake by Charmaine Wilkerson, so many great books that could go in this spot, but this one with short chapters, beautiful prose, and a propulsive plot is the perfect one to dip into when you're about to hit maximum capacity on family or food.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 51:49

All right, what I know one, collective groan all together because I have to say, Still Life the first book in the three pine series, it is set in autumn in Canadian Thanksgiving, we actually are there at the Canadian Thanksgiving meal that they share, and lots of other meals and certainly lots and lots of sweet treats to tempt you. I have to put a plug in for the very first book in the three pines series Still Life.

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:16

Perfect. I think we filled a lot of plates today, Meredith perfectly filled.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 52:22

I am so looking forward to Thanksgiving and even more now that we have all of these great books to think about while we're eating. Yes,

**Kaytee Cobb** 52:30

definitely. If you guys like this kind of thing, Novel Neighbor is way way good at it. And I'm guessing on Thanksgiving morning, they're going to have some kind of social media post that is essentially the same thing as this because they're so good at like, if you reach for the mushroom casserole first like some kind of obscure, and there'll be like the perfect book would be Taylor Swift's unpublished memoir, or whatever, and they're just, it's gonna be so perfect. So visit them if you need more of this, but it was really fun to play around with.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:00

That was really fun. You had a great idea, Kaytee Excellent.

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:04

Okay, now we get to go to the fountain and make some wishes, Meredith.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:08

Okay. My wish today is that I really just do want to take this opportunity to be incredibly thankful. I want to be incredibly thankful for all of our amazing listeners. And we have so many wonderful, wonderful listeners are our bookish friends, all of our supporters, our families who make it possible for us to do this, and all the other things that we do. And Katie, I really want to say how grateful I am for you. We've been doing this for a long time together, and it just keeps getting better and better. So I am very, very grateful for you. And I just really wish that you know that

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:45

that's supposed to be my job to do this happy Thanksgiving. I

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 53:49

know I thought I would

**Kaytee Cobb** 53:50

I thought I would surprise you served me. Okay. Back on the train. I am going to give our listeners homework. So I wish this week to hear about your favorite indie bookstores. This is a circle back to my bookish moment this week. But we want to make sure we know about your favorite indie bookstores for when we book out our indie press list schedules. It's totally possible that by the time you guys hear this 2024 We'll be all the way booked out. But I open that survey results spreadsheet every single month to see if there's another bookstore that I need to keep at the top of my radar. And we love this program so much we love getting to surprise these bookstores with do this little bit of work for us. And we're going to do a really big exciting thing for you. So if you have a bookstore that is just it just makes your heart happy to think about it. We want to know about it. We want to know what makes them so great. Where it is. And hopefully we'll end up reaching out to them. So fill out the survey link which I'll make sure it's in show notes this week to make sure we know about it. That's my wish. Pink splash.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 54:55

All right. That is it for this week. As reminder, here's where you can connect with us. You can find me. I'm Meredith at @MeredithMondaySchwartz on Instagram. And

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:04

you can find me Kaytee at @notesonbookmarks on Instagram, full

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:08

show notes with the title of every book we mentioned in the episode and timestamps, so you can zoom right to where we talked about it can be found on our website at [currentlyreadingpodcast.com](https://currentlyreadingpodcast.com).

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:17

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**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:24

And you can become a bookish friend for only \$5 a month, you can get so much more content and you will be ready to get that fantastic spreadsheet, your reading log your reading tracker, you need this for 2024 Become a bookish friend and you will get that automatically. You can also rate and review us on Apple podcasts and shout us out on social media. All of those things help us to find our perfect audience. Yes,

**Kaytee Cobb** 55:52

bookish friends are the best friends. Thank you all for helping us grow and get closer

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 55:57

to our goals. Alright, until next week, may your coffee be hot and your

**Kaytee Cobb** 56:01

book be unputdownable.

**Meredith Monday Schwartz** 56:02

Happy reading Kaytee

**Kaytee Cobb** 56:03

Happy reading Meredith