



# Pomegranate Soup

*Marsha Mehran*

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## **Pomegranate Soup** Marsha Mehran

Beneath the holy mountain Croagh Patrick, in damp and lovely County Mayo, sits the small, sheltered village of Ballinacroagh. To the exotic Aminpour sisters, Ireland looks like a much-needed safe haven. It has been seven years since Marjan Aminpour fled Iran with her younger sisters, Bahar and Layla, and she hopes that in Ballinacroagh, a land of “crazed sheep and dizzying roads,” they might finally find a home.

From the kitchen of an old pastry shop on Main Mall, the sisters set about creating a Persian oasis. Soon sensuous wafts of cardamom, cinnamon, and saffron float through the streets—an exotic aroma that announces the opening of the Babylon Café, and a shock to a town that generally subsists on boiled cabbage and Guinness served at the local tavern. And it is an affront to the senses of Ballinacroagh’s uncrowned king, Thomas McGuire. After trying to buy the old pastry shop for years and failing, Thomas is enraged to find it occupied—and by foreigners, no less.

But the mysterious, spicy fragrances work their magic on the townsfolk, and soon, business is booming. Marjan is thrilled with the demand for her red lentil soup, abgusht stew, and rosewater baklava—and with the transformation in her sisters. Young Layla finds first love, and even tense, haunted Bahar seems to be less nervous.

And in the stand-up-comedian-turned-priest Father Fergal Mahoney, the gentle, lonely widow Estelle Delmonico, and the headstrong hairdresser Fiona Athey, the sisters find a merry band of supporters against the close-minded opposition of less welcoming villagers stuck in their ways. But the idyll is soon broken when the past rushes back to threaten the Amnipoors once more, and the lives they left behind in revolution-era Iran bleed into the present.

Infused with the textures and scents, trials and triumphs of two distinct cultures, **Pomegranate Soup** is an infectious novel of magical realism. This richly detailed story, highlighted with delicious recipes, is a delectable journey into the heart of Persian cooking and Irish living.

## **Pomegranate Soup Details**

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ISBN : 9780812972481  
Author : Marsha Mehran  
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# From Reader Review Pomegranate Soup for online ebook

## Pixietweet Clip says

I hated every second of this pseudo magic realist oeuvre. The writing is trying so hard to be eloquent and poetic but it's totally Hallmark. The writer graduated from the adjective school of writing. Yuck. Then again it's an easy read if you're in bed with the flu.

on the plus side: great recipes. little glimpse into both Iranian and Irish life.

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## Seher Andaç says

Çörek otu!

Love-in-a-mist!

Amor en una niebla!

Benim için kitap,zaman ö?ütücü günlerin üzerine serpilmi? çörek otlu sayfalar oldu bir nevi....

....

Dip not: Hikaye nas?ld? diye sordu bir arkada??m. Paketi aç?kta b?rak?lm?? petibör bisküvi gibi diye cevaplad?m:

"Bayat ve fakat yine de leziz, lezzetli! Sen sen ol; çörek otlar?n? cebinde ta??yan okuyucu ol!"

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## Emma says

I do feel I'm being a bit harsh here. There was such lot to like about this book - I'm a sucker for a cozy novel about food, initially it seemed a lightweight derivative of "Like water for chocolate" - which is brilliant & of course you can't expect every novel to invent a new genre. There is quite a bit of interesting and quite dark material about fleeing from Iran & then her sometimes insightful & sometimes rather dismissive view of Oirland. However ultimately I found this novel really lacked the cohesion of a more successful work. The character development was poor, the pacing was awful, the story was okay but lacked direction. Incidents & characters just popped up & disappeared. There was a strange mix of fragmented past history (without much insight - neighbour mean, husband was abusive) & then silly jolly asides about leprechauns, naughty local pranksters & ambitions of a disco - which didn't really progress the story or add much dimension to the characters. Comparing to some pretty solid novels that I have awarded with 3 stars, I felt bound to be a bit cruel here.

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## Cynthia says

Fabulous story of Iranian women fleeing the revolution who land in a small Irish town. Food figures in it similar to the way it does in "Like Water for Chocolate". It borders on magical realism (Irish-Iranian magical realism?)The moral of the story is that we all must change and move on in our lives. the past is always behind us and the future ahead.

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## Rebecca says

This book was very wonderful for what it was--a delicious mixture of food and the personal journeys of three sisters who escape Iran on the eve of the revolution and eventually make their way to Ireland. This book pleasantly reminded me of another book about the magic of food from another culture--The Mistress of Spices.

We learn of the sisters' experiences in Iran through flashbacks throughout the book, and I really appreciated Mehran's light touch in her descriptions of the sisters' painful memories. In my opinion, too many books are heavy-handed and overwhelming with sadness when they flashback to such events. Mehran had just the right combination of sadness and facts that made me want to learn more about this terrible time in Iran, but did not frighten me away from the violent history.

In Ireland, the sumptuous exotic spices of the sisters' cooking reinvigorate the aspirations of the townsfolk in Ballinacroagh and bring them together. I (of course) was hungry the entire time reading the book and would love to try some of the recipes that Mehran includes before every chapter. A yummy light read that delivered all it promised.

I am looking forward to discussing it at my book club on Monday and will post any other revelations our discussion brings. On a happy note, this might be my most successful book club pick ever--thanks Holyn for joining GoodReads so I could read your review!

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## Magulec says

Ca?kiem sympatyczna ksi??ka, bardzo podoba mi si? pomys? z przepisami, koniecznie b?d? musia?a co? wypr?bowa?.

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## Tina says

Journey with the Aminpour sisters as they embark on a new chapter of their lives in Marsha Mehran's novel, Pomegranate Soup. Marjan, Bahar and Layla escape amidst the Iran Revolution and open up the Babylon Caf  in a small Irish village where they awaken sleeping dreams and ignite new possibilities. Anyone who has been an outsider in a close-knit community can relate to the sisters who are faced with suspicion and discrimination in their new home. Moreover, they continue to be haunted by the past that never leaves.

A book for travelers and food lovers alike, Pomegranate Soup is resplendent in the history and details of people, tastes and landscapes. Mehran builds textural layers of the senses, taking the reader on a voyage of food and places. In the process, she portrays food as the vehicle it is in bringing people together and introducing new cultures. Indeed, 11 fairly straightforward Persian recipes are included so the reader can do the same. This uplifting tale is wonderful tribute to family, community and new beginnings.

It is a wonderful gift with a tray of rosewater baklava.

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### **Jessaka says**

My dear friend Cathy sent me this book, and I imagine that she bought it because of its title: Pomegranate Soup, which is the best soup that I have ever eaten. She and I had it as a small Persian café, Soltan Banno, in San Diego, CA just before I moved to Oklahoma.

I had met Cathy in an encounter group while in college. We both lived in Berkeley, and at one time we both dated Iranians. I moved to San Diego just before moving to Oklahoma. She and I remain close friends to this very day.

In the book, three Persian sisters who had escaped Iran, came to Ireland to open up a Persian café where they served this wonderful soup and other Iranian delights. At the end of each chapter there is a recipe, which reminds of the book, Like Water for Chocolate.

The Iranian, Mehran, that I dated while living in Berkeley, like the woman in this story, had also escaped Iran in the time of the uprising.

Mehran once made me a Persian dish, Chelo Kabab with Masto-Khiar. It too was very good. But nothing is better than that soup, which recipe I wish I had. Both recipes may have been in the book, but I no longer own it so I don't recall.

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### **Jennifer (JC-S) says**

Sometimes it is good to suspend belief and surrender your imagination to a form of magical realism which can transcend cultural barriers.

Three orphaned sisters, who fled Iran seven years earlier, have found their way to a small town in Ireland where they hope to make a home. They bring with them their heritage, their demons and their hopes for a better future. Marjan, Bahar and Layla open the Babylon Cafe in the heart of Ballinacroagh's Main Mall. The smell of traditional Persian cooking wafting through the Mall works its own magic on many of the townsfolk: business is growing as is acceptance. But the past is not yet finished with the sisters, and their future is threatened.

In part this novel is about the clash of cultures and inherent suspicion about what is different. It is equally about the power of hope and the unifying role of food and the role of senses in life. In many ways, both the characters and the setting are irrelevant to these unifying points. The setting could be small town anywhere, the sisters could have any different cultural heritage. At the same time as each sister confronts her demons, many of the townspeople find the courage to question their own assumptions and values.

The novel contains some delicious recipes which some readers will wish to try, while others of us will simply enjoy the possibility. While many of the characters are lightly drawn stereotypes this doesn't really detract from the power of the novel. A comparatively light read to be sure, but one with a powerful underlying message for those who want to accept it.

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### **Sahar says**

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### **Nicole says**

Set in the 1980s, three Iranian sisters set up a cafe in an Irish village to escape demons from the Iranian Revolution. First viewed with suspicion by most of the village, the sisters slowly carve a place for themselves. Lush descriptions of food and sympathetic characters make this an enjoyable and quick read. I am pleased to see that the author's second book is coming out in May 2008.

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### **Lisa says**

This was a delicious summer read. Part "Journey from the Land of No", part "The Taste of Chocolate", Marsha Mehran tells a magical tale of 3 sisters who change the village of Ballinacroagh, Ireland when they move to town after fleeing the Iranian revolution. In the process of becoming part of the community and influencing the people who live there, they begin to come to terms with their own painful past. Each chapter starts with a recipe for a Persian delicacy which is incorporated into the story. At times I really wanted to go out and find a Persian restaurant -- or to go to a grocery store to find the unusual ingredients required to cook some of these dishes myself!

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### **Lilisa says**

Set in the fictitious village of Ballinacroagh of County Mayo in western Ireland, the book opens with three sisters working feverishly as they count down the minutes to the opening of their new café – the Babylon Café. It's here that Marjan, Berhar and Layla are planting their roots after having fled Iran during the Iranian revolution of 1979 via Pakistan to the safe shores of London. Having toiled in the U.K. for a while, they have found solace in the beautiful country of Ireland, where they feel they can put the past behind them and start afresh by recreating the wonderful foods they grew up with - dolmeh, red lentil soup, baklava, dugh yogurt

drink, abgusht, elephant ears, lavash bread, torshi, chelow, fesenjoon, pomegranate soup, etc. Each chapter begins with a recipe and through the wonderful and exotic aromas and flavors of Marjan's cooking we experience the cathartic play of food and its significance in the lives of the three sisters. But Iranians settling in the village of Ballinacroagh is not an everyday occurrence; people are curious – the aromas emanating from the Babylon Café are different, tantalizing, strange. There's excitement – let's check out the new people, the café, the foods. Others are not too thrilled – who are these strange foreigners bringing their odd foods and ways into a peaceful village, where people have known each other for years. We come to experience the everyday goings on in Ballinacroagh – the inquisitive neighbor, the parish priest, the mischievous boys, the village bully. As the three sisters strive to attract customers and make their café a success, they painfully experience flashbacks of their time in Iran and what they had to endure before fleeing a revolution that continues to haunt them. A beautiful piece of work, wherein the storyline of the present is flavored with the past through the rich and fragrant ingredients of the foods prepared. I really enjoyed this book, much more than I thought I would – a highly recommended read.

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## Mahshid says

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## Mai Laakso says

Jos kaipaat lukukokemukseltasi mausteita, herkullisia ruokia ja jopa reseptejä, iranilaisen Marsha Mehranin Lumoavien mausteiden kahvila (Pomegranate Soup 2005, suom. 2006) sopii sinulle. Suomalainen nimi on mielestäni paljon sopivampi kirjan sisällölle, vaikka kyllä kirjassa keitetään myös granaattiomenakeittoa ja keittoon on myös resepti.

Kirja kertoo kolmesta sisaruksesta Marjanista, Baharista ja Laylasta, jotka pakenivat Iranin vallankumousta vuonna 1979 aluksi Lontooseen. He pakenivat, koska Baharin mies oli väkivaltainen ja Teheranissa asuminen ei ollut enää turvallista nuorille naisille. Baharin mies löysi heidät Lontoosta, mutta tytöt pakenivat jälleen ja nyt Irlantiin syrjäiseen pieneen kylään, jota hallitsi rautaisella otteella Thomas McGuire.

Tytöt perustivat kahvilan, mutta alkuun paikkakuntalaiset vierastivat outoja hajuja ja keitoksia. Juorut vahvistivat kyläläisten luulotteluja ja pahansuopaisuutta tyttöjen kahvilaa ja itse tyttöjä kohtaan, jota lietsoi olutparoni Thomas McGuire. McGuire olisi halunnut itse tyttöjen kahvilapaikan, jotta olisi perustanut siihen diskon, sillä salaisissa ajatuksissaan, hän oli dj ja diskotanssin kuningas.

Tälle ihanalle ja lempeälle sisarus-kirjalle on jatko-osa Ruusuvettä ja lammaspataa.

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