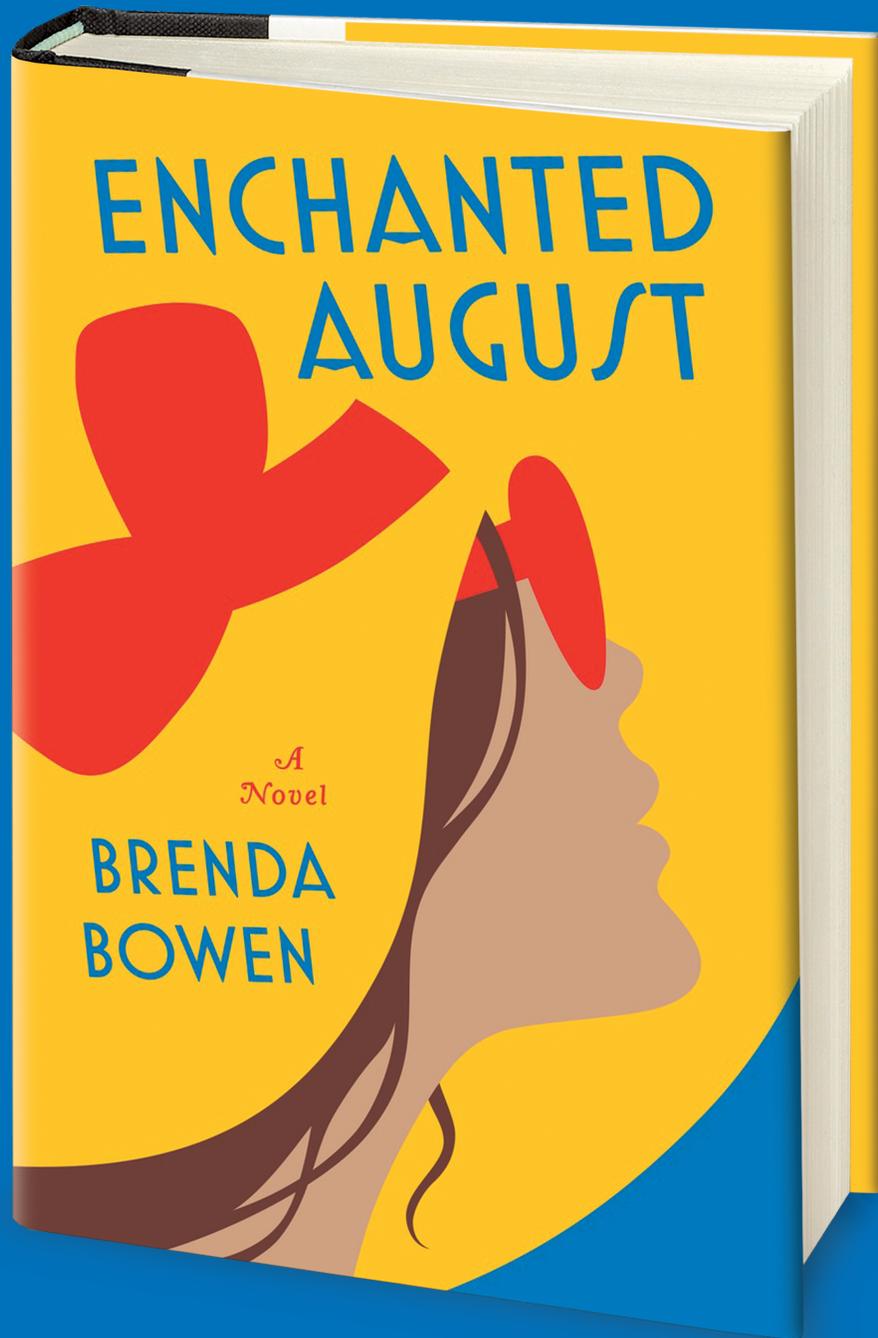


A month on a Maine island gives Lottie, Rose, Caroline, and Beverly a chance to escape from everyday life in ENCHANTED AUGUST. Even if there's no vacation in your future, you can make your own escape with good conversation, delicious recipes, and a perfect playlist! (*Charming Maine cottage not included...*)



## BOOK CLUB KIT



[BBOWEN949](#)



[BOWENWRITES/ENCHANTED-AUGUST](#)

[WWW.BRENDABOWEN.COM](http://WWW.BRENDABOWEN.COM)

# ASK YOURSELF...



## WHICH ENCHANTED CHARACTER ARE YOU?

*You are:*

- a) Sensitive yet strong
- b) Impulsive yet intuitive
- c) Vulnerable yet invincible
- d) Curmudgeonly yet kind (sometimes)

*Your vacation, if it's not summer in Maine*

- a) Venice (the one in Italy)
- b) Fort Worth
- c) Mustique
- d) West Hollywood

*Your ideal mate:*

- a) The smartest one in the room
- b) A jock
- c) The shy one
- d) A millionaire

*You drink:*

- a) Lattes
- b) Manhattans
- c) Bollinger
- d) Coffee from your own coffee-maker

*Your first date:*

- a) Meet for an afternoon walk; talk through the night. Part at dawn.
- b) You're twenty minutes late to the bar but your date is waiting. Great time in the sack.
- c) Classical concert. Making out – *allegro ma non troppo* – by the fourth movement.
- d) The night is a blur. Homemade scones and fresh-squeezed OJ in the morning.

### QUIZ KEY

*Mostly a's: You're a Rose. You are thoughtful, careful, steady, and a deep thinker. You feel things keenly. You're capable of anything, though sometimes you give too much of yourself. You don't know quite how beautiful you are.*

*Mostly b's: You're a Lottie. Life should be a blast, and around you it almost always is. You have an uncanny ability to know what people are thinking. And feeling. Your friends open up to you because you are such a good listener. You're fun to be around.*

*Mostly c's: You're a Caroline. You have refined, sophisticated taste and a cool exterior. Yet you are more vulnerable than people realize. Secretly a romantic, you're a trend-setter, a taste-maker. You exude charisma.*

*Mostly d's: You're a Beverly. You present the world a crusty exterior in the hope that they'll never guess how deeply you feel. You show your true self to only the privileged few, but oh, how they adore you once they get to know you.*

*A mixture: You're a combo of all the characters, just like the author.*

# SERVE



Here's an original recipe concocted exclusively for us by Brenda Bowen's buddy Tim Federle, author of *Tequila Mockingbird: Cocktails with a Literary Twist*. As Lottie would tell you, it pays to have a friend who can *really* mix a drink.

## DECANTED AUGUST

When four jaded New Yorkers head to a gigantic Maine cottage for a summer retreat, they expect solitude, peace, and lobsters. What they find instead is cocktail-hour shenanigans, unexpected houseguests, and, well, lobsters—not to mention true love. Inspired by Elizabeth von Arnim's novel of 1922 (*The Enchanted April*—read it!), ENCHANTED AUGUST marks the debut of Brenda Bowen, who has written a timelessly-now paean to the rejuvenation found in escaping it all. No matter the time of year, invite your book club over for a white wine sangria featuring Maine-fresh ingredients.

It's like summer in a glass.

*Makes 8 servings*

1 (750 mL) bottle sparkling white wine  
3 cups cran-raspberry juice  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1/3 cup blueberries  
1/3 cup blackberries  
1/3 cup raspberries  
8 basil leaves, for garnish

Combine all the ingredients in a large pitcher and allow to chill in a refrigerator for approximately 4 hours, or until you finish reading ENCHANTED AUGUST in one sitting, whichever comes first. Pour over ice in wine glasses and float a basil leaf on top, for garnish. Pairs best with shellfish—and good friends.

# SERVE



## BEVERLY'S BLUEBERRY CORN MUFFINS

*These are Beverly's favorites. It works with frozen blueberries too.*

1 cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup yellow cornmeal  
1 tablespoon double-acting baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter,  
melted and cooled  
1 large egg  
1/4 cup honey  
1/3 cup sugar  
3/4 cup milk  
2 cups picked-over blueberries  
(the small, Maine kind)

Preheat the oven to 425°F. In a bowl whisk together the flour, the cornmeal, the baking powder, and the salt. In a small bowl whisk together the butter, egg, honey, sugar, and milk. Stir the butter mixture into the flour mixture, stirring until the batter is just combined, and fold in the blueberries. Divide the batter among 12 buttered 1/2-cup muffin tins. Bake the muffins on the center rack of the oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until they are golden and a tester comes out clean, and turn them out onto a rack. Makes 12.

## LITTLE LOST MUSHROOM MELTS

*Who could resist these throw-back apps? Not Caroline Dester.*

1 stick butter or margarine  
1 5 oz. jar Kraft Old English cheese spread  
1-1/2 tablespoon mayonnaise  
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt (optional)  
1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt  
1 cup canned mushrooms, drained  
1 package English muffins, split (6 muffins)

Start with all ingredients at room temperature. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Mix all ingredients together and spread on English muffin halves. Spoon mushrooms on top of cheese mixture. Freeze at least 10 minutes. Cut into quarters, then bake 8 to 10 minutes. (Can be frozen for up to four weeks. If frozen, bake 15 – 20 minutes.) Makes 48 melts.

# LISTEN



## TUNES FOR A SUMMER NIGHT AS THE SUN GOES DOWN...

*Click [here](#) for a Spotify playlist*

Anything by João Gilberto, plus...

Wonderful World  
SAM COOKE

Crazy Love  
VAN MORRISON

The Weight  
THE BAND

The Book of Love  
THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

Hold On  
ALABAMA SHAKES

The Man Who Lives Forever  
LORD HURON

Wasted Hours  
ARCADE FIRE

Unlucky Skin  
SHAKEY GRAVES

It's Only Life  
THE SHINS

Keep the Car Running  
ARCADE FIRE

Step  
VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Moondance  
VAN MORRISON

# DISCUSS



- If you've taken the quiz, do you agree with the results? Did you identify with one character in particular? Why?
- Did you recognize the poem Rose reads in Cathedral Woods? You can find the full text [here](#). How does Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" sum up what so many of the characters have lost before they get to the island?
- *The Enchanted April* takes place in Italy; ENCHANTED AUGUST in Maine. Brenda Bowen says she considers the landscape another character in each novel. Do you think she's right?
- If you could escape your ordinary life for a month like the characters in ENCHANTED AUGUST, what would you do? Where would you go? With whom?
- When the characters leave Little Lost Island, it's inevitably bittersweet, and the book's ending is, too. How do you imagine that the island has changed the characters' lives? What do you think came of their plan to "take some of [the magic] back with them, and try it on for size at home?"

*You've read both *The Enchanted April* and ENCHANTED AUGUST?*

*Bravissimo! Here are some bonus questions for you:*

- **SPOILER ALERT:** Brenda Bowen changed the gender of Mrs. Fisher in *The Enchanted April* from female to male. How does the character of Beverly parallel Mrs. Fisher's? What does the gender change take away from the story? What does it add?
- The characters in *The Enchanted April* have no children. In ENCHANTED AUGUST, there is a passel of kids. Why did the author add children to the story? Do you think they raise the stakes?

*Did you watch the movie, too?*

- The question of how Robert "sees" Caroline for the first time is different in each version of the story: How does each writer finesse this? Who's most successful?

# A CONVERSATION WITH BRENDA BOWEN



*Q: How did the idea for Enchanted August develop?*

In 1991, I saw the movie *Enchanted April*, which transported me to Italy, a place I love, and made me feel as if life could be very magical indeed, if only for a short while. It wasn't till the credits rolled on the movie that I realized it had been based on a book, *The Enchanted April*, by Elizabeth von Arnim. I read the book, fell in love with it; saw the movie again (and again), and loved it more each time. And every time I saw the film or read the story, I felt: "This could be happening now."

For many years as an editor and publisher and agent, I've given authors and artists ideas for books. Usually the ideas are very vague, and the author then takes the idea and makes it into a bona fide story. I was thinking about giving the idea of an updated *Enchanted April* to an author, so I started roughing out a story to see if it could work. Then I kept going. And going. And now... it's a book under my own name, which is thrilling indeed.

*Q: Your book is based on a 90-year-old novel, which was made into an Oscar-nominated film. Did you feel apprehensive taking on such a well-loved work? What are the differences between your novel and the original Enchanted April? Why did you move the story to Maine, and to August?*

I didn't actually feel apprehensive, though in retrospect I should have. *The Enchanted April* is a bit of a well-kept secret: those who know it tend to adore it; but many do not know it at all. The story seemed to be crying out to be replayed by women (and men) who move in the modern world.

When I started writing my book, it was called *April, Enchanted*, and it took four bedraggled New Yorkers over spring break to an island based on St. Lucia. I loved the idea of setting the new book in the Caribbean because the colors and fragrances are so strong, as they are in the von Arnim original. But I didn't really know the place, in my bones, so the manuscript didn't work at all. Plus, I couldn't imagine a month-long spring break. I talked to my agent, the wonderful Faith Hamlin, about my dilemma, and proposed to her that I take the characters to Maine, where I've spent summers for many years. She said, "Yes, get them up to Maine and leave them there a month, and then send me the manuscript." So I did.

*Q: You seem to have a great affection for Maine. Have you spent a lot of time there? Do you have your own "Hopewell Cottage?"*

I do love Maine. I went to Colby College, in Waterville, where I got a sense of what it's like to tough it out in wintery, inland Maine. I'd never even visited the coast of Maine till my last week at

Colby, and then, like everyone else, I fell in love with it. A friend of mine has a family cottage on one of Maine's thousands of islands, and I spent many summers with her there in my twenties and thirties. Then I had a family, and we started renting a cottage of our own. I have my own Hopewell, the place we go year after year, though, like the characters in ENCHANTED AUGUST, I only have it to rent. But that's enough. "My" Hopewell doesn't have two turrets, but in every other respect it's as charming, peaceful, evocative, and breathtaking as the cottage in ENCHANTED AUGUST.

*Q: Besides THE ENCHANTED APRIL, what were your literary (or non-literary) influences while writing this book?*

I'm such a magpie: I steal everything. So I'm influenced by the words and actions of people around me. I just take whatever they say and put it into my stories. I love many of the 19th-century writers: Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, E. M. Forster, Henry James, J. M. Barrie. I'm not crazy about Dickens and I can't read Trollope (I've tried!). I love Philip Roth's books: they are so different from what I like to write but they are just what I like to read. I am very influenced by movies – screwball comedies in particular. Mistaken identities, mixed signals, tiny lies that turn into big trouble – those are the stories I most adore. I go to the theater as much as I can. I like to hear the sound of stage dialogue: like real life, but heightened. When I get stuck, I read Mary Wesley.

*Q: Could you talk about your writing process? How did you get in the "Little Lost" mindset?*

I spent three years writing the first third of ENCHANTED AUGUST, and then—once I had a publisher and a deadline—six months writing the second two thirds. I do a lot of my writing at the Hungarian Pastry Shop in New York City, where there is no wi-fi and there are no electrical outlets. You can't go online, and you can only use your computer for as long as it keeps a charge. The computer on which I wrote the book kept only a two-hour charge, so I'd write for two hours and then stop, wherever I was.

When I had to step things up to meet the deadline, I'd do two writing sessions of forty minutes each in the very early morning before I went to work at 8:30 AM. Then I'd write for a half-day on Friday and as much time as I could on Saturday and Sunday. I also spent most of August of last year finishing the novel on my own Little Lost Island.

I generally put on headphones to write. I play birdsong or sounds of the forest or the ocean as my writing soundtrack. When I write a rainy scene, I play a rainstorm on the headphones. I'm always shocked I'm not drenched to the skin when the scene is done.

*Q: You are an award-winning writer for children under a different name. What's the difference between writing for children and writing for adults?*

Kids' books are so much shorter! That's the big difference. I write a lot of picture books and early readers. The early readers have a word-count maximum of two hundred-fifty words, so that is one very short story. It's been great to hone my skills writing for kids. You learn to be very direct

and simple. The pleasure in writing for an adult audience is that you can spend more time on feelings and thought and motivation: a picture book is more “here and now” than a novel, at least for me.

*Q: You have spent many years in the publishing world. What's it like being an author, rather than an agent or publisher?*

This could be a really *really* long answer, or a short one, so I'll go with the short one: I love being an author. As Neil Gaiman says, “I get to make up stories all day and someone pays me.” That is a great thing. I am grateful for every reader, every bookstore owner, every librarian who touches my book. I know what it takes to get a book to readers and I am deeply appreciative of everyone who has a hand in it.

*Q: What would your perfect summer day look like? If it includes reading, what would you read?*

Start on a Maine island. Get up early. Make coffee very quietly so as not to wake up the cottage. Heat up a sticky bun from the farmer's market; vow to eat only half. Sit on the porch with coffee and sticky bun. Break vow. Watch the water. Pick up a book from the cottage bookshelves and dip in. Go inside and realize three hours have passed.

Put on some clothes, many of which are the same as clothes worn yesterday. Walk to the other side of the island in the sun. Watch the kids play tennis with the olds. Knit a little. Eat something for lunch. Read on the porch: I am very susceptible to the latest summer novel, or else I'm rereading a favorite classic like *The Great Gatsby* or *Villette* (great book; bad title). Or my darling Mary Wesley. Notice there are no more sticky buns; bake a blueberry cake for tomorrow.

Maybe take the boat into town to get groceries. Go to a friend's cottage to contribute to a communal feast of a dinner, usually involving fresh fish on the grill and always involving vegetables from the garden. Also involving pie. Eat. Talk. Drink. Walk home under the stars with no flashlight, if it's not too dark. Go to bed early. Get up with the first bird and do it all over again.

*Q: If you could have your own Hopewell Cottage who would your ideal houseguests be? They can be living or deceased.*

NOTE: Shakespeare would get a whole summer of his own.

*Fellow writers:* Elizabeth von Arnim, Mary Wesley, Jane Austen (though I fear the journey would tire her), Mary Shelley, Charlotte Bronte. (I'd save Philip Roth for a winter retreat – too bracing for a summer cottage.)

*In the drinkers' corner:* Jimmy Joyce, Dylan Thomas, Richard Burton.

*So that we'd have some artists to go with the scribblers:* Henri Matisse, Toulouse Lautrec, Rogier van der Weyden, Modigliani.



# BONUS: THE ENCHANTED APRIL MOVIE NIGHT



Settle in with a Campari and soda or a bottle of crisp, chilled Vermentino, and download, rent, or pull from your “most beloved” DVD shelf the 1991 movie *Enchanted April*. Filmed on location where Elizabeth wrote and imagined her novel, this is an entrancing, hopeful, and exquisitely beautiful movie with gorgeous costumes, breathtaking sets, and fine acting (with an Oscar nomination for Joan Plowright). Treat yourself to:

## POPCORN SAN SALVATORE

1 package plain popcorn  
Extra virgin olive oil, Italian preferred  
1/3 cup fresh rosemary, or 1 tablespoon dried  
Sea salt

Mix the olive oil and rosemary in a large serving bowl. Pop popcorn according to directions on package. Place steaming hot popcorn in serving bowl and mix well. Sprinkle with sea salt. Mangia.

## MRS. FISHER’S DEAD POETS SOCIETY

Mrs. Fisher is devoted to her dead poets when she arrives at San Salvatore. By the end of the book, she is more interested in the living. Here are some of the poems she no doubt had by heart:

Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

*The Kraken, Summer Night, Crossing the Bar*

George, Lord Byron:

*The Prisoner of Chillon, She Walks in Beauty*

William Wordsworth:

*Intimations of Mortality*

Finally, here’s a selfie of Brenda Bowen at Castello Brown, where she went to research Elizabeth von Arnim. Bowen wrote the introduction to the new Penguin Modern Classics edition of *The Enchanted April*. Behind her is the cozy harbor of Portofino, Liguria, Italy, looking almost exactly as it did when Elizabeth wrote *The Enchanted April*. Ciao!

## GRAMOPHONE LIST

And here’s what, perhaps, the characters might have played on the Victrola, circa 1922 (Click [here](#) for a Spotify playlist):

Rose – *La mer*, Claude Debussy

Lotty – *Toot-Toot Tootsie, Goodbye*, Al Jolson

Caroline – *Dance, Little Lady*, Noël Coward

Mrs. Fisher – *Coronation Ode*, Sir Edward Elgar

