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Plan your reading list for 2020

BIBLIOFILES

Dana Hendrix

Here we are, approaching 2020, and the big question is: What are we going to read in the new year? What will be the books capture our imagination and make it to the *New York Times* Best Sellers lists? What will keep us up late at night? What will our book clubs discuss? What will our friends recommend? It's all a mystery right now.

But some books on the horizon are pretty certain to be on many people's reading lists. In the first part of the year, we'll see new novels by Isabel Allende (*A Long Petal of the Sea*, in January), Colum McCann (*Apeirogon: A Novel*, in February), Anne Tyler (*Redhead by the Side of the Road*, in April), Suzanne Collins (*The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes [The Hunger Games]*, in May), Emma Straub (*All Adults Here*, also in May), Joyce Carol Oates (*Night. Sleep. Death. The Stars.*, in June), and Yaa Gyasi (*Transcendent Kingdom*, in July).

And in nonfiction, the new year will bring a new book by Erik Larson, *The Splendid and the Vile*, a profile of Winston Churchill, in February. Also in February a book by Julian Barnes, *The Man in the Red Coat*, comes out. This one is about Samuel Pozzi, a French surgeon who was the subject of the John Singer Sargent portrait referred to in the title. *Wandering in Strange Lands: A Daughter of the Great Migration Reclaims Her Roots* by Morgan Jerkins comes out in May and analyzes the 1916-1970 migration of 6 million African Americans from the rural South. *Tower of Skulls: A History of the Asia-Pacific War, July*

1937-May 1942 by Richard B. Frank is the first in a planned trilogy on the Pacific Theater in World War II covering the Japanese invasion of China and the attack on Pearl Harbor; and it also comes out in May. Then in June *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again* by Robert D. Putnam charts how American society became steadily more egalitarian between the Gilded Age and the 1960s.

As in 2019, there will be so many books and so little time in 2020. How do you decide what to read next? One time-honored option is to visit the library and browse the shelves, looking for serendipity to strike. Or you can look at the goodreads.com website for ideas. Or search an author on bookseriesinorder.com to find a complete list of titles from a series that you like and select from that. Or visit fantasticfiction.com to see a "coming soon" list of titles. All three of those websites have multiple ways to lead you serendipitously or directly to your next book.

On the goodreads.com and fantasticfiction.com websites, you can create an account and track your own reading past and future. You can create a list of titles you want to read, or look back at your list and be reminded of what you have read and how well you liked it.

In the library we often hear from patrons who aren't sure if they have read a particular book, so they ask if we can tell them whether they ever checked it out,

and well ... we often can! Within limits, that is. You can track your own reading in our system, as well, if you log in to your account. Go to library.georgetown.org and click on the green "Log into Your Account" button in the left hand column. Just use the barcode on the back of your library card as your user ID, and the phone number we have on file for you as your password.

Once logged in, click on "My Account" in the top right corner, and then "History" on the next screen, also toward the upper right. A list of your borrowing history will show up and you can browse it there or, if you are a complete nerd like I am, you can actually download it as an Excel spreadsheet and save it, sorting it alphabetically by author, for instance, or by title. Like I did last week, when I downloaded my list dating back to 2007.

However you track your reading past and future, there is great reading to look forward to in 2020. See you in the library!

Dana Hendrix is the Fine Arts Librarian at the Georgetown Public Library.

Library Events

- December 27, 2 p.m. *Aladdin* film showing
- December 31, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Noon Year's Eve
- January 8, 6:30 p.m. GPL World Cinema screening of *Woman at War* (recommended for ages 18 and older)
- January 11, 3-4:30 p.m. Teen Super Smash Bros. Tournament (ages 12-18)

Chinese food is new tradition

Traditions create memories and bridge generations. One of our family traditions is to enjoy Christmas dinner at a Chinese restaurant.

Chinese restaurants first opened in the United States during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. They catered to miners and railroad workers.

At the end of the 19th century, on the Lower East Side of New York City, Jewish and Chinese immigrants lived in close proximity. The Chinese, who did not celebrate Christmas, kept their restaurants open on Christmas Day. Jews do not celebrate Christian holidays so they patronized the Chinese eateries.

Justice Elena Kagan mentioned this in her Supreme Court confirmation hearings. When a senator asked her where she was on Christmas, she said, "You know, like all Jews, I was probably at a Chinese restaurant."

The tradition has diversified over the years. A *Washington Post* article concludes, "The tradition has become something of a national ritual, and it's born out not only in folklore, but also some data. Interest in Chinese food spikes considerably each and every year on Christmas, as evidenced by Google search trends. No other day during the year compares, or even comes close."

My husband and I did not grow up eating Chinese food on Christmas but it has been our tradition for the last 38 years. People assume the idea came from the popular movie, *A Christmas Story*: The dog eats the holiday turkey so the family ends up eating dinner at a Chinese restaurant.

We started our tradi-



TASTES OF THE TOWN

Linda Dwyer

tion before the movie's release in 1983. We lived away from family when our first baby was due at Christmas. We decided to go out to dinner and discovered the only place open was a Chinese restaurant.

That was our first of many Chinese Christmas dinners. After several years we switched to Japanese food because the entertaining Benihana chefs kept our family amused. As the kids acquired interests in different cuisines we switched to a Thai restaurant.

On our first Christmas in Georgetown we could not find a local Asian restaurant open on Christmas Day. We decided to be flexible

about when we celebrated our holiday. Now our Asian meal, followed by a movie at City Lights, takes place on a day close to Christmas. For my recipe I am including a traditional holiday treat from my childhood. My mother's parents came from Lithuania. Every December we baked Lithuanian Kolaczki cookies. The cream cheese dough was rolled out nice and thin and then cut into rectangles. A tiny scoop of apricot or prune jam went on top and two corners were brought together making a bundle of sweetness.

Variations of this cookie are found throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

When we moved to Texas I tasted the Czech version of this jammy jewel, which is popular in the Hill Country. Czech Kolache are made with a rich yeast dough and are a danish style pastry rather than a cookie. Lone Star Kolaches recently opened in Georgetown on Williams Drive and is open daily from 5:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and I look forward to trying their Czech pastries. However, I am going to bake my mother's Kolaczki cookies to enjoy after our Chinese dinner!

Cream Cheese Kolaczki

3 oz. cream cheese
1/2 cup butter, softened
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup any flavor fruit jam
1/3 cup confectioners' sugar for decoration

Mix cream cheese and butter until smooth. Add flour slowly until well blended. Shape into a ball and chill overnight or for several hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roll dough out 1/8 inch thick on a floured pastry board. Cut into 2 1/2-inch squares and place 1/2 t. (approx.) of jam or preserves. Overlap opposite corners and pinch together. Place on ungreased cookie sheets.

Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven. Cool. Sprinkle lightly with confectioner's sugar.



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