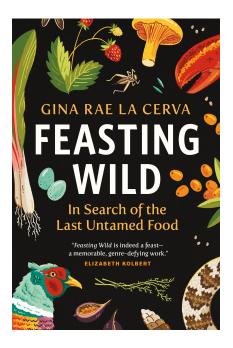


Feasting Wild Book Club Guide



About the Book

Two centuries ago, nearly half the North American diet was found in the wild. Today, so-called "wild foods" are becoming expensive commodities, served to the wealthy in top restaurants. In *Feasting Wild*, geographer and anthropologist Gina Rae La Cerva traces our relationship to wild foods and shows what we sacrifice when we domesticate them—including biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge, and an important connection to nature.

Along the way, she samples wild foods herself, sipping elusive bird's nest soup in Borneo and smuggling Swedish moose meat home in her suitcase. Thoughtful, ambitious, and wide-ranging, *Feasting Wild* challenges us to take a closer look at the way we eat today.

Discussion Questions

- 1. The first chapter of *Feasting Wild* opens with author Gina Rae La Cerva's visit to Noma, an elite restaurant that sources wild ingredients exclusively from the Nordic region. Have you had any experiences of eating foods marked distinctly as wild, either in a restaurant or somewhere else? What was notable about the experience(s)? Has reading this book changed your perspective on them at all?
- 2. Feasting Wild discusses the history of many wild foods—from lobsters and sea turtles to game meat and bird's nests. Was there a story of wild food that you found to be particularly surprising or interesting?
- 3. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gina Rae La Cerva explores the complexities surrounding laws that govern poaching and conservation, and how they relate to colonialism and Indigenous food sovereignty. Did the book change your perspective on poaching and conservation, and how the former is commonly framed as innately bad, and the latter as innately good?



- 4. La Cerva considers how knowledge of wild food has often been the domain of women, from impoverished settler women in colonial America to folk medicine in Poland, with traditional knowledge passed down orally. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, she writes that "a matrilineal system of access to the bushmeat trade networks developed, an unwritten knowledge that could be passed down from mother to daughter" (164). What matrilineal food traditions have come through your own family or culture?
- 5. A central theme of the book is how the lack of wild foods in our diet relates to our perceived relationship with "Wild Nature": as something entirely separate from humans. What role does "wildness" play in your life? Do you see nature as something separate from yourself, or something that we are all a part of?
- 6. La Cerva writes "before hunting became a privilege—the rewards reserved for a few—it was a communal liturgy.... Through careful repetition, we make relations with the land. Today, the daily work is usually concealed and done by others. Most of us can hardly imagine acquiring food with such attentive reverence" (239). Has *Feasting Wild* changed how you think about hunting and where food comes from?
- 7. Is it possible to be homesick not for a place but for the past? How does *Feasting Wild* explore this idea in relation to wild food? When have you felt this type of homesickness in your own life?
- 8. La Cerva muses on her desire for both wildness and home, explaining "for someone like me, it is staying home that is hard" (244) but that she has also "been searching for... [a] feeling of home" (288). How do you see these seemingly conflicting desires play out in the book? What role does the Hunter play in relation to them?

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