



# Lizzie & Dante

**BOOK  
CLUB  
KIT**

*A Novel*

**MARY BLY**

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR**



## A LETTER FROM AUTHOR MARY BLY

Dear Readers,

I'm so happy you've chosen to read *Lizzie & Dante* in the company of friends!

Over the four years I wrote *Lizzie & Dante*, the characters became friends to me—and the setting was already one of my favorite places on earth. I met my (Italian) husband on a blind date in grad school, and for years we took our two children to the island of Elba every summer.

Fizzy Elba wine, incredible food, sandy beaches, and even pink-fringed umbrellas mingle into some of the happiest memories of my life. I'm glad to share them with you, and I hope that Lizzie, Dante, Etta, and the family become as dear to you as they are to me.

I wanted to share something personal with you, so here's a photo of my husband and children on the very beach that you'll be reading about.

With all best wishes for you and yours,

*Mary*





**WATCH THE COVER REVEAL ON YOUTUBE!**





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Lizzie has cancer, but early in the novel she's pretty sure she's going to stop treatment. What are the factors at play in her decision? Have you ever had a situation where you felt that quitting was the best course of action? What went into your decision?
2. Discuss what Lizzie and Etta have in common in their upbringings. Where do they fundamentally differ?
3. Which character do you identify with most, and why?
4. Why is Rohan having trouble with his *Romeo & Juliet* idea? How do Lizzie (and Etta) finally help him unlock it?
5. What does singing mean to Lizzie? Why does she stop—and why is it important when she starts again?
6. Lizzie feels like she lives on a different planet—"the planet of the dying." What is this planet like for her?
7. Lizzie says she doesn't want to marry Dante because she wants to protect him—and Etta—from the harsh realities of cancer and death. "It's my decision, and *my* no," she says. "It's my death, and if I choose not to do it in the company of an Italian chef and his twelve-year-old daughter, then I shall do so." Do you think it's fair for Lizzie to decide what's best for Dante? At what point must we stop trying to protect our loved ones from pain? What would Lizzie have lost if Dante listened to her and let her keep Elba as just a memory?
8. Dante asks Lizzie, "Is it better to have had a mother for a week or a month or whatever time you can give us—or never at all?" What do you think? Knowing how the book ends, do you think Lizzie and Dante made the right decision?
9. Lizzie actually never *tells* Dante she's sick—he figures it out before she can. But with Etta, she does have the conversation. Why do you think the author made this choice? What does it say about Lizzie's relationship with Etta—and, incidentally, about Lizzie's relationship with Dante?
10. By the end of the novel, a family of sorts has developed: Dante, Lizzie, and Etta, plus Grey and Rohan, and Ruby (and a few others in the epilogue). Who is in your chosen family?

## PLAYLIST

*Listen to the soundtrack to Lizzie and Dante's love story.*

“The Look of Love” by Dusty Springfield

“Po’ Boy” by Bob Dylan

“Romeo and Juliet” by Dire Straits

“Feeling Good” by Nina Simone

“Every Sperm Is Sacred” by Monty Python

“At Last” by Etta James

“Ave Maria” by Andrea Bocelli

“Love Story (Taylor’s Version)” by Taylor Swift

“And I Love Her” by The Beatles

“Something” by The Beatles

“In My Life” by The Beatles

“All Things Bright and Beautiful” by John Rutter and The Cambridge Singers



## RECIPES

### The Principe Blu's Tricolor Pasta

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup semolina flour
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp. water
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. oil
- Food powders for coloring: beetroot, tomato, spinach, etc. Start with 1 tsp. each and increase for brighter colors.

#### Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine and whisk semolina flour, flour, and salt.
2. Make a well in the middle and add eggs. Mix and incorporate the eggs with your hands. Add oil and knead, adding 1 tbsp. of water to dough until all the flour is incorporated into the dough.
3. Split the dough into 5 parts. Add a different color powder to 3 of the dough pieces, leaving 2 dough pieces plain.
4. Knead the colored powder into the dough by hand for approx. 8–9 minutes, or until smooth and elastic/pliable.
5. Roll each dough piece out to ¼-inch or so, depending how wide you want the lines to be. Place each dough piece on top of another, alternating with a plain color to make stripes. Make sure you seal the layers with a bit of water (you can use a damp or wet towel to wipe the layers).
6. Cut rough ends off and then cut into 1-inch strips. Seal 2–3 strips together (use the damp towel).
7. Gently roll pasta dough to a ⅛-inch thickness. (If you have a pasta machine, this step will be much easier, so use it!)
8. Use pasta dough to make ravioli, fettuccine, bow ties, or whatever else your heart desires. Cook in salted boiling water to desired doneness.

Source: [bigoven.com/recipe/homemade-multicolored-pasta](http://bigoven.com/recipe/homemade-multicolored-pasta)

### Dante's Cheese Plate

Arrange the following ingredients on a wooden cheese board. For plating inspiration, see *That Cheese Plate Will Change Your Life* by Marissa Mullen.\*

#### Ingredients

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| • Prosciutto           | • Grilled vegetables |
| • Bresaola             | (your choice)        |
| • Mozzarella di bufala | • Olives             |
| • Mortadella           | • Pistachios         |

\*Or, use "That Italian Countryside Plate" (p. 68)

## DRINKS

*If you can get your hands on some Elba wine (try [Tannico.com](https://www.tannico.com)), by all means, drink that!  
If not, try the drink Dante and Lizzie have at their romantic dinner—which can be enjoyed with or without alcohol.*

### Dante's Basil Mint Lemonade

#### Ingredients

- ½ cup fresh basil leaves, plus extra sprigs for garnish
- ½ cup fresh mint leaves, plus extra sprigs for garnish
- ½ cup honey
- 8 cups filtered water, divided
- 1 ½–2 cups fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 1 ¼ oz. vodka or tequila, if desired

**Note:** If you'd like an alcoholic version, add 1 ¼ oz. vodka or tequila to the jar of ice before adding the lemonade mixture. Top with sparkling water if desired, then add the garnishes.

#### Instructions

1. Muddle the basil and mint leaves using a mortar and pestle. Alternatively, muddle the herbs in a small bowl using a muddler or the back of a wooden spoon.
2. Combine the honey and half a cup of water in a small pot on the stove until the liquid just barely comes to a boil, stirring occasionally to dissolve the honey. Remove from heat.
3. Pour the honey simple syrup over the muddled herbs and then allow to steep and cool at room temperature, at least 30 minutes and up to several hours (the longer it steeps, the more flavor it will impart).
4. Strain the simple syrup into a pitcher or a quart-sized mason jar.
5. Juice 8–10 lemons until you have 1 ½ to 2 cups of fresh-squeezed lemon juice. Use less for sweeter lemonade, more for a tarter lemonade.
6. Combine the mint and basil simple syrup with the lemon juice and remaining water in a large pitcher, along with 2 cups of ice. Stir.
7. Pour over ice and serve in jars with a sprig each of mint and basil.

Source: [oursaltykitchen.com/mint-basil-lemonade](https://oursaltykitchen.com/mint-basil-lemonade)



## RECIPE & ESSAY

*If you enjoyed Mary's descriptions of Italy, you might want to dive into her story of living in Paris for a year—which includes a recipe for risotto!*

### An Excerpt from *Paris in Love: A Memoir* by Eloisa James\*

Back in 1990, rice and love became forever entwined in my mind. A man I'd dated for ten years broke off our relationship, and my response to grief was to learn how to make risotto.

A few months later, I went on a blind date with Alessandro, and some time after that found myself in Florence, seeking the approval of my future mother-in-law, whose favorite dish was risotto. Rice and love.

When my long-term relationship went awry, I was living in a tiny apartment in the graduate ghetto of New Haven, Connecticut. I spent my free time cooking, crying, and reading. My favorite cookbook was Paul Bertolli's *Chez Panisse Cooking*, a collection of fervent essays that included a long piece on risotto. I would stand over the pot, stirring as Paul instructed, reading a romance borrowed from the public library, and crying every now and then when it seemed the heroines had a better life than I did. After a month or two of this, I was quite good at risotto, and I started to think about men in a more cheerful manner, which led to a blind date with Alessandro, then a graduate student in Italian with loopy black curls and a swimmer's body. He invited me to his house for dinner. I wore a tiny black minidress with over-the-knee green suede boots. The evening was a success, so I reciprocated. He loved my risotto. It wasn't until years later, when I ate his mother's creamy, delicious risotto, that I understood how crucial that tiny detail was to our future life.

Risotto recipes are everywhere, though I do recommend reading Bertolli's book, if you can. The basic recipe has an onion, a little garlic, Arborio rice, a cup of white wine, and homemade broth. But this is a recipe that's like love: you must savor every step. When you can smell that the onions are soft but not brown, add the garlic. When you smell the garlic's burst of perfume, throw in the rice and stir until it takes on a glossy, plumpy sheen. The smell of wine should leap from the pan when you pour it in, and finally—Paul is right about this—the broth goes in slowly, ladle by ladle. Stir. These days, I listen to podcasts while I stir, rather than read romances, but it's all the same: a slow brewing pot, a stir, another stir.

Chez Panisse risotto came to me when I was heartbroken, and led straight to a risotto-adoring Italian with whom I fell in love and whom I married. And that led to his mother, with her wooden spoon and passion for broth, to my daughter, whose favorite food is risotto with roasted squash.

**\*Mary Bly has written many books under the pen name Eloisa James.**

[Learn more about \*Paris in Love\*.](#)