

A Book Club Companion to Vintage Notions

We have also created a separate guide if you want to use the Vintage Notions book as a basis for gathering a group to celebrate and share the Home Arts. See page 3.

In this book club companion to Amy Barickman's *Vintage Notions: An Inspirational Guide to Needlework, Cooking, Sewing, Fashion and Fun*, you'll find ideas and topics to jump start your discussion. Everyone should read the book beforehand (or the group can decide to divide up months among members) and come prepared with comments and questions, but feel free to use these suggestions to get the yarn ball rolling. Alternatively, *Vintage Notions* could be used as supplemental material to enrich the experience of another text. Use it seasonally, monthly, or otherwise, as the group sees fit. Extra credit: Serve refreshments based on recipes in the book.

Why choose *Vintage Notions* for your book club?

This beautiful keepsake book is organized by months, sharing entrepreneurial wisdom, inspirational essays, and historical insights about fashion and home arts that have uncanny relevance to today's women of all ages. Vividly written and entertaining, *Vintage Notions* will supply plenty of inspiration and lively dialogue for your book club and beyond.

What are people saying about *Vintage Notions*?

"Amy's book takes a soulful look at the beautiful connections we have with our sewing and crafting sisters of the past. This book inspires all of us to discover our own personal heritage by sharing stories between mothers, daughters, grandmothers and friends. It celebrates what women can create with their own two hands and what we can achieve together."

~ Amy Butler, Industry-leading artist/fabric designer

"I had to let you know what a delight I have found in your book. I brought it home, began reading and was entranced by its content and its beautiful graphics. I am a voracious reader, and this book, from the beautiful cover to the thick, glossy pages is so out of the mainstream. It is a joy."

-Kitty P.

"Thank you for the wonderful inspiration and encouragement to keep in touch with my creative side and to add good old fashioned elegance to my life." -Sandy R.

Full Book Discussion topics

- What did you find surprising about the articles and projects presented in the chapter?
- How has reading this book changed your opinion of a certain person or topic?
- What quotes or passages struck you in particular?
- Compare the ideas and fashions introduced in this book with today's trends. What has changed? What has remained the same?
- Which featured projects or recipes would you like to make?
- What beauty advice offered in the book remains relevant?
- Mary Brooks Picken often wrote of purpose and progress. What are your life purposes?
- What holiday traditions described in the book remain relevant today?
- What was the quirkiest piece of advice you read in the book?
- How have the roles and expectations for women changed from the early 1900s to today?
- How have the terms "housewife" and "stay-at-home mom" evolved over time?
- What did you think about Mary Brooks Picken and who would you compare her to today?
- What inspired you most about her? What do you think her challenges were?
- Did you like the Modern Notions that Amy Barickman wrote at the end of each chapter? Was it helpful in relating this vintage material to your everyday life? What would you write?

Create a Monthly Gathering to Celebrate Vintage Notions

In this month-by-month companion to Amy Barickman's *Vintage Notions: An Inspirational Guide to Needlework, Cooking, Sewing, Fashion and Fun*, you'll find tons of inspiration for hosting a monthly gathering based on the book. There's no wrong way host a *Vintage Notions* book club, so feel free to use any, all or none of these ideas. Just remember to have fun!

First, a few tips...

Once you've formed a group (we suggest about four to twelve people) designate a schedule. Select a specific day and week, like the first Wednesday of each month, when everyone can meet for a couple hours.

Next, divide up the chapters. Members take turns hosting. Base each meeting around the chapter of the corresponding month. If you're starting your group in August, start with the August chapter.

Everyone should read the chapter beforehand and come prepared with comments and questions, but the hostess should lead the discussion. She can also serve refreshments from the recipes in the chapters and provide activities and projects based on instructions in the book. Decide in advance whether the hostess will supply the project materials or whether members are responsible for bringing their own.

Get started

Here are a few general discussion topics you can use for any chapter:

- What did you find surprising about the articles and projects presented in the chapter?
- How has reading this book changed your opinion of a certain person or topic?
- What quotes or passages struck you in particular?
- Compare the ideas and fashions introduced in this book with today's trends. What has changed? What has remained the same?
- Compare the expectations and roles for women from past generations with those of today.

And now, some specific ideas tailored to each chapter:

January

What to serve: Prepare a batch of cream of tomato soup from the recipe included in the chapter, or share a vintage recipe from your family.

What to do: Have your guests make the orange baskets based on the instructions in the chapter.

What to discuss:

- What are your resolutions or “do-overs”?
- What are your beauty rituals? What advice offered in this chapter endures today?
- Compare the fashions described in this chapter to today’s trends. What has changed? What has endured?
- What items have you refashioned? Bring them for a show and tell! (See Indygo Junction for more ideas of how to refashion old items: www.indygojunction.com/patterns/recycling)

February

What to serve: Dish up homemade pie or treats from the recipes included in the chapter, or share a vintage recipe from your family.

What to do: Have your guests make Valentine’s cards. Provide construction paper, glitter, glue, scissors and other materials so each member of the group can personalize old-school greetings for their sweeties. Try The Vintage Workshop’s library of vintage images for more material!

What to discuss:

- Mary Brooks Picken writes about her uncle. Describe a family member of whom you’re particularly fond.
- What’s your favorite perfume?
- Compare the fashions of lingerie and corsets pictured in this chapter to today’s styles. What has changed? What has endured?

March

What to serve: Make one of the meatless meals included in the chapter, or share your favorite vegetarian appetizer.

What to do: Have your guests create monogrammed napkins. (For project ideas with monograms, see Amy's book *Hankie Style*: http://www.indygojunction.com/book/clothing/hankie_style and/or download this [Monogram Alphabet PDF](#) from Indygo Junction)

What to discuss:

- Mary Brooks Pickens writes of purpose and progress. What are your life purposes?
- What slimming tricks from the article about disguising generous proportions remain relevant today? Are there other helpful hints that you know about?
- Surround your pals with “petals” of praise. Give a compliment to each person in the room. As an option, use old magazines to cut out words and images, and create a compliment collage!
- The article on bathing describes different types of dips, from relaxing tepid bath to salt rubs.
- In 1929, the ensemble dominated. What fashion trends dominate today? Bring pictures, magazines, clippings, etc. to show and tell!

April

What to serve: Slice up some layer cake from the recipe featured in the chapter, and/or have a cake recipe exchange.

What to do: Have your guests make homemade lotions or the fabric flower, both found in this chapter.

What to discuss:

- What are your favorite springtime traditions?
- How do we measure age as a society? How do you measure it?
- Do you agree with the points made about aging graciously and naturally?
- How do you celebrate your birthday? What has been a recent memorable celebration - either yours or someone else's?

May

What to serve: Provide cold treats from one of the recipes featured in the chapter, or share an “ice box” recipe.

What to do: Let members press flowers or make lampshades from the project in the chapter.

What to discuss:

- Mother’s Day is upon us! What traits do you most appreciate about her?
- What’s your summer skin care routine? Is the advice offered in the article still relevant or useful?
- What gifts or clothes have you made (or aspire to make) for children?
- Compare the fashions of sports hats pictured in this chapter to today’s styles. What has changed? Wear or bring your favorite hat to share with the group!

June

What to serve: Host your gathering outside on a porch, deck or driveway, where your guests can sip one of the dainty summer refreshments from the recipes in the book.

What to make: Try some simple embroidery as detailed in the chapter. (For example, try the dish towel project) The Glossary of Stitches on p. 234 is also a useful resource! It illustrates over 25 different stitches.

What to discuss:

- Do you get along with your neighbors? If you have a neighbor who has been there for you, share the story.
- How do you meet summer halfway?
- Compare the dresses for home and garden pictured in this chapter to today’s styles. What has changed? What has endured? Share your favorite Summer styles! (see Indygo Junction’s “Modern House Coat” for ideas!)
- What constructive play do you enjoy during your summer days?

July

What to serve: Offer homemade ice cream from the recipes provided in the chapter and/or guests can bring their own favorite ice cream flavors for a taste-testing party!

What to discuss:

- What's your favorite ice cream flavor?
- Discuss Mary Brooks Picken's points about beauty versus personality.
- How do you feel when you look your best? What's your best beauty secret?
- Compare the pajamas and summer outfits pictured in this chapter to today's styles. What has changed? What has endured?
- What style of loungewear/pajamas do you prefer? What brands?
- What advice from the articles about summer beauty and washing clothes remains relevant today?

August

What to serve: Prepare raisin sticks from the recipe provided in the chapter, or share a snack/appetizer recipe.

What to do: Treat your guests to homemade foot baths described in the chapter.

What to discuss:

- How do you pack for summer vacation? Any tips?
- What's your favorite way to enjoy downtime?
- Compare the fashions of vacation hats and kimonos pictured in this chapter to today's styles. What has changed? What has endured?

September

What to serve: Make homemade preserves from the recipe in the chapter, or share a vintage recipe from your family.

What to do: Discuss your favorite needle arts and ask members to bring a vintage linen to share. Teach your guests a new cross-stitch technique and practice it on a project.

What to discuss:

- How did you feel about the first day of school as a kid? What was your favorite part about the first day of school?
- Tell about an experience you have had that made you appreciate life in a new way.
- Describe your kitchen. What do you like and dislike about it? Do you feel like it is a “workshop”? How would you change it if you could?
- Do you pack a lunch for yourself or your kids? How is the advice in the article relevant today?
- What advice about fall fashions remain relevant today? What are your favorite current trends?

October

What to serve: Provide one of the Halloween treats, like Devil’s Food Cookies and Witch’s Brew Punch, or share a fall recipe from your family.

What to do: Beforehand, encourage your guests to wear costumes. Play the eye-guessing game described in the chapter. Practice posture and poise tips outlined in the chapter.

What to discuss:

- What are your favorite fall traditions?
- Recall a Halloween costume from your childhood.
- What are your favorite costumes pictured in the book? Compare these with modern-day costumes. Tell about (or show!) a favorite Halloween costume that you have worn or made.
- What advice in this chapter did you find particularly inspiring?

November

What to serve: Plan for a Thanksgiving potluck and recipe exchange. Try one of the cranberry recipes featured in the chapter.

What to do: Practice one or two of the nerve-calming techniques suggested in the chapter that you can use to ease the stress of the holiday season.

What to discuss:

- What does the holiday season mean to you?
- What are you grateful for?
- What are your Thanksgiving traditions?
- Do you get a running start on Christmas? What gifts discussed in the chapter are still useful today?
- What beauty tips included in this chapter remain relevant?
- Compare the hat fashions featured in the chapter with the headwear trends of today.

December

What to serve: Treat your guests to one of the sweets from the recipes in the chapter. Or, have everyone bring homemade cookies for a cookie recipe exchange!

What to do: Make this month's meeting an ornament exchange among members. Encourage members to think thrifty and spend less than \$10. Also, bring a gift (or three) to wrap using the techniques detailed in the article. Use these or other already wrapped gifts for a gift exchange!

What to discuss:

- What are your most treasured holiday traditions?
- Share a story behind a favorite Christmas ornament.
- How are Mary Brooks Picken's points about do-it-yourself still relevant today?
- How are the tips on gift wrapping and gift baskets still relevant today?
- How do you plan to be a little kinder around the holidays?
- Compare the holiday fashions and decorations described in the book with today's trends. Bring pictures, magazines, clippings, etc. to share.