**The Memory of Lemon
by Judith Fertig**

**About the Book**

*A crisp tang of citrus that is at once poignant and familiar, sharpening the senses and opening the mind to possibilities once known and long forgotten...*

Claire “Neely” Davis is no ordinary pastry chef. Her flavor combinations aren’t just a product of a well-honed palate: she can “taste” people’s emotions, sensing the ingredients that will touch her customers’ souls. Her gift has never failed her—until she meets a free-spirited bride-to-be and her overbearing society mother. The two are unable to agree on a single wedding detail, and their bickering leaves Neely’s intuition frustratingly silent—right when she needs it most.

Between trying to navigate a divorce, explore a new relationship, and handle the reappearance of her long-absent father, Neely is struggling to make sense of her own conflicting emotions, much less those of her hard-to-please bride. But as she embarks on a flavorful quest to craft the perfect wedding celebration, she’ll uncover a family history that sheds light on both the missing ingredients and her own problems—and illustrates how the sweet and sour in life often combine to make the most delicious memories...

**About the Author**:

Cookbook author Judith Fertig grew up in the Midwest, went to college and cooking school in Europe, and now lives in Kansas City. Described by Saveur Magazine as a "heartland cookbook icon," Fertig writes cookbooks that reflect her love of bread, baking, barbecue, and the fabulous foods of the Heartland.

Check out her blog on http://www.judithfertig.com/ for even more recipes, photos, and a peek into her kitchen.

**If you enjoyed this book*:***

* *A Taste of Heaven* by Penny Watson
* *The Orchard* by Jeffrey Stepakoff
* *Christmas at Thornton Hall* by Lynn Marie Hulsman
* *Recipe for Disaster* by Miriam Morrison
* *The Garden Angel* by Mindy Friddle

**Discussion Questions**

1. **A recent study from the Emory University School of Medicine shows that memories can be passed on to subsequent generations through DNA. What memories, abilities, or tendencies pass through the families in The Memory of Lemon?**
2. Neely’s gift allows her to sense a flavor that is a hyperlink to someone’s hidden issue. The flavor leads to an emotion and then she sees a scene from someone’s past. When she tries to resolve a difficult and classic standoff—Bride versus Mother—no flavor comes to her for a long time. Why do you think that is?
3. **Do you agree with Neely’s customers? Is pie more emotional, more nostalgic than cake? Which dessert is more attached to a certain memory for you—pie or cake?**
4. **In flashback scenes, we see characters who are Wanderers and Healers. Which one do you think best characterizes Neely? Are there any characters who started out as Wanderers and became Healers?**
5. Neely’s father, the homeless Jack O’Neil, knows he has to face a terrible Vietnam War experience in order to begin his journey toward normal life. How can reliving a horrifying experience eventually bring healing?
6. **How do characters’ perceptions of the river change over time? How does Abigail Newcomb feel about the river, contrasted with her granddaughter Little Abigail in later years? What does the river mean to Lydia? To Lydia’s mother Cadence? To Neely and Ben?**
7. The artist John James Audubon wandered through the American wildness and also wandered through this novel. How do the responses of Lydia and her mother to Audubon influences in the wedding underscore their differences?
8. **We sense, through one of Neely’s surprise flashbacks, that Sister Agnes might have had to give up a baby before she entered the novitiate. And that the child grew into someone Neely knows well. Were you surprised?**
9. Some memories come back through flavor, some through song in this novel. What prompts memories for you? A certain aroma? A song on the radio?
10. **In a world of instant communication, Neely is forced by circumstances to send snail mail letters to her father and to Ben. What is special about a letter? How do letters deepen the relationships between Neely and her father? Neely and Ben?**
11. Gran, Jack O’Neil, and Neely all share the same gift of sensing a flavor that will lead to a story that reveals something that is hidden. But each of them has experienced the gift differently. Why do you think the young Gran tasted the bitter, inky flavor of a story that had yet to happen? Why can’t Jack O’Neil “taste” things like Neely can anymore? Why does Neely have trouble deciphering the twin flavors of citrus and spice?