

One Big Happy Family

We recommend that you wait to read these questions until after you have finished the book, to avoid spoilers.

1. Julie is embarrassed that she's dating a younger man. How did you feel about the age difference between her and Heath? Do you think it affected their relationship in the story? Why or why not? What complications might they face in the future that wouldn't exist if they were closer to the same age?
2. Discuss Blair's food restrictions, how the different characters reacted toward them, and how their reactions revealed their personalities.
3. Did your feelings about Gwen, Blair's mom, change as you read the story? If so, how so? Did the trauma she experienced make her treatment of Blair understandable or acceptable? Why or why not? Would you have been able to forgive her, if you were Blair? Why or why not?
4. In *One Big Happy Family*, it seemed nearly everyone had a secret, and all those secrets came tumbling out during their time at the cabin. Chat about each character's secret and how its revelation impacted the story.
5. When Julie found out that her boyfriend's ex-wife was going to be alone at Christmas, she didn't hesitate to invite Tiffany to join them at the cabin. How did you feel about that? What would you have done in Julie's shoes?
6. With which character did you relate the most? Why?
7. What emotions did you feel about the ending of the book?
8. What is your family's holiday tradition? Do you get together as a big group? What do you eat? Do you do anything special to commemorate loved ones who have passed away?

SUGGESTED MENU



Julie's Shortbread Cookies
(recipe follows)

One Big Happy Family

A TREAT TO EAT: Julie's Shortbread Cookies



A note from Susan Mallery: I am not nearly as talented as Julie in One Big Happy Family. Fortunately for me, I only need to make the decorations work fictionally, and not in real life. However, this cookie recipe is mine and is really delicious, even if you decide to, like me, decorate them with one solid color instead of the super-cute Santas that Julie makes in the book. If you do make the Santa cookies, I would love to see a picture! Post it to social media and tag me, or send it to me by direct message. I'm @susanmallery everywhere!

Makes about two dozen

- 3 sticks (1-1/2 cups) of butter, room temperature
- 1-1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 3-1/4 cups all purpose flour, plus some for dusting the rolling surface
- 1/4 cup corn starch
- 1/2 tsp salt

Cream the butter and sugar on medium speed until pale yellow and smooth, about 3-4 minutes.

Whisk together the flour, corn starch and salt until thoroughly combined. Add to the butter mixture. Stir by hand or mix on low speed just until combined. Form the dough into two balls, then flatten into 4-inch disks. Wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for one hour.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and line cookie sheets with parchment paper. Roll out the dough to one-half inch thick and cut into desired shapes. Place the cookies about 2 inches apart and bake until the edges just begin to brown, about 15-20 minutes. Cool on wire rack. Decorate as desired.