

**THE SOLID  
GROUNDS  
COFFEE  
COMPANY**

A  
SUPPER CLUB  
NOVEL



# A Note from Carla Laureano

When I was considering writing the third book in the Supper Club series about coffee, I was inspired by the example of several faith-based organizations working in Colombia to help farmers convert coca to coffee crops. Farmers often find themselves with no other choice but to grow coca for the cartels, and government incentives to convert to coffee often don't materialize, leaving them unable to feed their families and pay basic expenses. Third-party organizations, on the other hand, are able to take some of the uncertainty out of the equation by guaranteeing higher prices for fair-trade and organic coffee to be sold to artisanal roasters in the US and other countries.

However, coffee is a price-sensitive commodity. In 2014, panic over coffee shortages led to widespread planting, particularly in Brazil. As of this writing in 2019, the market has been flooded with beans, driving the price below half of what it was only five years earlier.

Unfortunately, due to falling prices, many of the farmers who converted to coffee years before have had no choice but to convert back to coca. Coffee prices are predicted to rebound, and it's possible that the pendulum will swing back the other way as it once again becomes lucrative.

I encourage anyone who is concerned about the impact of their coffee habit on the farmers who grow the beans or the connection to the drug trade to seek out fair-trade, single-origin coffee from micro- and macro-roasters. By buying high-quality beans sourced directly from the farmers or through a reputable co-op, we can help ensure a living wage for farmers and shift the demand, however slightly, toward a more sustainable coffee economy.



# Discussion Questions

1. Ana is the definition of driven, always striving toward perfection. In what ways is this a good quality? How is it harmful? How important is it to you to “check the boxes” in your own life, literally or figuratively?

2. Bryan compares himself to the Prodigal Son of the Bible story (see Luke 15:11-32), wondering what happened when the Prodigal had to prove he was a changed man. How do you imagine the rest of the Prodigal’s life played out? Have you encountered people who cling to an old perception of you? Were you able to persuade them that you’d changed?

3. Through the outward symbols of her success—her wardrobe, her car, her apartment—Ana carefully crafts the image she presents to the world. Bryan is also accused of hiding his true self behind his reputation as a shallow playboy. What “armor” do you wear when you want to protect yourself or project a certain image? Do you struggle, as Ana does, to let others see your vulnerabilities?

4. For a long time, Ana and Bryan resisted their attraction to each other, in part because of their interconnected friend group. Were they wise to do so?

*“[Ana] finally had the time and freedom to do whatever she wanted. . . .  
The only problem was, she had absolutely no idea what that was.”*

*—The Solid Grounds Coffee Company*

# Discussion Questions

5. Though she's mostly satisfied with her life, at times Ana feels left out and lonely once her two best friends begin working together and find romantic relationships. Have you ever felt like the odd one out in a group of friends? What happened?

6. Bryan and Ana both experience major disruptions to the careers they've built over many years. Have you ever had a sudden change to your life's direction? If you found yourself with the chance to start over and do something new, what would you choose?

7. Ana is great at her job, but sometimes bothered by the work she does to protect or spin clients' images. Do you think she's right to feel that way? How would you advise her if she came to you with her concerns?

8. Bryan never feels like the son his father wanted, so he gives up on the idea of pleasing him. Ana also fears she can't meet her family's expectations, but she tries by doing things like continuing to attend Mass. Do any parts of your life look different from what your parents might have wanted or expected? Which character's response do you most relate to?

*"I have a coffee company that needs help getting off the ground. The offer's still open. The plea, really, because I could use your help much more than you need mine."*

—Bryan Shaw in *The Solid Grounds Coffee Company*

# Discussion Questions

9. Ana keeps a huge secret from everyone, including Bryan and her best friends. Did you understand her reasons?

10. As Bryan faces a crisis, Mitchell tells him, “Don’t be so quick to fix a situation that might not be yours to fix.” What do you think of this advice? When have you tried to fix something that might not have been your responsibility? What was the result?

11. Ana, Melody, and Rachel all face big changes as the story ends. What do you think the future holds for their friendship? Who are the longest-running friends in your life, and what kind of changes have you endured together?

## My Book Club Questions:

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# Be your own barista!

## THE ANATOMY OF COFFEE BASED DRINKS



**Latte**



**Cappuccino**



**Espresso**



**Mocha**



**Macchiato**



**Americano**



**Café Au Lait**



**Café Con Leche**



**Café Con Panna**



**Flat White**



**Breve**



**Turkish Coffee**

*Solid Grounds Coffee Company* / CARLA LAUREANO

# Coffee Drink Chart

Inspired by Ana and Bryan's coffee roasting adventures to savor more coffee or create your own delicious coffee drinks? Keep this coffee drink chart nearby for quick reference as you craft your own signature coffee creations. Enjoy!



# My Book Club Notes

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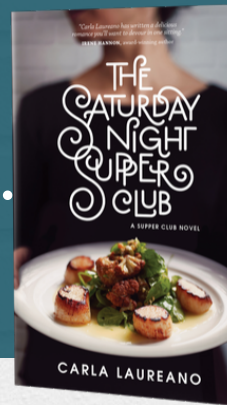
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# The SUPPER CLUB series

Book Club Kit

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Thanks for choosing

The  
**SUPPER CLUB**  
novels

as your book club picks!

Keep an eye out for *Under Scottish Stars* by Carla Laureano  
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By Carla Laureano



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