

Secrets, Spells and Chocolate

AUTHOR VISIT

Chef Marisa Churchill is a graduate of the California Culinary Academy and continued her studies at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. She has been called “one of the city’s top pastry chefs,” by Michael Bauer, former head food critic for the San Francisco Chronicle. In 2007 she was chosen as one of the top forty pastry chefs in the country by Food Arts magazine. Her recipes have been featured in everything from Food & Wine to Oprah. For her full bio, please visit her [website](#).

Below are “menu” options for various author visits. Please choose the option that best suits your needs. Alternatively, you can also select a combination of options to create a customized author visit. Over the years, Marisa has taught hundreds of cooking classes, lectured at culinary events, and even elementary schools. All menu options can be tailored to appeal to both young and old audiences. She is excited to collaborate with you!



OPTION 1

In this fun and simple author visit, Churchill will spend thirty minutes talking about what it's like to be a chef including the blood, sweat, and tears. She will touch on cooking competitions and how they can bring out the best in your abilities, or make you taste the bitterness of defeat. She will dive into her experiences competing on Top Chef and Food Network Challenge and share her inspirations (which include the fantastical showpieces at the Coupe du Mond de la Patisserie) for her book. This will be followed by a short reading, 10-15 minutes of Q&A, as well as a writing activity.

For the writing activity, Churchill will ask everyone in the audience to think about a memorable dish they ate. Where were you? How did it make you feel? Perhaps, it was a birthday cake that made you feel extra special and joyous? Maybe it something you hated eating but had to force down to be polite. Whatever it was, give some thought to that moment and the first bite.

Then, take 5-10 minutes and write about that experience.



OPTION 2

In this in-depth author visit Churchill will dive into the world of one of her favorite mediums: chocolate!

There are four primary cocoa beans that the world's supply of chocolate is made from: Nacional, Criollo, Forastero, and Trinitaro. From bean to bar, chocolate is one of the most fascinating ingredients. Like wine, the flavors of chocolate tell a story. From the type of cacao to where it was grown, what the climate was like to how it was harvested, these factors affect the flavors of chocolate. In turn, the subtle nuances of flavor influence how these chocolates are selected and used in recipes.

As if that wasn't cool enough, chocolate is also one of the primary mediums used for culinary artistry. It can be molded, sculpted, and even painted. This allows chefs to create all sorts of showstopping edible illusions. We will see some edible illusions created by Marisa and as well as some of the masters of chocolate in a slide show featuring everything from books made of chocolate to turtles and even snakes.

We will also taste four distinctly different types of chocolate. Try to place them on the flavor wheel and explore why certain chocolates are better than others in various baking applications.

This option will also include a twenty-minute Q&A and a short reading.



OPTION 3

In this detailed author visit, you'll see Chef Marisa in action as she demos one of her recipes. The recipe will either be one of the recipes featured in *Secrets, Spells, and Chocolate* or will be connected to the book in some way. Marisa will provide cooking and baking tips during the cooking demonstration, and everyone will taste samples and receive a printed copy of the recipe.

After the demo, Marisa will delve into the creativity required both in writing and in recipe development. She'll discuss flavor combinations and factors to consider when creating a recipe: contrasts in texture, appearance, colors, elements of surprise. In many ways developing a winning dish is a lot like writing a great novel. Every component plays a critical role and should be leading you somewhere.

She will then talk about what it's like to be a chef. She'll dive into her experiences competing on *Top Chef* and *Food Network Challenge* and share her inspirations for her book.

The event will end with a short reading followed by a twenty-minute Q&A.

