

New York Times Bestselling Author

# MELANIE BENJAMIN

The Author's Bar

*Cocktails & Mocktails Inspired by Her Novels*

## A Welcome Toast

Books and friends go together like wine and cheese. Or in this case, whiskey and soda. Or vodka and cranberry.

I've put together my very first cocktail and book pairing, including mocktails, so everyone can enjoy.

For each of my books I've listed the iconic "Original" cocktail that was popular during the time period of the book, one that might have been enjoyed at the Ritz in 1930s Paris or the Plaza in 1950s Manhattan. Or even a frontier kitchen!

There's also a special interpretation for modern times, along with a Non-Alcoholic Companion.

Welcome to the Author's Bar! Pull up a stool, pop on some period-appropriate music (Cole Porter? A country fiddle? A Victorian ballad?) and enjoy. Don't forget to tip your bartender!

*Melanie*



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# Alice I Have Been

*Oxford, England — 1860s*

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

Few works of literature are as beloved as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. In *Alice I Have Been*, Melanie Benjamin imagines the life of the real Alice Liddell Hargreaves — the girl who inspired a story that outgrew her, and the woman who lived in its shadow. As she nears her eighty-first birthday, she reflects on a life of passion, privilege, and loss, and on the bittersweet truth that part of her will always remain the determined, undaunted child who once followed a rabbit into wonder.

*"This is book club gold."*

— *Publishers Weekly (Starred Review)*

## ORIGINAL

### THE SHERRY COBBLER

Floral, easygoing, and properly Victorian.



2 oz amontillado sherry  
2 tsp sugar  
2–3 orange & lemon slices  
Mint sprig

Method: Shake sherry, sugar, and citrus with ice; pour unstrained into a cobbler glass and garnish with mint.

## TODAY'S TAKE

### THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Clear, reflective, and just a touch bittersweet.

1½ oz London dry or floral gin  
½ oz blanc vermouth (dry style)  
¼ oz crème de cacao blanc  
2 dashes orange or lemon bitters  
Edible flower

Method: Stir with ice until perfectly chilled; strain into a coupe, float an edible flower, and express lemon peel.

**SPIRIT-FREE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS:** 1½ oz juniper botanical · ½ oz blanc verjus · ¼ oz white-chocolate syrup · 2 dashes NA orange bitters · top lightly with chilled soda.

# The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb

*America & Europe — 1870s–1880s*

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

She was only two feet eight inches tall, yet her legend still stands more than a century later. Mercy Lavinia “Vinnie” Bump refused the quiet life expected of her and reached out to P. T. Barnum, married the famous General Tom Thumb, and became one of the Gilded Age’s most celebrated women. In her bold, witty voice, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb* captures a life both spectacular and tender — a story of ambition, love, and a heart that refused to live small.

*Vinnie Bump’s narration brims with confidence and wit; Benjamin transforms a sideshow curiosity into a fierce, unforgettable heroine.”*  
— Booklist (Starred Review)

## ORIGINAL

### THE TOM COLLINS

Floral, effervescent.

2 oz Old Tom gin  
¾ oz fresh lemon juice  
½ oz simple syrup  
3 oz club soda  
lemon wheel + cherry

Method: Shake gin, lemon, and syrup with ice. Strain into a tall glass over ice, top with soda, and garnish.



## TODAY’S TAKE

### STAGE LIGHTS

Bright, balanced, a touch glamorous.

1½ oz London dry gin  
½ oz elderflower liqueur  
½ oz grapefruit juice  
¼ oz honey syrup  
2 oz dry Prosecco  
Edible flower

Method: Shake gin, elderflower, grapefruit, and honey with ice. Strain into a coupe; top with Prosecco.

**SPIRIT-FREE STAGE LIGHTS:** Swap gin for juniper tonic, elderflower liqueur for cordial, and Prosecco for dry sparkling white grape juice. Keep the grapefruit and honey for sparkle and balance.

# The Aviator's Wife

United States & Europe — 1920s–1960s

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

She was born to observe brilliance, not to share in it — until she met the most famous man in the world. In *The Aviator's Wife*, Melanie Benjamin re-imagines the life of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, the shy ambassador's daughter whose marriage to Charles Lindbergh lifted her from the quiet of the page into the glare of the skies. From glittering triumphs to unimaginable loss, Anne learns that love can both confine and free her — and that the courage to fly sometimes begins with learning to stand alone.

*Benjamin artfully weaves fact and fiction, giving readers a nuanced portrait of a woman discovering her own strength in the shadow of legend.”*  
— Publishers Weekly (Starred Review)

## ORIGINAL

### THE AVIATION

Ethereal, elegant,  
unmistakably Jazz Age.

2 oz London dry gin  
½ oz maraschino liqueur  
¼ oz crème de violette  
¾ oz fresh lemon juice  
cherry or lemon twist

Method: Shake with ice; strain into a chilled coupe and garnish with a cherry or lemon twist.



## TODAY'S TAKE

### THE SILVER HOUR

Soft light, quiet strength.

1½ oz floral small-batch gin  
½ oz elderflower liqueur  
½ oz lavender honey syrup  
¾ oz fresh lemon juice  
1 oz dry sparkling wine  
edible flower

Method: Shake gin, elderflower, honey, lemon with ice. Strain into chilled coupe; top with sparkling wine and garnish.

**SPIRIT-FREE SILVER HOUR:** 1½ oz juniper botanical · ½ oz elderflower cordial · ½ oz lavender honey syrup · ¾ oz lemon juice · 1 oz dry non-alcoholic sparkling wine. Shake all but the sparkling component with ice; strain into a coupe and top with sparkling wine.

# The Swans of Fifth Avenue

*New York City — 1950s to 1970s*

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

Among the glittering stars of 1950s New York society, none shines brighter than Babe Paley — Vogue icon, style muse, and queen of the Fifth Avenue Swans. Yet beneath the polish and pearls lies a woman longing for connection. When Truman Capote bursts into her rarefied world, their friendship becomes legend — and betrayal. In *The Swans of Fifth Avenue*, Melanie Benjamin reveals the passion, envy, and heartbreak behind the world's most photographed smiles, capturing an era as intoxicating as the champagne that fueled it.

*Benjamin turns gossip into literature in this rich, immersive tale of beauty, ambition, and betrayal.”*  
— *People Magazine*

## ORIGINAL

### THE VESPER MARTINI

Cold, flawless, and impossible to forget.

3 oz gin  
1 oz vodka  
½ oz Lillet Blanc  
lemon twist

Method: Stir long and cold with ice; strain into a chilled coupe and express a lemon peel.



## TODAY'S TAKE

### THE SWAN SONG

Cool as crystal, soft as regret.

2 oz gin  
½ oz vodka  
¼ oz Lillet Blanc  
¼ oz dry vermouth  
½ oz white crème de cacao  
lemon ribbon

Method: Stir until glacial; strain into a Nick & Nora glass and garnish with a lemon ribbon.

**SPRIT-FREE SWAN SONG:** 2 oz juniper botanical · ½ oz white-grape verjus · ¼ oz vanilla syrup · top with chilled tonic. Stir over ice and strain into a Nick & Nora glass.

# The Girls in the Picture

Los Angeles — 1910s — 1920s

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

Los Angeles, 1914 — a city of sunlight, sawdust, and silent film. Here, writer Frances Marion and actress Mary Pickford find each other — two ambitious women inventing an art form and a friendship that will change Hollywood forever. As fame and fortune rise around them, they learn that success can illuminate and shatter in equal measure. In *The Girls in the Picture*, Melanie Benjamin captures the dawn of cinema and the price women paid for daring to be its authors.

*“Benjamin’s Hollywood shimmers with ambition, heart, and heartbreak.”*

— *Entertainment Weekly*

## ORIGINAL

### THE BEE’S KNEES

Bright, hopeful, and quietly revolutionary.

2 oz London dry gin  
¾ oz fresh lemon juice  
½ oz honey syrup (2:1)

Method: Shake with ice; strain into a chilled coupe and garnish with a lemon twist.



## TODAY’S TAKE

### THE SILENT STAR

Golden light, camera flash in a glass.

1½ oz small-batch gin  
½ oz lemon juice  
½ oz honey-lavender syrup  
½ oz sparkling rosé  
edible flower or lemon wheel

Method: Shake gin, lemon, and syrup with ice; strain into a coupe; top with sparkling rosé and garnish.

**SPRIT-FREE SILENT STAR:** 1½ oz juniper botanical · ½ oz lemon juice · ½ oz honey-lavender syrup · ½ oz non-alcoholic sparkling rosé. Shake all but the sparkling component with ice; strain and top with rosé.

# Mistress of the Ritz

*Paris — 1930s to 1940s*

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

Paris, 1939 — the city of light flickers under occupation. Inside the Ritz, Blanche and Claude Auzello preside over the hotel of dreams even as war darkens its corridors. Among royalty and Nazis, lovers and liars, they play a dangerous game of charm and deception. In *Mistress of the Ritz*, Melanie Benjamin tells the true-inspired story of a marriage tested by occupation and honor — of two people who discover that resistance can wear silk as well as steel.

*“A taut tale of suspense and love in a world of darkness and grace.”*

— *Library Journal (Starred Review)*

## ORIGINAL

### THE SIDECAR

Amber, elegant,  
composed under fire.



1½ oz Cognac  
¾ oz Cointreau  
¾ oz fresh lemon juice  
sugar rim (optional)

Method: Shake with ice; strain into a chilled coupe. Add a thin sugar rim if desired.

## TODAY'S TAKE

### THE LIBERATION

Resilient, radiant, and quietly  
victorious.

1½ oz Cognac  
½ oz orange blossom honey syrup  
½ oz lemon juice  
½ oz dry orange liqueur  
dash Angostura  
lemon twist

Method: Shake all ingredients with ice; strain into a Nick & Nora glass; express a lemon peel.

**SPIRIT-FREE LIBERATION:** 1½ oz alcohol-free Cognac alternative (such as Lyre's VSOP or Gnista Barreled Oak) · ½ oz orange blossom honey syrup · ½ oz lemon juice · dash NA bitters. Shake with ice and strain into a Nick & Nora glass.

# The Children's Blizzard

Dakota Territory — 1888

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

Dakota Territory, 1888 — a land where mercy and weather are equally unpredictable. When a sudden storm sweeps across the prairie, schoolteachers and children must decide between shelter and the desperate hope of home. In *The Children's Blizzard*, Melanie Benjamin draws on true accounts to reveal the courage, love, and quiet heroism that bloom in the harshest conditions — and the haunting choices that linger long after the snow has cleared.

*"Benjamin transforms history into human pulse — a story as stark and luminous as winter light."*

— BookPage

## ORIGINAL

### THE HOT TODDY

Simple, steadfast,  
and built for survival.

2 oz rye or bourbon  
¾ oz honey  
¾ oz fresh lemon juice  
4 oz hot water  
clove-studded lemon wheel

Method: Combine whiskey, honey, and lemon in a heated mug; stir in hot water and garnish.



## TODAY'S TAKE

### THE WINTER LIGHT

Pure, clear, and quietly radiant.

1½ oz bourbon  
½ oz honey-ginger syrup  
½ oz fresh lemon juice  
3 oz hot chamomile tea  
dash aromatic bitters  
lemon peel

Method: Build in a warmed mug; stir gently; inhale before you sip.

**SPIRIT-FREE WINTER LIGHT:** 1½ oz chamomile concentrate · ½ oz honey-ginger syrup · ½ oz lemon juice · 3 oz hot water · dash NA bitters · lemon peel.

# California Golden

*California Coast — 1960s to 1970s*

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

Southern California, 1960s — where the waves are endless and expectations are shallow. Carol Donnelly surfs against the tide of convention, leaving her daughters, Mindy and Ginger, to find their own balance between love and loss. In *California Golden*, Melanie Benjamin captures the glitter and ache of a generation chasing freedom — a story of mothers and daughters learning that even in paradise, the undertow can pull you home.

*“A shimmering tale of women, waves, and the cost of independence.”*

— *Los Angeles Times*

## ORIGINAL

### THE MAI TAI

Golden, lush, and deceptively strong.



1 oz light rum  
1 oz aged Jamaican rum  
½ oz orange curaçao  
¼ oz orgeat (almond syrup)  
¾ oz fresh lime juice  
mint sprig  
spent lime shell

Method: Shake all but garnish with ice; strain into a rocks glass filled with crushed ice. Garnish with mint and lime shell.

## TODAY'S TAKE

### THE GOLDEN HOUR

Sun-kissed and salt-rimmed, a modern wave of brightness.

1½ oz white rum  
½ oz dark rum float  
½ oz passion fruit purée  
½ oz lime juice  
¼ oz orgeat  
¼ oz pineapple juice  
pinch sea salt  
edible orchid or citrus wheel

Method: Shake with ice; strain into a rocks glass with crushed ice; float dark rum and garnish.

**SPRIT-FREE GOLDEN HOUR:** 1½ oz pineapple juice · ½ oz lime juice · ½ oz almond syrup · ½ oz passion fruit purée · float 0.5 oz non-alcoholic dark rum (if available) · pinch sea salt. Shake with ice and strain into a rocks glass with crushed ice.

# The Windsor Affair

England & France — 1930s–1940s

## ABOUT THE NOVEL

England and France, 1930s–1940s — when a king’s heart could upend an empire. In *The Windsor Affair*, Melanie Benjamin turns her gaze to the Abdication Crisis and the two women whose lives—and rivalry—shaped it. Wallis Simpson, the glamorous American divorcée who captivated Edward VIII, and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the steadfast Duchess who would become queen, find themselves on opposite sides of history’s most scandalous love story.

### ORIGINAL

#### THE FRENCH 75

Elegant, lethal, and perfectly improper.

1 oz London dry gin  
½ oz lemon juice  
½ oz simple syrup  
3 oz Champagne

Method: Shake gin, lemon, and syrup with ice. Strain into a flute and top with Champagne.  
Garnish with thin lemon ribbon.



### TODAY’S TAKE

#### THE ABDICATION

Bold, bittersweet, irresistible.

1½ oz Cognac or aged gin  
½ oz crème de cassis  
½ oz lemon juice  
¼ oz honey syrup

Top with chilled brut rosé

Method: Shake Cognac, cassis, lemon, and honey with ice. Strain into a coupe top with rosé.  
Garnish with an expressed orange twist or edible gold dust.

**SPIRIT-FREE GOLDEN HOUR:** 1½ oz pineapple juice · ½ oz lime juice · ½ oz almond syrup · ½ oz passion fruit purée · float 0.5 oz non-alcoholic dark rum (if available) · pinch sea salt. Shake with ice and strain into a rocks glass with crushed ice.

# TOASTS!

You can't mix cocktails with friends without a good toast! I love these examples from the past:

## Victorian Era (1837 – 1901)

*“May we never want a friend, nor a bottle to share with him.”*  
— *The Complete Toastmaster*, 1874

## Edwardian / Gilded Age (1900 – 1918)

*“To the ladies — the only beings who can make us wise and foolish in the same hour.”*  
— *Toasts and After-Dinner Speeches*, 1904

## Interwar / WW II (1920 – 1945)

*“To our wives and sweethearts — may they never meet.”*  
— *Royal Navy Mess Toast*, c. 1930s

## Mid-Century Modern (1950 – 1960s)

*“To good friends, good books, and evenings that end too soon.”*  
— *Esquire Party Book*, 1952

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## A Final Toast

"Here's to the readers who bring our stories to life — "

— *Melanie Benjamin*