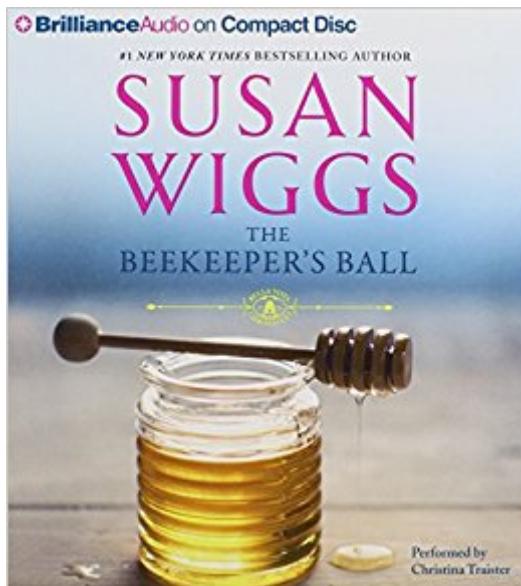


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# The Beekeeper's Ball (Bella Vista)



## Synopsis

#1 New York Times bestselling author Susan Wiggs returns to sun-drenched Bella Vista, where the land's bounty yields a rich harvest and family secrets that have long been buried. Isabel Johansen, a celebrated chef who grew up in the sleepy Sonoma town of Archangel, is transforming her childhood home into a destination cooking school—a unique place for other dreamers to come and learn the culinary arts. Bella Vista's rambling mission-style hacienda, with its working apple orchards, bountiful gardens and beehives, is the idyllic venue for Isabel's project and the perfect place for her to forget the past. But Isabel's carefully ordered plans begin to go awry when swaggering, war-torn journalist Cormac O'Neill arrives to dig up old history. He's always been better at exposing the lives of others than showing his own closely guarded heart, but the pleasures of small-town life and the searing sensuality of Isabel's kitchen coax him into revealing a few truths of his own. The dreamy sweetness of summer is the perfect time of year for a grand family wedding and the enchanting Beekeeper's Ball, bringing emotions to a head in a story where the past and present collide to create an unexpected new future. From "one of the best observers of stories of the heart" (Salem Statesman-Journal), *The Beekeeper's Ball* is an exquisite and richly imagined novel of the secrets that keep us from finding our way, the ties binding us to family and home, and the indelible imprint love can make on the human heart.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*Starred Review\* The unconscionable incident with Calvin Sharp caused Isabel Johansen to leave

culinary school and flee to her family's home, Bella Vista, nestled in the Sonoma wine country. Isabel continues to hone her culinary skills while turning Bella Vista into a destination for food lovers. She even adds a cooking school and is eagerly planning Bella Vista's first major event, her sister Tess's wedding. But Isabel's hard-earned happiness is shattered when Calvin, now a famous TV chef, chooses her town as the venue for his new restaurant. Things get even more hectic and complicated when former war correspondent Cormac O'Neill comes to town, ready to write her grandfather's biography, including his role in the Danish Resistance during WWII. As much as Isabel denies it, she's getting more and more attracted to Cormac, something that's definitely not on her 'œto do' list. Wiggs' carefully detailed plotlines, one contemporary and one historical, with their candid look at relationships and their long-term effects, are sure to captivate readers. The second of Wiggs' Bella Vista Chronicles, after *The Apple Orchard* (2013), features a nice bonus: a delightfully unique boy-meets-girl opening. Librarians will want to stay with this entire series. --Shelley Mosley --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"Wiggs' carefully detailed plotlines, one contemporary and one historical, with their candid look at relationships and their long-term effects, are sure to captivate readers."-Booklist, starred review A dazzling intergenerational tale."-Publishers Weekly" A satisfying, engaging read."-Kirkus Reviews"Highly recommended."-Library Journal" Wiggs tells a layered, powerful story of love, loss, hope and redemption."-Kirkus Reviews on *The Apple Orchard*, starred review" This brilliant and epic family drama...fills the senses...courtesy of Wiggs's amazing narrative and supreme skill as a writer."-RT Book Reviews on *The Apple Orchard*, Top Pick! A tale with universal appeal."-Booklist on *The Apple Orchard*" This is classic Wiggs, with its emphasis on the strength of family and friends, and a landscape integral to the plot."-Publishers Weekly on *The Apple Orchard* --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

I read this book with my book club. There are recipes included and one of the ladies made a cake and it was delicious. I have given the book to my cousin who is always interested in WWII information and I have bought another book by Susan Wiggs with the same characters. I like the way the book was written. It went from current time, then to WWII, and back to current times. The characters were likable and it was fun seeing how everything worked out.

Susan Wiggs' first book of the series Bella Vista was *The Apple Orchard* where the story began of Magnus Johansen and two daughters Tess Delaney and Isabel Johansen. Brief recap:

Tess is informed by Dominic Rossi, an attorney for her Grandfather Magnus Johansen that Magnus is in a coma and she has been named in his will and must return to a small town called Archangel in Sonoma County. Tess is drawn more and more into the beauty of Bella Vista and a sister Isabel she never knew existed. As the story develops Tess falls in love with Dominic Rossi and as The Beekeepers Ball opens, everyone is preparing for Tess and Dominic's wedding. Isabel is an accomplished chef and ready to open a cooking school at Bella Vista. As if planning the wedding and preparing for the school to be perfect, enter biographer Cormac O'Neill who was asked to write about Magnus and his experience with the Danish resistance in WWII and his life at Bella Vista. Cormac's knack for uncovering truths, Isabel learns more about her grandfather's tragic past, including how he lost his parents and grandfather during the Nazi occupation of Denmark and how he came to meet her now deceased grandmother and another dear friend Annalise Winter. The Beekeepers Ball is several storylines in one, the marriage of Tess and Dom, Isabel struggling to overcome her struggle with her insecurities while slowly falling in love with Cormac. A new beekeeper Jamie Westfall who arrives with no home, pregnant and very young who fits into the family. I look forward to the next chapter of Bella Vista; Apple Orchard and Beekeepers Ball left many storylines open to many books to come.

The second in the Bella Vista Chronicles, The Beekeeper's Ball focuses on Isabel Johansen in stunning Sonoma Co, CA, as she converts her family home to a destination cooking school, and flashbacks telling her grandfather Magnus's story as part of the Danish resistance during WW2 Nazi occupation. Family truths long untold unfold, and we watch as observers things people do in times of extreme duress that are later judged by history, family members, in the context of peacetime and safety. Susan Wiggs does a very good job threading this needle. I am however very anxious for her to return to this series to see where it goes next. She never disappoints.

I very rarely write book reviews. I am generally finishing books at 1-2am and up way past my bedtime and by the next day I am on to the next book. I also don't like to write a review on my kindle, so the book has to really stick with me in order for me to get online later and review it. Susan Wiggs is a writer who I adore, and I can tear through her books reading one every day. I have read most of her books but not all at this point. I have read the entire Lakeshore Chronicles, the Tudor Rose trilogy, Chicago Fire trilogy, and many stand alones. My favorites are those that use each book in the series to tell an individual's story, while still weaving together a whole family, town, or event in time. The Bella Vista Chronicles are one of my favorite sets of Susan Wiggs Stories. I do

not default to Romance Books, but rather to Historical Fiction. This book, and it's counterpart in the Bella Vista Chronicles, are amongst my favorites, because of the historical fiction component, which skillfully weaves a story of a family (or multiple families) across history. It brings the past together with the present and sets up a bit of a mystery to be unraveled. Well written, excellent characters and setting. I was hooked and tore through both books immediately and was (and am) waiting for what could possibly be a third. Great read, if you enjoy historical fiction you will love The Bella Vista Chronicles.

This is a very well researched and written book. Mac is a writer who is doing a book on Magnus, Isabel's grandfather. Isabel is supervising the renovations of the family home and creation of her cooking school. She is also cooking for her half sister's wedding, which they refer to as the 'Beekeeper's Ball' instead of wedding reception. All of the food will contain honey. Through Mac's interviews with Magnus concerning his time in Denmark and involvement with the 'resistance' during WWII, Isabel and Tess learn many new facts. Mac is very direct with Isabel concerning romance. She resists him (as he is leaving) for about 85% of the book. I did appreciate her ability to step away from Mac. There is a story concerning a young beekeeper's pregnancy and we don't know what happens to Jaime in this book. Hopefully we will see more of her story in the next book. Mac finds a trunk containing Isabel's mother clothing from Italy. Included is a Valentino gown. Even after a trip to meet her maternal relatives, we don't know how mom got the Valentino. (family apparently was not wealthy enough to come to daughter's funeral) The book ends with a cliffhanger concerning Isabel and Tess's dad. Can't wait for the next book

Loved it. The ongoing story of two half sisters who only found out about each other as adults. The story is full of surprises about their past. As their grandfather tells his life story about growing up in Nazi occupied Denmark, more family secrets come out.

For more amazing recipes and fun storytelling. The descriptions now have me looking at a trip to Napa Valley. But the story echoes in my head in a good way. Ready to read the next book in the still series.

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