



Secret Ingredients

A CULINARY
NOVELIST FINDS
HER HUNGRY
AUDIENCE ONLINE

When Sharon Boorstin began shopping her first novel, *Cooking for Love*, there was general enthusiasm among publishers for the content (Beverly Hills cookbook author accompanies best friend on exotic journey to find the man who got away)—and general agreement about the characters: They were too, uh, too . . . What's the word we're groping for here? Too *old*. After all, they were 49.

"I was told things like, 'Who would believe women that age would go off and have these adventures?'" says Boorstin of the novel, which, in fact, was inspired by a real-life escapade involving a close friend, her long-lost boyfriend, Google, and the female-arousal oil Zestra. "But I saw it specifically as a story of that almost-50 age group. For me, the fun was that they *were* this old, that they were at an age where you're wondering if you'll still be able to *have* adventures."

Consequently, Boorstin, also author of the memoir/cookbook *Let Us Eat Cake*, decided to embark on a little adventure of her own: self-publishing. Trawling the Internet, she discovered *iUniverse*, a print-on-demand operation. The tab for turning her manuscript into a book that could be ordered online was \$600. Then Boorstin got busy putting her mouth where her money was, speaking mostly to women's groups around the country. She also e-mailed all the women who'd contacted her after the publication of *Cake*: "I told them that I had this new book, that no one would publish it because the women were too old, and they'd write back and say, 'The women were too *what*?' It became a rallying cry."

Boorstin sold enough paperback copies online, at \$18 a pop, to push *Cooking for Love* into the top 25 at *BN.com* (Barnes & Noble). Her success attracted the interest of *iUniverse* Star, a unit of the Web site, which is marking its relaunch this month as a traditional publisher by reissuing the book with some racy new recipes (Orgasmic Cookies and Morning-After Muffins, for example) and a slightly jauntier title: *Cookin' For Love*. Zestra, too, has gotten into the act, sponsoring a series of "Girlfriends Gatherings" this summer, where Boorstin will discuss the book and participants will get free samples.

"The thing I'm trying to say in the book is that the older you get, the more important your women friends are," says Boorstin. "It's your friends who make it easier to get through whatever problems you have. As the years go by, the waters get choppier, and sometimes there are sharks. Your friends are there to make sure you don't get eaten."

—JOANNE KAUFMAN

