



Hello there 😊

Welcome to September's newsletter! I'm excited to share what's been keeping me busy lately.

What I've Been Reading

Just For the Summer by Abby Jimenez



This summer, I couldn't go anywhere without seeing Abby Jimenez's latest book, *Just for the Summer*. Whether it was poolside, all over Instagram, or featured in the window of my local bookstore, it seemed like everyone was reading it. Curious about the hype, I decided to give it a try.

I'll admit, I wasn't familiar with Abby Jimenez before this. But after hearing her on a podcast, I was intrigued enough to see what her writing was all about. What surprised me

first was her impressive background—not only does she own a bakery chain in Minnesota, but she's also a Food Network champion!

Just for the Summer is actually the third book in her *Part of Your World* series, but don't worry—it can be read as a standalone. Jimenez's writing is perfect for readers who enjoy contemporary romance that blends humor, emotional depth, and serious themes. What really hooked me was her natural, quick-witted dialogue. The playful banter between characters feels authentic and charming, like the conversations you might have with real friends, family, or a romantic partner.

The story follows Emma and Justin, two individuals who seem to have the worst luck in love—everyone they date ends up finding their happily ever after with someone else after they break up. Emma and Justin decide to date each other as a joke, figuring that their "bad luck" might cancel out. What begins as a lighthearted arrangement turns into a deeper exploration of vulnerability, personal growth, and the long-lasting effects of childhood on adult relationships.

I loved how Jimenez incorporates modern language and cultural references, which gives her stories a fresh and relatable vibe—especially for younger readers. Overall, I found her writing to be a delightful mix of heart, humor, and realism. It's easy to see why her books have gained such a following.

What I've Been Writing

How Romance Novels Inspire My Writing and Why They Resonate with Readers



My experience with Jimenez's book got me thinking about the broader romance genre and its enduring popularity. As an author navigating the ever-changing landscape of publishing, I've recently found myself drawn into the world of romance writing. While my roots are in

women's fiction, I've discovered that the line between genres is often blurrier than we might think—and that's a beautiful thing.

My upcoming novel, *Summer in the Moon Garden*, features a romance subplot that's taken on a life of its own. This storyline follows Kat, our protagonist, as she reunites with her high school and college sweetheart Danny after years apart. Born from my long-standing fascination with second chances and the enduring nature of true love, this narrative thread weaves seamlessly into the larger tapestry of the story.

There's something magical about the idea of rekindling love and fate, offering two people another shot at getting it right. This timeless theme has finally made its way into my writing, inspired by some of my favorite films, like *Sweet Home Alabama*, *Hope Floats*, *It's Complicated*, and countless Hallmark movies. Each of these stories shares a common thread—the enduring power of true love—which I'm finally exploring in my own work.

These themes resonate with readers across genres, making the romance subplot an interesting element of *Summer in the Moon Garden*. By intertwining Kat and Danny's rekindled relationship with the main plot, I aim to create a rich, multifaceted narrative that explores the complexities of love, timing, and personal growth.

As I work on my third book, tentatively titled "Sweet Mama Jane's," I find myself leaning even more into the romance genre. While I've always appreciated romance novels, I'm now seeing them in a new light, both as a writer fulfilling a long-held interest and as an observer of publishing trends. It feels like I'm finally writing the stories I've always wanted to tell and discovering that they align perfectly with what readers are craving.

What I've learned about the romance genre has frankly blown me away. While overall book sales are on a downward trend, romance is bucking that trend spectacularly. Here are some eye-opening statistics:

- Romance novels account for nearly a quarter of all book sales in the U.S.
- The genre generates over \$1 billion in sales annually.
- About half of all romance readers devour at least one novel per week, with some reading up to 30 books a month!

But it's not just about quantity. The quality and diversity of romance stories are expanding too. One particularly interesting trend is the growth of "later-in-life romance"—a subgenre focusing on love stories for older characters. This category has seen a tremendous growth in just the last year.

During my winter escapes to Florida, where my mom lives, I've observed firsthand the voracious appetite for romance novels among retirees. These readers, many of them baby boomers, are living their best lives both on and off the page.

In our current climate of uncertainty, romance novels offer a comforting escape. They're like a warm hug for your brain, reassuring readers that happy endings are still possible, even if only in fiction. This blend of escapism and hope is a powerful draw for readers of all ages.

As someone who primarily reads and writes women's fiction, I've always been drawn to elements of romance in storytelling. There's something captivating about a well-crafted love story that keeps me turning pages long past my bedtime. While not all of my writing includes traditional romance, I've found that exploring relationships—whether budding romances or established marriages—adds significant depth to the narrative.

This overlap between romance and women's fiction, often seen in "beach reads," is part of a larger trend. Readers are seeking stories about love, second chances, and personal growth at every stage of life. It's a reminder that our capacity for love and transformation doesn't diminish with age—if anything, it deepens.

As I continue to write and explore these genres, I'm excited by the possibilities. The growing popularity of romance proves that these stories of love, hope, and transformation are more than just "beach reads"—they're the heartbeat of modern fiction.

Whether you're a longtime fan of romance or a curious newcomer, there's never been a better time to dive into the genre. You might just find your next favorite read—or, in my case, your next writing inspiration.

What are your thoughts on the romance genre? Have you noticed these trends in your own reading habits? I'd love to hear your perspectives in the comments below!



What I've Been Cooking

Chocolate Chip Cookies!!!



Speaking of sweet treats, let's not forget that Abby Jimenez isn't just a master of romantic storytelling—she's also a skilled baker! Her dual talents got me thinking about the similarities between a perfectly crafted romance novel and a well-made batch of cookies. Both offer comfort, a moment of indulgence, and a recipe for happiness. In that spirit, I thought I'd share my own recipe for the ultimate comfort food: chocolate chip cookies. Just like a good romance novel, these cookies are the perfect blend of sweet and satisfying, with a dash of nostalgia thrown in. So why not whip up a batch, curl up with a love story, and treat yourself to a double dose of comfort? Here's my tried-and-true recipe for chocolate chip cookies that are guaranteed to melt your heart faster than any fictional romance.

Ingredients

- 2 sticks of butter, room temp
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups plus 1 rounded tablespoon all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 8 oz. chocolate chips
- Maldon Sea Salt Flakes (optional)

Directions

- Using a stand mixer, cream butter at low speed until it's creamy and whipped.
- Add sugars and beat on high until the mixture is pale ivory in color and feels like soft, grainy clay—about 3 min or so. **This step helps with the cookie structure and**

creates a lighter, more delicate cookie.

- Add in eggs, one at a time and mix until well combined. Add vanilla. (I like to let the tablespoon overflow a little because I ❤️ vanilla)
- In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and salt.
- Add dry ingredients into butter sugar mixture, mixing until just combined --don't over mix. Stir in chocolate chips.
- Using an ice cream scooper, scoop dough onto a parchment lined baking sheet and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. This prevents the cookies from spreading too much while baking.
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees while chilling dough.
- Generously space out cookies on a parchment lined baking sheet—I usually do 6 per sheet (give cookies room to do their thing—a crowded cookie sheet=oddly shaped, flat cookies) *If you like your cookies salted, now is the time to add the flaky sea salt.* Bake for 8-10 minutes. Take out when edges are done but still pale and a little shiny on top. *If you forgot to salt, right out of the oven also works.*

Happy baking and reading!

Best wishes ✨

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