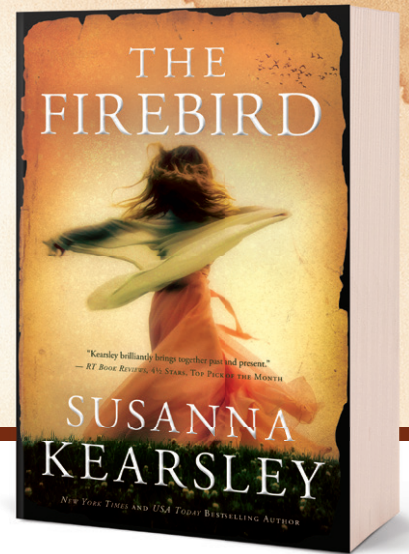


## EVENT GUIDE

# THE FIREBIRD

by Susanna Kearsley



### *Throw a Russian Tea Party!*

Russians are known for drinking tea 5 to 6 times a day, and they take their tea parties seriously! Guests are encouraged to leave their cares at the door to enjoy a steaming-hot drink, delicious sweet treats, and lively conversation!

### **Food and Drink!**

- Black Indian tea is a staple. Serve sugar cubes, honey, and jam to sweeten.
  - Tip: Sip like the Russians sip, with a sugar cube held between your teeth!
- Satisfy your sweet tooth with pastries, cookies, and candy. Kozinaki and Russian tea cakes are regular offerings (...and you'll find the recipes below)!
- Tiny smoked-salmon-and-cucumber finger sandwiches are savory options.

### *Time-Slip Treasures*

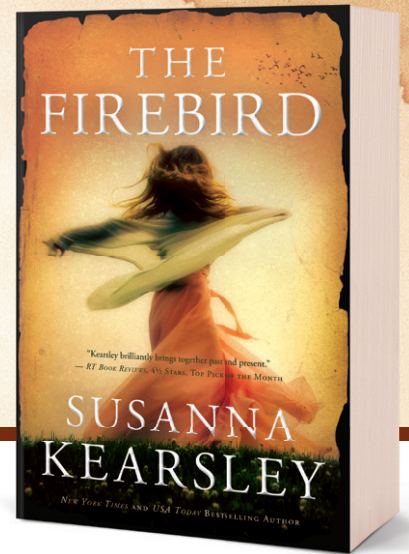
In Susanna Kearsley's *The Firebird*, Nicola Marter is blessed with a gift. When she touches an object, she glimpses those who have owned it before. When a woman brings a small wooden carving to the gallery Nicola works at, she can see that it was named after the Firebird—the mythical creature from an old Russian fable. Compelled to know more, she travels back in time to find answers.

*Unfortunately, we have to rely on our favorite fiction to travel through time (for the foreseeable future). But that doesn't mean we can't be taken back once in awhile—and it often happens when we encounter an object from our past. All it takes is one touch, one smell, or one look to trigger a memory that's lingered for a lifetime.*

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### *Time-Slip Treasures continued...*

#### Ask your book club members to:

- Think about an object that is tied closely to a memory from their past, and, if possible, bring it to share with the group as they answer the following questions:
  - How did they come to possess this object?
  - Who/what does it make them think of? Why?
  - Why does this memory still linger? What makes it so important?
- Think about where they would travel if they could go anywhere in time:
  - Why did they choose that era?
  - Is there a specific place that they would visit during this time period?
  - What would they expect to find there?

### *Recipes for Your Book Club!*

#### Russian Tea Cakes (makes about 4 dozen):

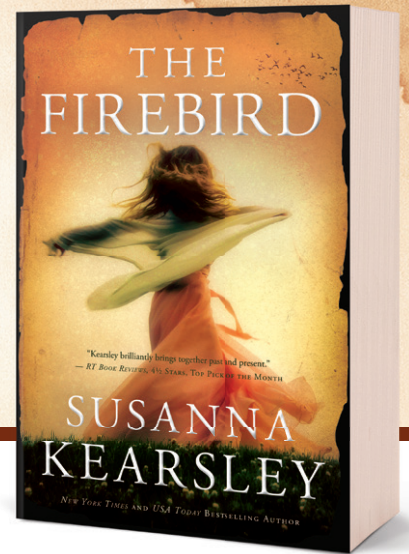
##### Ingredients:

- 1 cup (2 sticks or 8 ounces) butter, room temperature
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup pecans, toasted and finely ground
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)

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### Russian Tea Cakes continued...

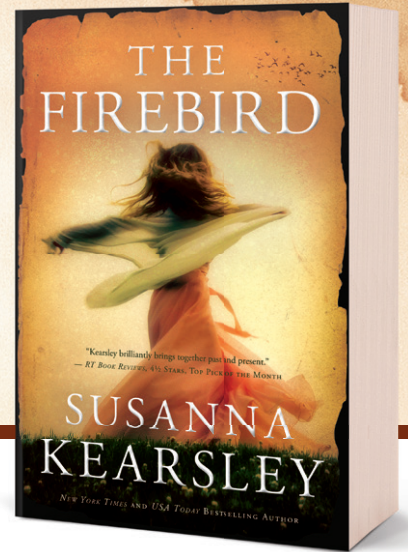
#### Directions:

1. Using an electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until light and fluffy. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup powdered sugar and vanilla; beat until well blended. Beat in flour, then nuts.
2. Divide dough in half; form each half into ball. Wrap separately in plastic; chill until cold, about 30 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F. Whisk remaining  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  cups powdered sugar and cinnamon, if using, in pie dish to blend. Set cinnamon sugar aside.
4. Working with half of chilled dough, roll dough by 2 teaspoonfuls between palms into balls. Arrange balls on heavy large baking sheet, spacing  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch apart. Bake cookies until golden brown on bottom and just pale golden on top, about 18 minutes. Cool cookies 5 minutes on baking sheet. Gently toss warm cookies in cinnamon sugar to coat completely. Transfer coated cookies to rack and cool completely. Repeat procedure with remaining half of dough.

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# THE FIREBIRD

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### Kozinaki (Russian Candy)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 pound of shelled walnuts or almonds, finely chopped
- 2 cups (16 ounces) of honey
- 6 tablespoons of sugar

#### Directions:

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350° F. Spread the chopped nuts in a single layer in a pan and toast them in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes, turning them about with a spoon from time to time. Watch carefully for any sign of burning.
- 2.** In a heavy 2-quart pan, combine the honey and sugar and, stirring constantly, bring to a boil. When the syrup reaches 220° F. on a thermometer, lower the heat and stir in the nuts. Stirring often, cook for 15 minutes.
- 3.** Brush the inside of an 8- to 9-inch round pie tin or pan with cold water and pour in the nut mixture. Smooth the top and set aside, uncovered, to cool. When firm, dip the pan into hot water and invert a flat plate on top. Grasping the two firmly together, turn over; the candy should slide out in one piece. With a sharp knife dipped in hot water, cut into diamond shapes. The candy will keep at room temperature for about one week.