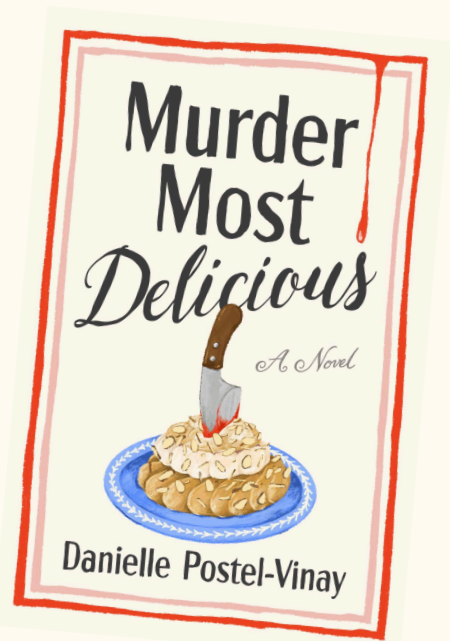


MURDER MOST DELICIOUS

A Novel by Danielle Postel-Vinay
Harper Perennial • 2026



READING GROUP GUIDE

1. Olivia describes losing her sense of taste as feeling like 'Matisse losing his vision or Beethoven going deaf.' How does the loss of a defining gift shape her identity and self-worth? Can you think of a time when you lost something central to who you are?
2. Despite losing her sense of taste, Olivia discovers that her nose alone is powerful enough to carry her through a blind wine tasting. What does this revelation say about resilience, adaptation, and the surprising ways we survive loss?
3. The Paris Neighborhood Watch is an eccentric ensemble: a florist, a pâtissier, a café owner, a librarian, a cop, and an agoraphobic detective with a cat named Chateaubriand. How does the novel use this community to comment on the value of belonging?
4. Augusta Dupin is described as brilliant but agoraphobic, leading investigations from inside her apartment. How does the author use Augusta's condition to overturn traditional detective-novel conventions? What does Augusta's reliance on others tell us about the nature of knowledge?
5. Food and wine in the novel are described in deeply sensory, almost reverential terms. How does the author use French cuisine as more than backdrop and as a vehicle for character, culture, and even justice?
6. Olivia is an outsider — an American — thrust into a tightly-knit Parisian neighborhood under the worst possible circumstances. How do the locals' attitudes toward her shift over the course of the opening chapters? What is the novel saying about insiders, outsiders, and how communities absorb strangers?
7. The novel uses scent as both a narrative device and a form of emotional memory. Olivia can identify a wine's vintage, region, and producer from a single inhale. How does the author use scent throughout to evoke character, mood, and place?

READING GROUP GUIDE (CONTINUED)

- 8.** Chantal says, 'Ugly things are everywhere, but it doesn't mean one has to live an ugly life.' How does this philosophy run through the novel's treatment of joy, grief, and the choice to remain present to beauty?
- 9.** Olivia came to Paris in desperate need of a second chance — and finds herself in more trouble than she left behind. Yet by the end of the opening chapters, something has shifted for her. How does the novel frame 'starting over,' and is there a tension between the promise of Paris and its reality?
- 10.** By the end of the opening chapters, Olivia has lost her dream job, become a murder suspect, fled a crime scene, and found herself swept up in the affairs of an eccentric neighborhood she arrived in only hours ago. Yet the tone of the novel remains warm and even comic. How does the author balance genuine darkness with lightness and wit? Do you find this balance convincing, and what does it suggest about how people actually cope with catastrophe?



THE WINES OF MURDER MOST DELICIOUS

Olivia Beech's extraordinary nose guides readers through some of France's most celebrated wine regions. Below are the wines mentioned or evoked in the novel, alongside comparable bottles to seek out for your reading group gathering.

Wines Featured in the Novel

Wine	Region	Grape	Tasting Notes
Domaine Tortochot, Gevrey-Chambertin 2016	Burgundy, France	Pinot Noir	Red forest fruit, Burlat cherries, violets; biodynamic, delicate minerality. The poisoned wine at the heart of the mystery.
Domaine Mathias Planchon 'Le Paradis' Sancerre 2020	Loire Valley, France	Sauvignon Blanc	Orange blossom, elderberry, honeysuckle, lemon peel, thyme, white smoke. Olivia's eureka wine — identified by nose alone.
Côte du Rhône (unnamed)	Rhône Valley, France	Grenache / Syrah blend	Violets, red berry, pepper. One of Olivia's reference points for her scent memory.
Champagne (unnamed)	Champagne, France	Chardonnay / Pinot Noir / Pinot Meunier	Brioche, citrus, apple. Jacques' preferred way to celebrate neighborhood triumphs.
Washington State White (unnamed)	Washington, USA	Riesling / White blend	Herbaceous pear and pineapple. Referenced as part of Olivia's international scent catalogue.
Burgundy Blind Tasting Flight (six glasses)	Burgundy, France	Pinot Noir	Jacques' interview tasting — the six glasses Olivia was meant to identify, one of which contained the fatal poison.

Suggested Bottles for Your Reading Group

Pair your discussion with one of these approachable, widely available selections inspired by the novel:

- **Henri Bourgeois 'La Bourgeoise' Sancerre** — crisp, citrus-driven Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire; perfect aperitif wine.
- **Louis Jadot Gevrey-Chambertin** — accessible entry-level Burgundy with cherry, earth, and that signature Pinot minerality.
- **Guigal Côtes du Rhône Rouge** — reliable, food-friendly, with the violet and red-berry profile Olivia knows by heart.
- **Moët & Chandon Brut Impérial** — the quintessential Champagne for celebrating small victories, as Jacques would.
- **Domaine Weinbach Riesling 'Cuvée Théo' (Alsace)** — for those who appreciate white wines with that 'mellow white peach and honey' Olivia so prizes.
- **Yves Cuilleron Condrieu (Viognier)** — explosive apricot and orange blossom, exactly as Olivia describes. A stunning aperitif or fish-course pairing.



GASTON'S PÂTISSERIE: A PASTRY COMPANION

Gaston, the neighborhood pâtissier whose family has owned his shop for three generations, arrives at dawn each morning to fill the street with the scent of vanilla and caramelized sugar. Below are the pastries and sweet treats featured in or evoked by *Murder Most Delicious* — each a small monument to the pleasures of French daily life.



Pastry / Treat	Description & Context in the Novel
Chocolate Éclairs	Gaston's signature creation — the ones Officer Hedi cannot resist no matter how difficult Gaston's personality. Choux pastry filled with chocolate crème pâtissière and topped with glossy ganache. The novel's most recurring edible symbol, representing the irresistible pleasures of neighborhood life.
Mille-feuille	Layers of crisp, buttery pâte feuilletée interleaved with vanilla crème and finished with fondant icing. Spotted in Gaston's window display. The mille-feuille's many layers evoke the novel's own stratified storytelling.
Chouquettes studded with sugar	Airy puffs of choux pastry dotted with pearl sugar — the most democratic of French treats, sold by the bag and eaten in the street. Their unassuming sweetness mirrors the novel's gentle warmth.
Cannelés de Bordeaux	Small, ridged cakes from the Bordeaux region, dark and caramelized on the outside, custardy within. Their wine-country origins make them a fitting presence in a novel so deeply steeped in French viticulture.
Fruit Tarts (strawberry, apricot, plum, fig)	A constellation of seasonal fruit tarts shining in Gaston's window — fresh fruit over almond cream in a buttery shell, glazed to a high shine. The abundance of choice becomes a small metaphor for the neighborhood's richness.
Chocolate Tartelettes	The bite-sized treat Gaston slides across the counter to Chantal — on the house, without being asked. A private language between old friends; a reminder that chocolate never breaks your heart.
Croissants (warm)	The morning staple at Martine's café, eaten on the sidewalk tables with café au lait. The ritual of the croissant is the novel's social glue — where gossip is traded, alliances formed, and the neighborhood begins its day.
Vanilla Bean Crème Brûlée	The Chez Jacques signature dessert, once described by the writer Colette as having 'a scent as sweet as death' — a phrase that takes on darkly ironic weight once Jacques is poisoned on his own bistro floor.
Tarte Tatin	Jacques' tarte tatin recipe, which Chantal openly admits she has been trying to steal for decades. A caramelized upside-down apple tart — rustic, indulgent, and imbued with the soul of the French countryside.
Crème Caramel	Mentioned by Olivia as one of the comforting things she imagines finding at Chez Jacques — 'the soothing custard of crème caramel.' A symbol of the restaurant's power to restore and console.
Jambon-Beurre on a Demi Baguette	Strictly a sandwich, not a pastry — but Chantal's lunch of thinly buttered baguette with ham, with 'the taste of the sea' from the salted Breton butter, represents the simplest and most perfect of French pleasures.

FIVE PARIS LOCATIONS TO VISIT

Murder Most Delicious is set in the Gros-Caillou quarter of the Seventh Arrondissement — a real, gloriously quiet sliver of Paris that most tourists overlook entirely. The novel brings it to life with precision and affection. Here are five locations — all either featured or evoked in the novel — to seek out on your own Parisian pilgrimage.

1. The Gros-Caillou Quarter, 7th Arrondissement

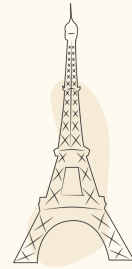
📍 *7th Arrondissement, Paris — around Rue Sédillot and Rue de l'Université*

The novel's beating heart. This 'triangle of streets under the Eiffel Tower' is where Olivia arrives, Chez Jacques stands, Gaston bakes, Chantal tends her flowers, and Hedi patrols by scooter. In real life, Gros-Caillou is a residential neighborhood of elegant Haussmann buildings, quiet cafés, and zero tourist fanfare. Walk the Rue de l'Université, Rue Sédillot, and Rue de Grenelle to find exactly the world Postel-Vinay describes: boulangeries still fragrant at 8am, florists spilling onto the pavement, the unmistakable sense of a village existing inside a city.

2. The Champ de Mars

📍 *Champ de Mars, 7th Arrondissement — access from Av. Anatole France or Av. de la Motte-Picquet*

The great park stretching from the Eiffel Tower to the École Militaire, and the view from Martine's café terrace in the novel. Each morning the neighborhood gathers here to drink café au lait with the Eiffel Tower rising on one side and the Seine stretching on the other. The Champ de Mars is one of Paris's most democratic spaces — equally beloved by tourists and locals, picnickers and runners, amateur philosophers and booksellers. Go on a spring morning, when the light is exactly right, and you will understand why this neighborhood is worth killing for.



3. The American Library in Paris

📍 *10 Rue du Général Camou, 75007 Paris*

Featured in the novel as the place where Prosper, the neighborhood's resident young intellectual, works part-time and borrows tomes of doom about globalization and climate change. The real American Library in Paris — one of the oldest English-language lending libraries in Europe, founded in 1920 — is located on Rue du Général Camou, just where Postel-Vinay places it. It holds over 100,000 volumes and remains one of the loveliest quiet corners in the city. Membership is open to all; entry is free for a look.

4. The Quai d'Orsay & the Seine Embankment

📍 *Quai d'Orsay, 75007 Paris — running parallel to the Seine*

Hedi's morning route to Martine's café runs along the Quai d'Orsay, the broad embankment road running beside the Seine through the heart of the Seventh. The novel uses these walks to establish rhythm and routine — the daily rites that hold a neighborhood together. Walk the Quai d'Orsay in the morning, before traffic, and you'll find the river at its most contemplative: grey-green, wide, and patient, carrying the weight of the city quietly westward. The Musée d'Orsay — home to one of the world's great Impressionist collections — is a short detour along the same embankment.

5. Père Lachaise Cemetery

📍 *16 Rue du Repos, 75020 Paris — Métro: Philippe Auguste or Gambetta*

Not located in the Seventh, but powerfully evoked in the novel. When Jacques dies, Chantal's mind fills with 'flowers strewn over marble tablets in Père Lachaise.' This famous necropolis in the 20th Arrondissement is the resting place of Colette — the writer the novel directly quotes regarding Chez Jacques' crème brûlée — as well as Chopin, Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde, Édith Piaf, and Jim Morrison. Walking Père Lachaise is to walk through layers of French cultural memory: precisely the kind of beautiful, melancholy, historically saturated experience that *Murder Most Delicious* is suffused with.