



## Don't Sing at the Table

By **Adriana Trigiani**  
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### Introduction

Filled with practical, sage advice, and infused with *New York Times* bestselling author Adriana Trigiani's trademark warmth, love, and humor, *Don't Sing at the Table* introduces a pair of feisty, intelligent, and strong forces of nature whose lives embody the story of 20th-century America itself. Between them, Trigiani's grandmothers, the extraordinary Lucia and Viola, lived through the century from beginning to end, surviving immigration, young widowhood, single motherhood, four wars, and the Great Depression. Culled from their remarkable experiences this heartfelt guide, at turns hilarious and poignant, offers answers to the seminal questions in a woman's life, from getting married to saving money, nurturing the soul to keeping calm in a crisis, raising children to finding private comfort.

Encouraging readers to take risks but to play it smart, to follow their hearts while keeping their heads, *Don't Sing at the Table* is essential for anyone who has wished they could turn to someone older and

wiser to ask, 'How did you do it?'

### Questions for Discussion

1. Adriana wrote that she was able to write *Don't Sing at the Table* because her grandmothers 'never threw anything away' clothing, bank records, contracts, wills, newspaper clippings, photographs.' What did your grandmothers pass down to you? What can those items tell you about the way they lived their lives?
2. Adriana wrote of Lucia, 'No one ever in the course of my entire life was ever as happy to see me as she was. Looking back now, I realize that you only ever need one person who lights up that way when you enter a room. One person is all it takes to give a kid confidence.' Who was that person for you?
3. Is craftsmanship valued as much today as it was in Viola and Lucia's time? What has changed?
4. Adriana recalled 'Venetian eggs' poached eggs in homemade tomato sauce with fresh dandelion' as one of her favorite meals Viola made her. What are some of your favorite meals your grandmothers made you?
5. In what ways were Viola and Lucia different? In what ways were they similar? Do you recognize aspects of your own grandmothers in them? Do you recognize aspects of yourself?
6. Adriana and her sisters still wear Viola's coats. Do you wear any of your grandmothers' clothing or jewelry? What did they teach you about style and beauty?
7. Adriana wrote, 'Our family stories have it all: risk, adventure, romance and intrigue. The places my grandmothers came from were described in stories they told.' What is a favorite story your grandmother told?
8. Lucia and Viola only met once. Though 'they held one another at a respectful distance, there was an underlying camaraderie'. What was the relationship between your grandmothers?
9. Which 'life lessons' described in *Don't Sing at the Table* do you value most? Did your grandmothers pass down any of the same advice to you?
10. What are your rules for living? Do you share any with Viola and Lucia?

### About the Author

Adriana Trigiani is an award-winning playwright, television writer, and documentary filmmaker. She is the author of the bestselling Big Stone Gap series; the bestselling novels *Lucia, Lucia*; *The Queen of the Big Time*; *Rococo*; *Very Valentine*; *Brava, Valentine*; and the teen novels *Viola in Reel Life* and *Viola in the Spotlight*. She lives in New York City with her husband and daughter.