

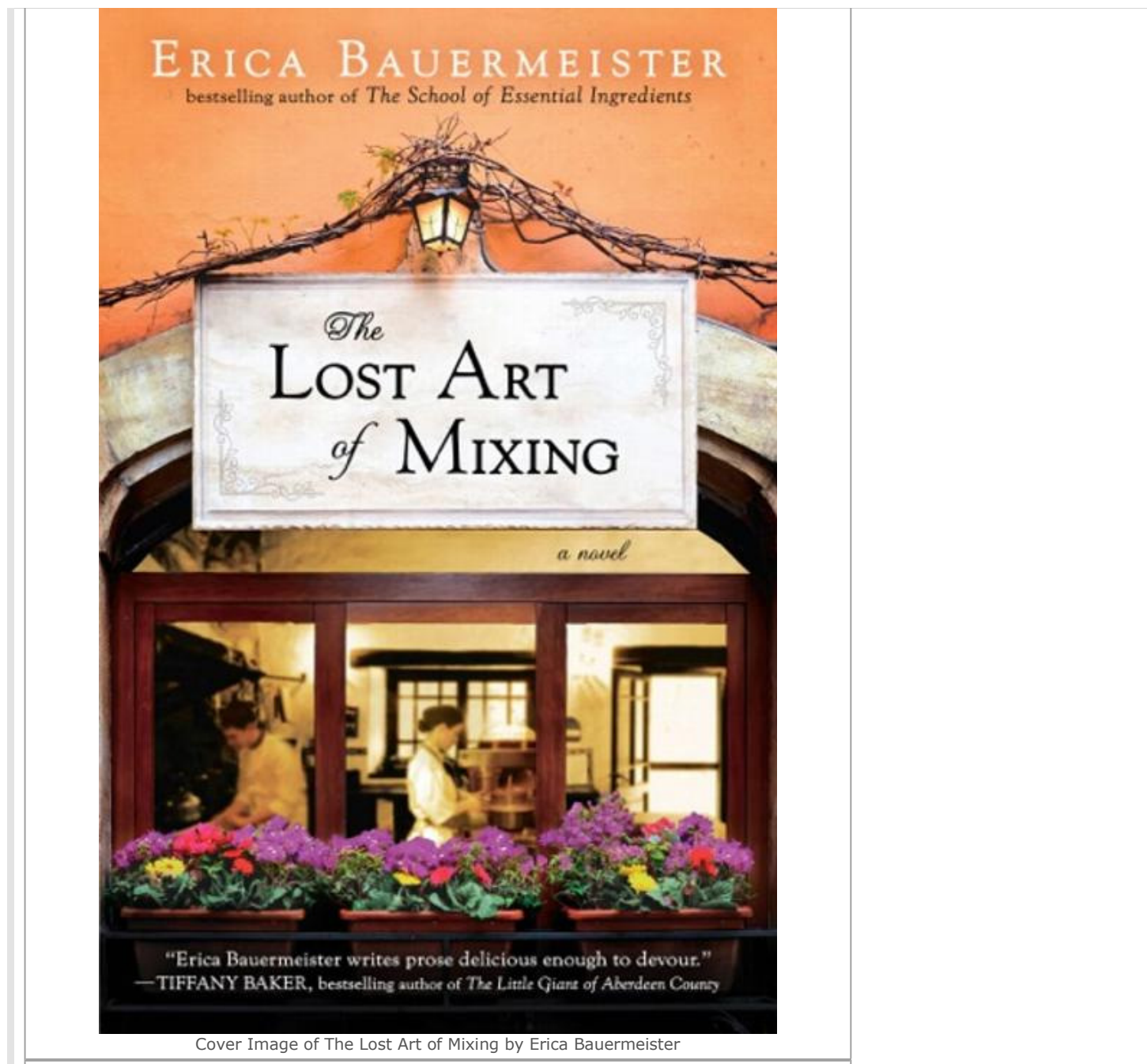
## [The Write Place At the Write Time](#)

[Home](#)[About Us](#)[Announcements](#)[Interviews](#)[Fiction](#)[Poetry](#)["Our Stories" non-fiction](#)[Writers' Craft Box](#)[Book Reviews](#)[Writers' Challenge!](#)[Submission Guidelines](#)[Feedback & Questions](#)[Artists' Gallery](#)[Literary Arts Patrons](#)[Indie Bookstores](#)[Scrapbook of Five Years](#)[Archives](#)[Inscribing Industry Blog](#)

Come in...and be captivated...

  x

### ***The Write Place At the Write Time Book Review- Hot off the Presses***



Cover Image of The Lost Art of Mixing by Erica Bauermeister

Author bio: Erica Bauermeister is the bestselling author of three novels: *The School of Essential Ingredients*, *Joy For Beginners* and the recently released *The Lost Art of Mixing*. She is also the co-author of two guides to books: *500 Great Books by Women: A Reader's Guide* and *Let's Hear It For the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14*. She received a PhD in literature from the University of Washington and has taught at both UW and Antioch. She lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

***The Write Place At the Write Time Book Review Presents:  
The Lost Art of Mixing by Erica Bauermeister***

Review by Denise Bouchard

In *The School of Essential Ingredients*, we come to know of Bauermeister's way with prose, her three dimensional characters and her sensuous way of describing food, taking it to another level of almost sybaritic pleasure.

Now, in her latest book, *The Lost Art of Mixing*, a sequel to *The School of Essential Ingredients*, we again encounter many of the same characters as well as some new ones. *The Lost Art of Mixing* brings all of her initial ingredients of well-rounded characters and heady description and folds in layers of rituals big and small.

Lillian is back as the protagonist with her special brand of magic. As a young girl, Lillian cooked to heal her mother's melancholy and eventually opened a restaurant and taught cooking classes, almost casting spells over her students' lives simply by her innate knowing of what they needed. In *The Lost Art of Mixing*, the pleasures of food, life and love once again entwine but this time it is Lillian for whom the spell is cast, finally giving her what she unknowingly hungers for.

As always, Bauermeister's way with words cleverly beguiles and her description is yet again strong:

*But she had realized early on that it wasn't simply the taste of the custard or the cool curve of a spoon slipping across her tongue, it was the creation of the dish that spoke to her--the careful warming of the milk and the beating of the eggs, the dark mystery of the nutmeg, the pouring of the liquid into small, round ramekins that she would set in a shallow bath of water in the oven, the watching as all the parts came together and turned from liquid to solid, gentled white and just slightly gold (75).*

In many such descriptions, the author seduces us through the language of food but she also has a very clever way of seeing people.

One of the characters is going through the early stages of Alzheimer's and being familiar with that as my mother and I maneuvered through it in her last years, I could clearly relate to both the sad knowing and the character's psyche as well as that strange mix of fantasy that comes with the illness that Bauermeister at times makes seem almost a magical state: *"It's kind of like an attic," she said to Rory. "It has all of your stuff but somebody else keeps throwing empty boxes and blankets on top of it, so you can't always find what you're looking for" (136).*

Her insights into family dynamics defined the sibling vs. caregiver roles:

*Except that particular fairy tale held up only if you were thousands of miles away, geographically relieved of responsibility. If you lived nearby, a plane hop, if you did any research at all, you could see what was coming. The slow disintegration of personality, inhibitions giving way to frustration and anger and paranoia. The increasing inability to read and write and eventually eat or speak. It wasn't easy, sweet or lovely. The studies said that thirty percent of caregivers died before their patients. Cold, hard facts--which you didn't have to be a doctor to find out about (164).*

Also fascinating are her observations of the way people think. One of her characters is an accountant who has a clever way of seeing the world and the people in it through numbers and how the numbers in their tax returns held their hidden stories: *"She reminded him of a 4, Al thought. Not the kind where all the lines meet up with each other, clean and straight, but the kind where there was a break at the top, a space where life poured in, for better or worse"* (31).

Often in life, we are given insights when we most need them and as Bauermeister's books are always so full of insights, they are gifts in a sense. You can't read and come away unaffected, even if it is just to cook with ever more focus, love and care, to lovingly fold in each new ingredient of your life and perhaps even add a dash of forgiveness. *"They were like ingredients that had become chemically incapable of mixing with each other, or perhaps had simply forgotten how, when she knew it wasn't the case and didn't need to be"* (155).

To read an excerpt of the novel, visit:

<http://www.ericabauermeister.com/mixing-excerpt>

© 2013 *The Write Place At the Write Time*

This on-line magazine and all the content contained therein is copyrighted.