



Read-Aloud Home Cooking

2



It was 12:30. That meant Amy's favorite customer, Mr. Gharbi, would soon be here.

3



"Good afternoon!" Mr. Gharbi said as he came through the door. As always, Amy took his order and her dad, Mateo, prepared it. Today, Mr. Gharbi ordered a bowl of chili con carne—extra spicy.

4



Mr. Gharbi took a bite. He smiled, but then he started to tear up. "Is it too spicy, Mr. Gharbi?" Amy asked. "No, no," Mr. Gharbi said, smiling. "It's perfect."

5



There was a faraway look in Mr. Gharbi's eyes.

"I see the two of you run this restaurant and I feel like I'm back in my family's kitchen in Tunisia. My mother and my aunts used to cook for the whole family. I would watch them chop onions, peel tomatoes, and soak the beans."

6



"I can still smell the dishes: fish and couscous, carrot salad, preserved lemons, eggs and tomato stew, and of course, my favorite—lablabi with harissa."

 **Ask:** "What do you notice? What do you wonder?"

7



Over the next few days, Amy thought a lot about what Mr. Gharbi had said. Then one day, she came to her father with an idea.

"Mr. Gharbi's 75th birthday is next week," Amy said. "He and his friends are coming here to celebrate. Maybe we can add something special to the menu."

Mateo smiled and wiped the specials board.

8



He took a marker and wrote: LABLABI WITH HOMEMADE SPICY HARISSA.
Amy was shocked. “Dad, you know how to make that?”
Mateo laughed. “No, but we can learn!”

9



Amy and Mateo looked up recipes, and sampled it from other restaurants.
They learned that lablabi was a stew made from chickpeas and harissa was
a hot, spicy red sauce.

10



That weekend they visited different farms to search for the freshest
ingredients.

11



The hardest part was finding the chili peppers. Some were too spicy. Some were not spicy enough.

As they headed to one pepper farm after another, Amy wondered if they would ever find what they needed.

12



They came to a farmhouse where they were greeted by a husband, wife and their two daughters.

13



The family took Amy and her dad out into the fields. They walked through the long rows of pepper plants.

Ask: "What do you notice? What do you wonder?"

14



One of the daughters plucked two peppers for Amy and Mateo to try. Amy took a bite. Heat spread from the tip of Amy's tongue to the back of her throat.

"What do you think?" Mateo asked.

Amy smiled. "They're perfect."

15



The day of Mr. Gharbi's birthday, the restaurant was full of activity.

Mateo was in the kitchen, cooking up a storm.

Meanwhile, Amy was in the dining room, hanging the decorations and setting up extra tables and chairs.

16



Soon balloons and centerpieces decorated the dining room. The smell of fresh lablabi and harissa filled the air.

As the first customers arrived, they marveled at how wonderful everything looked. By noon, the restaurant was packed—except for one special table.

 **Ask:** "What do you notice? What do you wonder?"

17



At 12:30, Mr. Gharbi entered. He was stunned by what he saw waiting for him.

18



Mateo presented their guest of honor with a big steaming bowl of lablabi. Amy drizzled a spoonful of bright red harissa all over the stew. They waited as Mr. Gharbi took his first bite.

“How does it taste?” Mateo asked.

Mr. Gharbi wiped his lips. Then he wiped his eyes.

“Tastes like home,” he said.