



Cook the Books

Jessica Conant-Park , Susan Conant

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This Gourmet Girl has to take the heat-because she just can't get away from the kitchen.

Chloe Carter desperately needs a job, so she takes one assisting a cookbook writer. Unfortunately it stirs up painful memories of her ex- boyfriend Josh, who left her for Hawaii. While compiling a book of recipes from Boston's top chefs, she comes in contact with one of Josh's friends, Digger. Chloe manages to stay cool until later she finds Digger's apartment charred-with Digger in it.

Not believing that an expert chef would die from a grease fire, she sets about looking for Digger's killer. But things get sticky when the tragedy brings Josh back to Boston-and back into Chloe's life.

Cook the Books Details

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From Reader Review Cook the Books for online ebook

Elevate Difference says

Cook the Books is part of a series of mystery books (Gourmet Girl Mysteries) by mother-daughter writing team Jessica Conant-Park and Susan Conant.

Chloe is a graduate student in her mid twenties, who lives by herself and has a passion for food. She has an incredibly gorgeous best friend named Adrianna, who is married to a goofy but honest and lovable free-spirited (broke) man named Owen. They have a delightful little bundle of joy named Patrick, who happens to melt Chloe's heart so much that she overspends and ends up in debt because she just can't resist buying him all the expensive toys and clothes she sets her eyes on; he's that adorable. Then there's Josh, her ex-boyfriend, a chef, who left a year before for a better job in Hawaii and left her behind.

Did you get all this? If you didn't it's okay because once you start reading the novel, this will be retold in pretty much every chapter. Do you want to know what else is constantly repeated? The word "Josh." It comes up in every other sentence. Of course there's more to the novel: there's murder, there's cooking, and there's a villain (or many?). More importantly, at the end Josh returns to make everything alright (because he's perfect). But don't worry, I haven't spoiled the end; you can guess that one by the end of the fourth chapter.

The story itself is pretty bland but its biggest sin is mainly that it's not very relatable. Chloe is supposed to be young, bright and independent, and yet she appears to be everything but. Why am I supposed to care about this character? She has no true interests other than her godson, the lives of other cooks and her ex-boyfriend. It probably doesn't help that the novel is written with a significant amount of dialogue, which, for the most part, is heavily contrived. For example, Chloe's employer, a serious man in his mid-thirties has just met new mommy Adrianna and all three of them are sitting down for dinner, his treat:

"And Adrianna," he said to my friend, "you especially should eat a lot, since you probably have no time to eat while taking care of a tiny baby, huh?"

This was not meant to be funny, or sarcastic (or creepy) but rather to portray what a great guy Chloe's employer is! The entire novel is written in this type of dialogue, which aside from being annoyingly predictable, becomes overly repetitive.

Cook the Books is filled with bad cliches and references. The murder that sets motion to the core of the storyline leads to Chloe's view to the "dark" side of cooking, the cutthroat competitive world of chefs. It's in fact the same world described by so many other chefs, except that in this case, it's overly dramatic.

The book cover includes a review blurb promising "snappy dialogue, puzzling murder and mouthwatering menus," which I guess is what fueled my disappointment, as I did believe it. In contrast to other mystery novels that portray unlikely heroines, Cook the Books didn't hit the mark, It has no sparkle and the heroine lacks a sense of self and definition. It was difficult to really care. It could have been light, fun reading, if only it had been half as long. If I was to recommend the book, it I would assume pre-teens might not mind it, but I don't know how memorable it would be.

There are some recipes added at the end of the book, which only adds to my confusion as to who the target group for this book is supposed to be. The recipes are courtesy of other authors and chefs. Some are easy

enough to follow and make (the Baked Tomato Nests), and some (like the Grilled Ohio Lamb Steak) are meant for the serious cooks who strives to entertain. The Baked Tomato Nests are a cute and fast idea, and in fact, the recipe jumped out at me from one of the actual chapters of the novel, so there was a nice connection there. However, overall the recipes were not very innovative, and in a way, that echoes my overall impression of the book.

To put it simply: it didn't leave a bad taste in my mouth, it needed spice (cayenne, Habanero, or even just plain old pepper)—it was just too bland.

Review by Jessica Sánchez

Michelle says

This is the 5th book in the Gourmet Girl series and picks up shortly after the events in the 4th book. While school is going well for Chloe, her love life is a mess after Josh leaves to go to Hawaii, and her budget is in shambles after spending lots of money on gifts for her best friend's new baby. She decides to find a job to help her financial situation and take her mind off of Josh. Chloe finds a great opportunity in working for Kyle Boucher, on a cookbook collating recipes from restaurants around Boston, and gets the job, even though she brings her best friend, desperate to get out of the house, to the dinner interview. Chloe finds out that the task is more daunting than she anticipated; while Kyle is the son of a famous chef, and is preparing the book under his father's headline, he doesn't seem to have much talent when it comes to food, and lacks organization/direction. When Chloe goes to taste test some new recipes from Josh's friend, Digger, from the menu of his newly opening restaurant, she is shocked to find that his apartment has burned and that Digger is apparently the victim of a grease fire. Chloe is suspicious, and begins digging in to see if she can help find out what happened. Her investigation is complicated by the return of Josh, bringing out some conflicting feelings. Will Chloe find the killer and will she work out things with Josh? The end of the novel makes a nice conclusion to the story and possibly the series. While I figured out the killer early on, it was a pleasant cozy mystery. As usual, recipes from the story are included at the end of the book.

Dharia Scarab says

Ugh, this book was not enjoyable.

The mystery was pretty much non-existent. The main character didn't investigate anything, although she did ease drop in one scene.

In reality this book felt more like YA fiction than a mystery, 90% of the book was about the annoying main character's boring life which consisted of cookbook editing (where she is turning a mess of unreadable notes into a book), social working school (which she hates and chose randomly), her friend's new baby (that she's obsessed with) and whining about or avoid her ex-bf (who she's still in love with but has been refusing all contact with since he got a job and moved to Hawaii and she didn't want to go with him). Serious high school drama.

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I

rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more, But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It had earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Betty says

What I learned... anyone can be published. The book wasn't bad. It just wasn't good. There wasn't a single character that I cared about. The plot was thin and predictable.

Susan says

Chloe takes a job as an assistant to Kyle, a young man who is writing a cookbook under the aegis of his celebrity-chef father. After all, grad student Chloe likes to eat, and good-looking Kyle may be just what she needs after her steady boyfriend Josh dumped her for a job in Hawaii. Then a friend of Josh's, a young chef, dies in a tragic accident--or was it an accident? Chloe, who sees her patients' delusions in her social worker internship, can't see how she's fooling herself.

Barb Foerst says

Chloe is still missing Josh and is overspending on buying clothes for her best friend's baby. Chloe takes on a part-time job editing a cookbook to pay for all the baby items. One thing leads to another with a chef dying in a fire and Josh returning from Hawaii. Not a great mystery but an enjoyable fast read.

Beth Appel says

Well - another, read-when-you-don't-have-a-brain book.

The adventures of the main character - so memorable I can't recall her name and I just finished the book, And the recipes don't seem to be workable. At one point she mentions using phyllo dough, then it is puff pastry. There is a recipe for red pepper chive jam but there are no chives. The recipes sound good, but I'm cautious about trusting them.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Jennifer Rummel for TeensReadToo.com

Chloe's still reeling from her breakup with her chef boyfriend, Josh, who moved to Hawaii . She misses him something fierce, but the new addition to her BFFs family helps ease the pain a little. Although she now needs to find a part-time job to pay for all the baby items for Patrick.

She finds the perfect job, helping to organize a cookbook of Boston restaurants with the son of a famous chef. Chloe hears that Digger, Josh's friend, has a new restaurant opening soon. She volunteers to call him and set up a tasting with her boss and his father.

When Chloe arrives at Digger's apartment for the tasting a little bit early to help set up, she discovers a fire truck blocking her way. Digger's apartment building is on fire, with him trapped inside. At first, it looks like an accident, but the more Chloe talks to other chefs for the cookbook, the more truths she uncovers.

When Josh shows up to find answers, Chloe finds herself in hot water. On one hand, she's so happy to see him, but so angry with him for leaving. Does he have the best intentions or will she be setting herself up for more heartbreak?

Could Chloe be engaging with a killer who wants to advance in the chef world, or could it be a woman scorned out for revenge? Will she uncover the truth before she says too much to the wrong person?

COOK THE BOOKS, the fifth title in the GOURMET GIRL MYSTERY series, mixes murder, romance, jobs, and friendships with food - lots of food. This mother-daughter team has created another mouth-watering treat.

Judy & Marianne from Long and Short Reviews says

Originally posted at: <http://lasrmystery.blogspot.com/2012/...>

Jealousy, bad food, good food and a lot of frazzled nerves weave their way around the mystery of who cooked the cook. I never realized chefs led such frenetic and dangerous lives until I opened up Cook the Books and discovered how different restaurant kitchen life can be.

This is a mystery series that's ongoing but this is my first time tasting the adventure. I didn't feel too lost because the author provided just enough back story for a new reader to understand that there's some serious water under the bridge between the main female protagonist, Chloe, and a man who, for a bit of the story, is in the background, Josh. I can't label him a hero because he's not the focus, he's more like a side kick with romantic overtones. His character does stir the pot a bit and shakes things up so a reader can see Chloe in action.

Chloe is the eye of the storm and the winds of chaos seem to swirl about her character. The ambiance of the

food world never abates and is a solid and steady theme throughout the book. The premise of finding a job to support a bad habit is believable, and having so much responsibility heaped upon one person's shoulders is a breakdown waiting to happen. Good thing the heroine has a few good friends and some seriously effective distractions to keep her mind occupied. Unfortunately, they're not the good kind.

The mystery is who killed one of her chef acquaintances. I don't believe he was a true friend but he was a person in her circle who perhaps readers might have met in previous books in the series. It was interesting how the search for clues was handled. I wasn't flooded with a lot of misdirection and red herrings. It was left to my finding out important clues when Chloe got them which made a lot of sense since this story is told in first person point of view. If the heroine didn't get it, neither did I, until the author wanted us to.

The odd thing is how the culprit was in plain sight. So was the motive but not the means or the opportunity. I never clued in how those things tied together. It was only when Chloe was presented with crucial parts of the picture from an unexpected source that everything started falling into place. Even then it didn't seem possible. But, human nature being its quirky self, it made sense once all was revealed. It was tragic in a way and I couldn't help feeling sorry for the criminal. It begs the question about circumstances and predilections towards an unbalanced psyche. I still say criminals make the best actors because the victims never see it coming.

The vibes between Chloe and Josh seem to be vibrant but drawn out. He made a huge mistake and he's in the dog house. But the mystery of whodunit doesn't allow for the silent treatment. The external conflict propels the two towards open communication that hints how all is not lost for Josh; he's got a lot of work ahead of him but Chloe still has him on her radar. The romantic elements are there so it adds a little spice and lightness to the dark drama and suspense of finding their friend's killer.

Cook the Books is an entertaining, light and zippy mystery with a lot of character. Most of the book is about Chloe and how she starts off doing something so basic and innocent and how it ends up spinning out of control onto a path totally unforeseen. Readers are teased with all these great sounding food dishes but the authors have guaranteed that our taste buds will join in on the fun by giving us the actual recipes so we can experience our own gastronomic adventures. I liked Chloe's friends and found the fact that she's still learning about herself interesting. The writing was good, the pace steady and the dialogue was insightful into the characters.

All in all Cook the Books is a fun read and it makes a person wonder just what is it going to take to iron out the relationship between Josh and Chloe. Guess I'll have to read the next book and find out what new mayhem dogs the heroine's steps. Should be good!

Dlora says

A fun romp through the world of chefs and restaurants. The book is styled as "a gourmet girl mystery," and although Chef Digger dies in a fire and Chloe is sure it was murder, there really isn't much detecting in the novel. It's more about cooking and foodies, which is fascinating to me. Chloe needs a part-time job while she's finishing up her sociology major and finds the perfect fit--helping rich, cute Kyle Bouchart put together a cookbook featuring top chefs in Boston. And taking on a new project in addition to being super busy with graduate school has a side benefit of distracting her from the pain caused by her boyfriend Josh having left her to take a job in Hawaii . . . that is until Josh is pulled back into her life by the death of his friend Digger. I thought Chloe was a bit over the top in her reaction to Josh's change of jobs. He might have been precipitate

but she didn't give him any chance to explain, apologize, or mend the relationship. But that's all part of the girly romance of the novel. If you like good food and the interesting world of gourmet cooks--and a girly romance--you'll enjoy this book. If you like murder mysteries and detecting, you probably won't.

Lori Wademan-Rodrigue says

I enjoyed this very much. It was really a cute mystery if not predictable.

Tg says

Cook the Books was entertaining and easy to read - completed it in an afternoon. It's a nice book to read when exhausted from more intense reading; i.e. for school or an exam. Would definitely consider reading more from the two authors when I have free time or am in my speedo on the beach. I wouldn't say it was the best book in the world - but I didn't pick up the book and think that it was. One look at the cover could tell you this!

Despite enjoying this book, I found the main character somewhat annoying. Her obsession with her godson was a little weird, her constant discussion of her finances annoying, and the deaths which occurred in the book were largely undramatic and disjointed.

With that being said, I still read the whole book and it wasn't tough to get through. Josh did sound fabulously divine... meow meow.

Tiffany says

When I first started reading this book, the main character had the most annoying, whiny, valley girl voice, in my head. It took a good 60 pages to get rid of that. For half of the book, Chloe was missing her ex-boyfriend Josh. Was near tears, at every moment. Even though she missed him, she wanted nothing to do with him. You would not get that from the fact that she mentions Josh on every page of the book. For a while I was counting how many times Josh was mentioned, but stopped when I got to 95,000. I suspect that the grand total is somewhere near 1 bajillion. The mystery of the murder was solved within the last 10 pages or so. It seemed like there was an attitude of, 'if the murder gets solved, it gets solved... if it doesn't, it doesn't'. And then, bam you did this is shouted at the culprit and the book is essentially over. No worries, because Josh is mentioned a few more times. Overall, kind of entertaining, that's why it gets three stars.

Liz says

This book was okay. It was the weakest in the series in my opinion. It was way too short. There was also a lot of repetition. For example, the character Adrianna seemed to mention how broke she was on every other page. I know people with money problems and most of them don't bring it up during every single conversation. I thought that really took away from the book. The mystery unfolded too quickly. Since I'm already acquainted with Chloe and her friends, I did enjoy the book somewhat. Still, this could have been

much better.

Gwen says

Cook the Books is a girly-easy version of a murder-mystery. As someone who enjoys a good cookbook and a good murder-mystery, I thought this book would be a perfect fit for me. It wasn't. Plus side, there are some recipes in the back of the book that are mentioned throughout the story.

Contains possible spoilers:

I couldn't get over the lead characters complaining about Josh, who left her and moved to Hawaii. I couldn't get over her not liking what field she was studying for graduate school. When there finally was a murder, I felt it could have just been an accidental death. Even when the death looked like a murder, I didn't feel tied to the character who died or the characters who could have done it.
