



Toast Mortem

Claudia Bishop

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The Inn at Hemlock Falls reopens for readers!

Bernard LeVasque has opened a multi-million dollar cooking school in Hemlock Falls — and has even stolen customers from Sarah and Meg Quilliam's Inn. But someone finds the infamous chef too bitter — and takes him off the menu for good.

Toast Mortem Details

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From Reader Review Toast Mortem for online ebook

Karen says

Meg and Quill are at their sleuthing best in this adventure. A culinarry arts school has been established with a surly chef at the helm. Bent on putting the inn out of business for good Maitre LeVasque starts a smear campaign to ruin the reputations of Meg and her sister.

Meanwhile a group called WARP has insinuated itself at the Inn for a convention of sorts. When the chef is found murdered clutching a recipe in his hands the pastry chef with a past of her own is a suspect after Monsieur LeVasque fires her for trying to breach her contract with the school while she's on parole for another matter. Quill is also trying to keep her sister Meg out of jail and manage her time with her toddler son and run the Inn.

The book is full of shenanigans as Quill snoops for clues even though she promised her hubby she would back off.

The girls get their man as the discover what the WARP group is about.

Rousing adventure and good laughs are a recipe for success. I give this one 5 golden pastries.

Terri says

I enjoyed reading this book, until I reached page 168...and read the racial slur the author used. She described someone throwing around a lot of money "like drunken Indians." To my mind, the author needs to go back and take an English class to learn there are enough words in any language that can be used to describe something without having to resort to racial slurs.

Jane says

Meg & Quill have ironclad alibis for the first murder, for a change.

Kathy Moberg says

A fun book to read -- I like reading Claudia Bishop's mysteries on vacations.

Marlyn says

It's been a while since I read a Hemlock Falls mystery, and I realized that I'd missed Quill and Meg like old friends I hadn't seen in a long time. The previous book in the series (#15, A Carol for a Corpse) was published in 2007.

Since then, Quill has become a parent to Jackson Myles McHale, almost two. Her husband, Myles, is overseas on an extended assignment for the government, so she and Jack have moved back into her rooms in the Inn. A culinary school (the Bonne Goute Culinary Academy) has opened nearby and the Inn at Hemlock Falls, though filled with guests, is not serving many meals. Most of the people registered at the Inn are there to tour and dine at the Academy.

Meg, the head chef at the Inn, is understandably upset. But when the owner of the Academy, well-known chef Bernard LeVasque, begins to harass her by spreading rumours of deadly viruses at the Inn, and advertising that the Inn is serving free food, she is also extremely confused. Is it because she took in the pastry chef he fired?

When, a few days later, LeVasque is found in his wine cellar with a knife in his throat, pastry chef Clarissa is the prime suspect. Certain that the Hemlock Falls sheriff is not going to look any further, Meg and Quill begin investigating again.

Welcome back to the Quilliam sisters. Here's hoping we see you again soon!

Candace Davidson says

I liked the book ok. This was the first book that I read by this author. There were too many characters in the book and they were "talking" at the same time, it was confusing. The story was fine though the victims didn't die until about half way through the book. Also the protagonists are two sisters and the author wouldn't make it clear which one was "talking" sometimes so it was confusing. I haven't decided if I want to read anymore from this author or not. She did have a lot of humor in the book which is why I gave it 3 stars.

Caroline says

I'm so glad to have Quill and Meg back! And Jack is adorable! Very entertaining read.

Susan says

I didn't feel I missed anything by not reading this series in order. The story focused more on Meg and Quill than it did on an actual mystery. In fact, about half the book was setting the stage for the murder to occur. I didn't think there were sufficient clues to guess who committed the crime. I won't go out of my way to look for more in this series.

Audrey says

Synopsis: Simply the best culinary mystery I've ever read.

Adela chaired the library board. Just as John Deere bulldozers were good at moving dirt, Adela was good at fund-raising. So the library was a pleasant, well-ordered place with good lighting,

lots of books, and up to date computer equipment.

I've seen lots of articles puzzling over the popularity of cozy mysteries, those mysteries where the main character is usually a woman employed in a domestic or semi-domestic sphere, who negotiates between that and the world of crime-solving due to unforeseen necessity. And I think I have the answer: these books generally all pass the Bechdel test with flying colors. The protagonist usually has a female sidekick with whom she banters back and forth about the crime. If there's a romantic subplot, it takes a backseat to solving the mystery.

And *Toast Mortem*, in addition to having a really fabulous title (no I can't explain the popularity of puns in cozies) is an outstanding cozy.

The Qwilliam sisters' upstate New York inn is threatened by the establishment of a culinary school right next door, whose famous French chef holds a grudge. In between deflecting his unfunny practical jokes and trying to keep the city council from killing each other, Qwill, the innkeeper, must also find time to raise her son, Jack, put up with air-heads at the front desk, and stop her chef-sister Meg from throwing frying pans at people. And what's the deep dark secret their pastry chef is protecting?

Cue more mayhem.

And it's glorious.

The town of Hemlock Falls is adorably quirky and better yet, well delineated, with the various tangled relationships between the characters adroitly managed. The Qwilliam sisters are fantastic: Qwill, the pragmatic worrier is the perfect foil for her hot tempered and snark-mouthed sister Meg. The front desk airheads are hilarious. Things fall apart in deliciously ghastly ways and the characters respond to situations in ways I could definitely relate to.

Well-written, interesting loopy plot, passes the Bechdel test, and features both placeporn and madcap good times (did I mention I love madcap? I love madcap).

Plus there's a librarian who manages to be neither a bunned spinster or a flowing-locked sexpot, but an intelligent and savvy individual who's amazingly good at her job. Bonus.

For a culinary mystery, it's not very food-oriented so much as it is kitchen-oriented, as in the focus remains squarely on what it's like to work in a kitchen, making all the food people squee over. The included recipes are kind of terrible, but that's also a plot point, so I'll let it pass.

Maria (Ri) says

I'm sure I would have enjoyed this more if I had not jumped into the series at book #16. Having no history with the Quilliam sisters, I'm just not that invested or interested in them. Having said that, the author seems to phone this one in a bit, throwing lots of characters around but without adding much mystery. In fact, a murder doesn't even happen until halfway through the book. I just didn't feel very compelled to keep reading. Two nights ago I decided to stop reading and go to sleep with only 10 pages left. I just really didn't care much to know whodunit. I would rate this 1.5 stars if I could - not completely terrible writing, but not gripping or very interesting. It felt like the author was just quite bored herself with the series so didn't add much heart to the writing at all.

Nancy Madacsi says

I found the pace of the book a little slow and the plot slow in unraveling. The primary characters are well developed with the exception of the murderer who comes out of left field. Overall the book is well written.

Kate says

A decent book, but I won't go tracking down the others in this series. The murder didn't start until halfway in (and the book is only 211 pages) and there were way too many characters (there is even a character cheat sheet in the front of the book to help you keep them all straight.) I liked Meg and Quill (the main characters) but I would have liked a little more focus on them and less on all the other people floating about for no reason.

Glen says

Reminiscent of Joanne Fluke, but not really in a good way.

We get a murder of a celebrity chef, who is a jerk, and gets the usual penalty. Our plucky red headed heroine investigates.

Long on small town goings on, short on mystery. The recipes were pretty lame.

Karen Holman says

copy right 2010

Elizabeth says

This was a good quick read and a nice cozy mystery from a series that I really like. Nothing graphic-- just a good old fashioned cozy with tons of wit, a quick moving plot and several laugh out loud moments.
