



Stick a Fork In It

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As a health inspector and former chef, Poppy Markham thought she'd seen it all—until she steps into Capital Punishment. The restaurant's twisted concept—last meals of death row inmates—could be a hit only in outlandish Austin, Texas. But the macabre theme becomes all too real when co-owner Troy Sharpe is found dangling from a hangman's noose in the cinder block dining room. Discovering that Troy was a hard-drinking jerk leads Poppy to the rub: if Troy had more enemies than a jail has bars, which one sent him to the land of rigor-mortised restaurateurs?

Stick a Fork In It Details

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Author : Robin Allen

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From Reader Review Stick a Fork In It for online ebook

Peggy Hallinan says

Fun, easy, breezy read. Characters are fairly well developed. Nice "potato chip" read. Recommended.

Vickie Harrington says

Stick a Fork in It.

This is the second installment in the Poppy Markham: Culinary Cop series. This book takes place shortly after the conclusion of the first book in the series, If You Can't Stand the Heat, and Poppy is still recovering from the attempt on her life.

Poppy finds herself conducting a pre-opening inspection for a new restaurant in Austin, "Capital Punishment." The restaurant, which will serve the last meals of executed criminals, is operated by a trio of guys Poppy went to high school with. Everything seems routine until one of the business owners is found dead during Poppy's inspection. Poppy isn't convinced that it is suicide, or an accident. So, against her better judgment, Poppy Markham, Culinary Cop, is back on the case.

This is the first book I have read in this series, and I completely enjoyed it. However, I wish I had read the first book in the series before this one, because the outcome of the first book is discussed in depth throughout this story. I still plan to read the first book, because Ms. Allen's knowledge and description of the culinary industry is top notch. I completely enjoyed this book and I feel like it will be an entertaining series.

Melinda Freeland says

Author Robin Allen cooks up another savory delight readers will eat up in STICK A FORK IN IT, the second book in the series about Austin/Travis County health inspector Poppy Markham: Culinary Cop.

Enticing appetizers for cozy mystery connoisseurs are promptly served in Chapter One of this humorous, clean book, starting with the author's great opening line and first paragraph.

"A couple of weeks ago, an employee at my father's restaurant tried to kill me by setting my bedroom on fire. ... When that didn't work, he tried to lock me in the restaurant's walk-in refrigerator and freeze me to death."

Readers' appetites are whetted further with the promise that much more of "the good stuff" is surely to follow because Allen continues to throw in one intriguing morsel right after the other as each page is turned.

Poppy's first assignment in STICK A FORK IN IT is to perform a food permit inspection for a new Austin restaurant that is decorated inside and out to resemble a prison and is named "Capital Punishment." The items on the menu are each named after a death row inmate and consist of what food the condemned truly

asked for as a last meal request. For example, if a diner craves two pints of mint chocolate-chip ice cream, then the meal to order would be a “Timothy McVeigh.”

The main plot of this novel is that before Capital Punishment can get everything up to par to pass inspection, a death occurs. One of the restaurant’s owners, Troy Sharpe, is found with a rope around his neck, hanging in the middle of the dining room. Or wait ... IS it Troy, or is it his twin brother Todd? “Culinary Cop” (and former chef) Poppy Markham intends to solve this “whodunit” mystery in the two weeks or so before Capital Punishment’s scheduled opening night.

I loved author Allen’s voice and her clever humor in her first book, IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT, and Allen doesn’t disappoint in bringing that same great style to Stick a Fork In It. For instance, several witty comments are always tossed back and forth each time a conversation occurs between Poppy and her ex-boyfriend Jamie, who is a former newspaper journalist and current freelance food writer. One example is when Poppy and Jamie are discussing Jeffrey Dahmer, the convicted serial killer nicknamed “The Milwaukee Cannibal.” Poppy asks Jamie, “What do you think was his last meal?” and Jamie answers, “Manwiches.” I laughed out loud on that one!

Speaking of Poppy’s ex, I noticed an interesting thing about Jamie’s website, which includes such things as restaurant reviews and food trends. The site is named “Amooze-Boosh,” and if you Google that funny-sounding name, you’ll discover that’s also the name of author Allen’s blog. I think that’s cool the way Allen includes that part of her professional writing life in this fictional story.

Just like with Allen’s first book, I once again enjoyed the food-related descriptions in this second book, such as: “I sat in my Jeep in the Markham’s parking lot roasting like a Peking duck while I pondered Daisy’s insight.” The author also has a talent for using other descriptions and making comparisons that are never trite, such as: “Her eyes grew as wide as Vinnie Barbarino’s bell-bottoms.”

Author Allen did a great job in keeping this reviewer from guessing the killer’s identity in STICK A FORK IN IT. I’m pretty sure regardless if other readers solve the mystery or not, once a reader has sampled some of author Robin Allen’s creations, a request for seconds will surely follow.

Jeannie and Louis Rigod says

Our favorite health inspector, Poppy Markham is on limited duty and finds herself assigned to inspect a new unopened restaurant...Capital Punishment. The decor and menu are still in flux but the concept is to honor persons last meals. Odd? This is Austin, TX.

To Poppy's shock, one of the owners dies by hanging....since he was a prankster, Poppy just has to find out if the death was intentional or an accident or...homicide?

The main deterrent in this book to me was the back and forth of Poppy's boyfriends. They seemed to detract from the main story. I like romance but this didn't feel like it to me.

It was a good story premise though.

Jacqueline says

Extra 1/2 star.

Nancy says

Just a couple of weeks after the events of *If You Can't Stand The Heat*, Austin, TX health inspector Poppy Markham is inspecting a new restaurant under construction that has a rather macabre concept. The new eatery, which is called Capital Punishment, has the look and feel of a penitentiary (by design, that is, complete with electric chair) with the menu consisting of "last meals" of famous death-row inmates. With Capital Punishment weeks away from opening and a couple of unresolved issues, Poppy returns to the restaurant only to find the corpse of one of the co-owners, a former high-school football star--hanged from a catwalk in the dining room! Soon Poppy finds herself delving into the throes of this mystery. Whether it was the victim's wife or his business partners including his twin brother (all one-time high school classmates), one thing Poppy feels certain--this was no suicide (as someone tried to make it appear).

Light fun read with a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the restaurant industry. Memorable characters include her father, Mitch (whose restaurant Poppy had left to become a health inspector); her materialistic stepmother Nina; her self-important stepsister Ursula; her micro-managing boss, Olive; and Poppy's gay next-door neighbors whom she calls "John With" and "John Without" (hair, that is). And just when things may be on the mend with Poppy and her ex-boyfriend, food critic Jamie Sherwood, her former lover Drew reappears after several years. All in all an enjoyable read. I was glad, though, that I had read Poppy's first "culinary cop" mystery; there's numerous references made to the events of that first book.

Julie Sucha Anderson says

A fine romp. Robin Allen delivers in this most fun summer read.

Jamie Miller says

Fun easy read. The world of what goes on in the back of a restaurant makes this series interesting.

Kristen says

In Robin Allen's *Stick A Fork in It*, the second installment of the Poppy Markham Culinary Cozy Mystery series, this caper has a tasty tell about deception, deceit, and cold-blooded murder. When Poppy Markham's on limited duty as a good inspector from a previous hand injury, she's assigned to do a food inspection a new restaurant called Capital Punishment, things aren't what they seem to be, other than the concept and the decor. Everything went wrong, up until Poppy finds one of the owners of the restaurant, Troy Sharpe, hanging by a noose. While the cops believed it is a suicide, she didn't think so and had done her own investigation for clues. She had a list of suspects to contend with, she dealt with her own issues at home and at work and a love triangle between her boyfriend and her ex-fiance. When she thought she had figured it out, she was cornered by the real killer and discovered why he had done it.

Anne (Booklady) Molinarolo says

A Solid 3.5 Cozy Read

Health Inspector and former Chef Poppy Markham is on lite duty at the Austin Health Department. She is still recovering from an injury that she sustained while solving the case of a murdered chef. Her stepsister Ursula was the police's prime suspect. Poppy proved her innocence of course. So on Memorial Day weekend, Poppy finds herself at the construction site of a new restaurant - Capital punishment. Their planned cuisine is to be the last meals of infamous death row killers. To her surprise, Poppy knows the owners: Todd and Troy Sharpe. Good looking and athletic the twin brothers were part of the in crowd in high school.

What should be a routine permit inspection, proves troublesome. Sinks, water, fans, electricity don't work, and there is the body of Troy Sharpe hanging from the catwalk the day after "green" protestors stormed the construction site. Everything points to suicide or accident in Troy Sharpe's death, but Poppy believes it is murder. Also piled onto plate is her relationship with food writer, Jamie Sherwood. Poppy believes they are on a slow mend until she comes face to face with her ex-fiancee, Drew Cooper.

I haven't laughed so hard as I did when reading a mystery! Robin Allen's sophomore installment is easy to read and quite funny. I'll have to read the first and the next installment in the Poppy Markham Culinary Police Series. I recommend *Stick a Fork In It* to anyone who enjoys a cozy mystery.

Candace Davidson says

This is the second book in this series. It was very funny. Poppy, the main character gets herself in a lot of sticky situations. I picked up the first book in the series. I am looking forward to reading it as well.

Sandybear76 says

Poppy is inspecting a new restaurant with a hidden food theme concept. The new restaurateurs are twins from Poppy's high school and they were the stars of the football team but they know nothing about opening a new restaurant. Poppy must return again and again to inspect the new place. She watched the twins goof around and play pranks while she waits for them to fix the water and the sinks. When a prank goes awry, Poppy feels a bit responsible as she was a few minutes for an appt and feels that if she had been on time, she could have stopped the prank in time.

Dalene says

What would be your last meal request? As one of the main ideas in the book besides the murder, this is just one of the humorous aspects of this book. I was able to receive this book through Netgalley and I chose it because it was a cozy mystery. This is one of the genres I wanted to read more of this year. I'm glad I requested this. It didn't disappoint.

The author has all the makings of a great cozy mystery. A great sleuth, Poppy, who works for the county doing food inspections. A crazy mother-in-law who lives it up and wants Poppy to buy clothing with color. Somehow their shopping trip never does transpire. Poppy is also juggling an ex-boyfriend and a current boyfriend, and as with other cozies, this definitely provides for some interesting times. Then there are the neighbors, John With and John Without, a hilarious gay couple. She is staying with them due to renovations on her own home because of an incident in the first book. This book had a lot of characters, not too many to keep track of, but enough to add laughter and spice.

This is the second book in the series. The first book is a free download from Amazon right now. I will definitely go back and read that book in the near future. I think it will definitely fill in some of the gaps with history I didn't understand with the relationships of the characters in this book.

I think the author has great series. The only thing that is disappointing to me is I have to wait for another book.

Note: I received a copy of this book from the publisher Midnight Ink via Netgalley.

What to Read Next?

Another humorous cozy mystery series is Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series. Again, I am waiting for the next release in this series. Ugh!

Sharon Redfern says

Stick a Fork in It is the second book in the Poppy Markham: Culinary Cop series. Poppy is a former chef at her family's restaurant and now works as a health inspector. In the course of her duties, she does the inspection for a new restaurant called Capital Punishment. The premise of the restaurant is that it will serve the last meals of famous killers. The owners of the place turn out to be old classmates of Poppy's-twin brothers who were part of the in crowd and their partner who was one of their bullying victims.

Poppy runs into problems with the inspection and has to keep coming back and eventually she is the one who finds a dead body on the premises. There are disgruntled employees, old grudges, possible illegal worker issues, and cheating spouses all in the mix. Poppy has her hands full dealing with the unpredictable owners while trying to solve the murder case.

During all of this action, Poppy is struggling with personal issues of her own. She has forgiven her boyfriend for cheating on her and they are working hard to mend the relationship. The fact that he is a restaurant critic and trying to pry details about the new place from her adds to the mild feeling of untrustworthiness. Add to the situation the re-emergence of Poppy's first serious love that left her in the lurch but has returned to the area, and Poppy has a lot on her plate (so to speak).

I don't know if it was the restaurant concept that bothered me, but I had a little bit of a hard time getting into the story. However, after the first couple of chapters, it really held my interest. I actually found all of the inspection references interesting and the characters were well fleshed out whether good and bad folks. The resolution of the murder was believable and there was a little twist towards the end and will keep fans of the series wondering about where Poppy will be going romance wise.

Holly says

This is one of the best mysteries I have ever read kept me guessing till the end on who done it. Every time I think I have the person I'm wrong. Keep up the good work and can't wait for the next one. If this is the first one you read in the series you need to read the other one called If you can't stand the heat. She is a great author. I give 5 stars on this book.
