



The City Baker's Guide to Country Living

Louise Miller

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A warm, full-hearted novel about a big-city baker who discovers the true meaning of home, and that sometimes the best things are found when you didn't even know you were looking.

When Olivia Rawlings—baker extraordinaire for an exclusive Boston dinner club—sets not just her flambéed dessert but the entire building alight, she takes a much-needed weekend break in the idyllic leafy town of Guthrie, Vermont. A weekend soon turns into something more permanent when Margaret Hurley, the cantankerous, sweater-set-wearing owner of the Sugar Maple Inn, needs to recruit a new baker who can help her reclaim the inn's blue ribbon status at the annual county fair apple pie contest. On paper, at least, Livvy seems to be just who she was looking for.

Livvy's love life's a mess and so she does what she does best: relocate. Along with Salty, her gigantic, uberenthusiastic dog with almost too much personality, Livvy, as the Sugar Maple's new baker, brings her mouthwatering desserts to the residents of Guthrie, home of Bag Balm, the country's longest-running contra dance, and her best friend, Hannah. And when Olivia meets Martin McCracken, the Guthrie native who has returned from New York to nurse his ailing father, Livvy comes to understand that she may not be as alone in this world as she once thought. With the joys of a warm, fragrant kitchen, the sound of banjos and fiddles being tuned in a barn, and the crisp scent of the orchard just outside the front door, Olivia Rawlings may finally find that the life you want may not be the one you expected—it could be even better.

The City Baker's Guide to Country Living Details

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From Reader Review *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living* for online ebook

Cindy Burnett says

4.5 stars

I loved this book from beginning to end! *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living* is chock full of fabulous characters and great story lines – I did not want it to end. I would love to spend some time in Guthrie, Vermont at the Sugar Maple Inn with Margaret, Al and Olivia eating all of the wonderful food that Louise Miller writes about in this great novel. Miller also throws in banjos and fiddles and some contra dances, and a great story about finding one's own version of family emerges. I did tear up some so have Kleenex handy! I truly loved this book, and I highly recommend it. Thanks to NetGalley, First to Read, Penguin, and Louise Miller for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Trish says

Louise Miller is remarkably accomplished in this debut novel about a family-less pastry chef escaping an affair with her boss in Boston, a married man, and landing at the Sugar Maple Inn in Guthrie, Vermont. All of our senses are engaged just by contemplating the premise: sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. Miller adds the umami ingredient, voice. Her main character, Livvy, has the wit to speak her mind and the cooking talent to go with it. What she doesn't have before she moves to Vermont are the comforts of a home where people will love her for just who she is.

Romances are written to a formula, and some do it better than others. Miller manages to include every element of a rockin' romance, including a prudently unconsummated sex scene with said boss late in the proceedings that proves her bonafides when it comes to one of the more difficult things to write well: sex. That this is a debut is reason for romance-lovers to celebrate. The story was inventive enough to encourage us to believe that there is more where that came from.

(view spoiler)

Miller herself is a pastry chef in Boston, though she gives Livvy "a splashier career" than her own. In an interview conducted by her publishers, Pamela Dorman Books/Viking, Miller tells us

"Actually, writing a pastry chef character gave me a surprise benefit: it made me more mindful in the kitchen. I found myself paying closer attention to everything I was making—especially to the tasks I can perform without thinking, like making chocolate mousse or crème brûlée—wanting to capture all the details."

Truthfully, it would not have bothered me a bit to have a few more clues to successful baking left in. Who isn't completely obsessed with *BBC TV's The British Baking Show*?

"I find that writing about food is a million times more difficult than actually making food. Baking requires precision, and I had to fight the urge to include every step of the process when

writing about making dessert. Many of the baking scenes had to be edited several times because they sounded too instructional."

I don't bake often, but when I do, I want to make sure it turns out. A few more hints to winning techniques wrapped in a romance fondant wouldn't go astray in this reader's opinion. Besides, if we learn a few things along the way we may not feel so guilty taking a day or two to read about *someone else* pursuing their dreams.

When asked why she chose this particular story line, Miller admits that she has always been a city kid:

"I think the allure comes from the fantasy that life will be vastly different—a slower pace, a life more connected to the land and to the seasons, with space to grow a big garden, to own a little piece of land and to know it well. Life in the city requires constant negotiation—with your neighbors, with the people on the subway, in line at the coffee shop, in traffic—part of the attraction is being free from some of those pressures."

Fantasy is a big part of successful romance. The most reassuring thing about this novel was that Livvy and her fellow characters all progress to some kind of personal dream fulfillment in the course of the story. Livvy creates her own family with strong bonds, and her friends manage to wrestle her to the ground long enough for roots to form. She is not finished growing, but we leave knowing she has a solid foundation for a good life and successful career. And that is how we feel about Louise Miller, too.

This is a fine book to escape the summer heat, so rustle up a copy when it comes out August 9, 2016 and settle in for a journey that begins with flambé and ends with homemade apple pie.

Margaret says

3.5/5

This book begins with our protagonist, Olivia "Livvy" Rawlings, a talented young (age 32) pastry chef working in Boston, feeling a sudden need to relocate after an especially unpleasant series of events. While carrying a huge and flaming Baked Alaska at a large catered event, she noticed her most recent lover, her much older and very much married boss, unexpectedly standing across the crowded ballroom with his wife. Surprised and distressed she drops the Baked Alaska, creating a major rumpus and setting the hall on fire. Back at her apartment, she calls her life-long best friend, Hannah Doyle, who now lives in the very rural, very far away Guthrie, Vermont (an imaginary town author Miller locates in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont). Hannah pulls some strings and gets Livvy a job as pastry chef in the Sugar Maple Inn. The very next day Livvy packs up her bags and her Irish Wolfhound and drives to Guthrie.

Miller describes the town and its people lovingly. Hannah is very happy to have her dear friend close by again, especially when she feels her in-laws trying to rule her household. The Inn is owned by Margaret, an eccentric and somewhat secretive older woman, who Livvy is constantly trying to figure out. The chef and other Inn employees are also interesting and well-developed characters. There is a full panoply of townsfolk for Livvy to meet, including an extended family, the McCrackens, which folds Livvy, an orphan with no living family members, into their warm embrace. And we too come to care for this place and these people as we happily turn the pages.

The book doesn't offer too many surprises as Livvy adjusts herself to the ins and outs of living in a small

town where people are both snoop and supportive. We get many details about the ins and outs of rural life. The landscape is both gorgeous and homey. The prose does not get in the way of the story; at the same time, the book is a treat to read, a confection of warmth and good will that will satisfy all but the most jaded. In the right hands, this book would make a fine romantic comedy movie: *Sleepless in Seattle* move over.

Amy says

All of my reviews can be found on www.novलगossip.com

This was a really fantastic book to listen to, I'm sure it was just as delightful to read, but there was something special about the audio version of *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living*. The narrator was amazing, she really brought the characters to life and I can still clearly hear her melodic and pleasant voice in my head days after finishing the book.

My favorite part about this book was the gorgeous descriptions of the food that Livvy made. Louise Miller is a pastry chef and her knowledge was so very apparent as she went into great detail about several of the recipes Livvy makes and the combination of the lovely descriptions and Marie's soothing voice was a magical combination for me.

The characterization was fantastic, Livvy was extremely well developed as was Margaret, her new boss at the Sugar Maple Inn. Dottie is Margaret's best friend and Hannah is Livvy's and both of them were well drawn as well. It follows Livvy's life over the course of a year and is broken down into sections by season and by the end, I felt like I had really come to know and admire Livvy. She's really quirky, a true individual who dyes her hair every color of the rainbow depending on her mood and she plays the banjo.

This was a warm, cozy read that made me smile, but there were also tender, sad scenes that touched me as well. Miller infused plenty of humor, small town charm, and heartfelt moments into a charming story about starting fresh and learning to depend on someone besides yourself.

Rebecca Foster says

When Olivia Rawlings, the protagonist of pastry chef Louise Miller's debut novel, arrives in Guthrie, Vermont one September, it's with a weight of guilt and rumor behind her. She left Boston's Emerson Club in ignominy after setting the place on fire with a Baked Alaska and sleeping with a married boss twice her age. Now her best friend, Hannah, is determined to help Livvy make a fresh start in a small town. She uses her clout as the local doctor's wife to get Livvy a job as the chief baker at the Sugar Maple Inn, run by a formidable older lady named Margaret.

Livvy sets up in the sugar house with her Irish wolfhound, Salty, and settles into a daily routine of baking muffins, bread and cakes for the guests. She gets to know the local community by soaking up atmosphere at the Black Bear Tavern and playing banjo with the Hungry Mountaineers band at country dances. The McCrackens, in particular, become a kind of surrogate family for this lonely woman in her early thirties: Dotty is Margaret's best friend; her husband Henry is battling colon cancer; and their youngest son Martin has temporarily given up his normal life in Seattle to help out. A love of food and music binds Livvy to the

McCrackens, and Henry is like a stand-in for the father she lost as a teenager.

This is a warm, cozy read full of well-drawn secondary characters and romantic possibilities for Livvy. There's nothing clichéd about it, though. Livvy is a sassy narrator whose hair goes from purple to orange to turquoise and whose promiscuous past matches her reputation for perfect macaroons and apple pie. I didn't love the conflict at the three-quarters point that briefly takes Livvy back to Boston, but it all comes together in a satisfying dénouement.

I love how Miller documents the rhythms of the small-town country year, including tapping the maple trees in the early spring and a pie baking contest at the summer county fair. But I'm calling this a perfect book for autumn because of how the early chapters depict pivotal events from Livvy's first months in Guthrie, especially the annual Harvest Festival supper (corn consommé, baby green salad with walnuts and maple vinaigrette, goat cheese on apple spice bread, prime rib or mushroom risotto, chive popovers, Vermont cheddar with quince paste, and pumpkin crème brûlée) and a boisterous Thanksgiving meal with the McCrackens.

Kitchens of the Great Midwest by J. Ryan Stradal was one of my top fiction picks of last year, and this is a worthy 2016 counterpart. Though not quite as edgy, Miller's debut also shares the foodie theme of my favorite novel of 2016 so far, *Sweetbitter* by Stephanie Danler. All three of these books capture the almost theatrical magic of the restaurant meal. I'll leave you with this extended passage describing the setup for the Harvest Festival. Though I've never been to New England in the fall, it makes me nostalgic for it all the same:

There is a moment after the prep is done and before the theater of the dinner service begins when I love to escape the kitchen. Dusk had fallen, and when I stepped outside, I was drawn to the light spilling from the barn, golden and inviting. I poked my head in. Margaret had outdone herself. The long tables were covered in cream linen. Squash-colored tapers stood tall in sparkling silver candelabras. Fat bouquets of sunflowers, goldenrod, and black-eyed Susans stuffed into mason jars were surrounded by tiny pumpkins and crab apples. I looked up to see a thousand white Christmas lights hanging from the rafters. The whole room glowed.

Originally published on my blog, Bookish Beck.

Malia says

This book was just what the doctor ordered after a number of dark mysteries and psychological thrillers! It's a lovely summer read with likeable characters and did I mention there's pie? Boston baker, Livvy, makes a reluctant move to the Vermont countryside, where she takes up a position as baker for the Sugar Maple Inn, little knowing that its owner, Margaret, has other plans for her. There is some romance, a little mystery, but mostly this is a story about friendship and family. It's not cheesy, if a little predictable, and I really enjoyed immersing myself in the cozy atmosphere of this book. As someone who enjoys baking, and certainly the odd slice of pie, Miller's culinary observations were fun, and I intend to test the apple pie recipe she includes in the back of the novel. For fans of light-hearted fiction with a cast of friendly characters and a well-illustrated, cozy setting, *THE CITY BAKER'S GUIDE TO COUNTRY LIVING* won't disappoint!

I won this book in a Goodreads Giveaway and have written what I think is a fair and honest review. Thank you!

Suzanne Leopold says

Livvy Rawlings is a pastry chef at an exclusive restaurant in Boston called the Emerson Club. One evening while serving a flambe dessert, she accidentally sets the building on fire. Out of job and needing money, she moves in with her best friend in Vermont. Eventually, she finds herself a job as a baker at a small inn. The owner's intention is to utilize Livvy's culinary skills to win a pie contest.

Livvy begins to settle into her life and guests are pleased with her baking. She develops a close friendship with her neighbors, Dotty and Henry McCracken. She feels a connection to their son Martin who is in from Seattle. Livvy plays the banjo in a local band where Martin is the fiddler. Unsure of how long Martin will stay in town, she would like a romantic relationship to develop.

Livvy starts to embrace small town living and moves on from her past life. One big difference is local gossip which makes everything public. Is this the place where Livvy will settle?

I enjoyed the many well developed characters that were introduced in this book. The descriptions of the baking flowing through the story made it a real treat to read.

I am thrilled that the author is working on her second novel.

\$14.14 for hardcover on Amazon ! [https://www.amazon.com/dp/1101981202/...](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1101981202/)

Morana Mazor says

Kaže se da ne treba suditi knjigu po koricama...ali, isto se kaže i da iznimke potvrđuju pravila pa, ako uzmemo u obzir te dvije izreke onda je ova knjiga iznimka koja potvrđuje pravilo jer je prilično lako možemo prosuditi po koricama tj. naslovnici.

Meni se, priznajem, svidjela žim sam vidjela najavu; ta nježna plava boja, ozračje tople kuhinje i, naravno, naslov, sve to zajedno djelovalo je tako ugodno i privlačno da sam u tom trenutku znala da ću je čitati.

I sada kada sam je pročitala mogu sa zadovoljstvom ustvrditi da nije iznevjerila moja očekivanja. Dobila sam upravo ono čemu sam se nadala čak i malo više od toga; laganu, šarmantnu priču ukomponiranu u idilično, seosko okruženje, a sve to prožeto mirisima raznih pita, kolača i torti budući da je glavna junakinja, Olivia-Livvy, vrhunska slastičarka.

Na samom početku romana, Livvy živi u radi u Bostonu no, nakon vrlo nezgodne situacije koju izazove u restoranu u kojem radi, seli se u ruralno mjesto u Vermontu gdje joj živi najbolja prijateljica Beth i tako započinje njezin život na selu...

Poglavlja u knjizi obilježena su po mjesecima u godini, a autorica nam prekrasno opisuje promjene godišnjih doba u kojima je, znamo, puno ljepše uživati na selu nego na betonu gradskog asfalta.

Pa tako čujemo kako nam pucketa lišće pod nogama tijekom jeseni, možemo osjetiti studen zime kako nas štipa za nos i obraze dok se vozimo na saonicama po snijegu...uz opise prirode tu su i prikladna jela i slastice za pojedina doba godine, a sve to zajedno daje ovoj knjizi posebnu atmosferu.

A dok mi uživamo u izmjenama godišnjih doba, naša junakinja Livvy otkriva tajne života na selu; radi u kuhinji pansiona, seli sa, zajedno sa svojim psom, u malu kućicu na imanju, počinje svirati benjo u lokanom

bendu tako da osim mirisa hrane i slastica, pri?u prožimaju i zvukovi muzike i plesa.. Naravno, pojavljuje se i Martin, jer taj život na selu bio baš toliko idili?an da tu nema i nekog zgodnog frajera koji zaokuplja pažnju naše cure.. :)

Njihov odnos, kako to obi?no biva, ima nekih uspona i padova, nekih skrivenih pa otkrivenih tajni, ali sve je to lijepo osmišljeno i napisano tako da nam ti klišeji baš i ne smetaju.

Kuhinja i kuhanje protežu se kroz ovu šarmantnu knjigu ve? od naslovnice pa kroz cijelu pri?u i baš je zato mogu usporediti sa pripremanjem nekog (ne baš zahtjevnog) kola?a po prvi puta; dakle, imamo sve potrebne sastojke (nju, njega, idili?no okruženje) koje pomiješamo (po?etak radnje); onda je tu pokoja poteško?a i strah da to ne?e dobro ispasti (zaplet) te na kraju zadovoljstvo i ispunjenje jer je sve ispalo i bolje no što smo se nadali (rasplet i happy end).

Naravno da se ovaj "recept" može primijeniti i na druge romane, ali u ovom je slu?aju baš apsolutno prikladan jer nas ova knjiga, tijekom i nakon ?itanja ispunjava osje?ajem ugone i utjehe baš kao i topla pita s jabukama, pala?inke s ?okoladom ili bilo koja, vama omiljena, slastica.

Napomena: ne ?itati na prazan želudac..! :) Želim vam ugodno ?itanje i dobar tek!

Maria says

*I already put on five pounds just from reading this, my first note on *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living* reads.*

To bake or not to bake, that *is* the question. Then again, what's the worst that could happen? Well, you could set the room on fire...

That is how *The City Baker's Guide to Country Living* by Louise Miller begins. We are introduced to the main character, Olivia Rawlings, mid-catastrophe. Olivia is a well-known baker, a *pastry chef extraordinaire*, who seems to love, live and *breathe* her craft – apart from her *casual* affair with her boss. Her mother left when she was still a child and her father passed away when she was but a teenager. All she seems to have left is her job, her baking, and Hannah, her best friend. It's to Hannah's arms she runs when avoiding the ashes of her simmering recent past, and it's from her leading hand that she finds her future.

I feel like I have been offered not a slice, but a universe-sized version of my all-time favorite cake. This book is *comfort*, is *acceptance*. It is not the kind of novel you simply love, it's the kind of novel that returns the favor, loves you back.

The writing, *oh* the writing... it's *delicious*. You can smell whatever is being confectioned; you can taste its flavor and feel its *rich* textures. These moments seem to be highlighted by Louise Miller's clever change in pace. When Olivia is baking, no matter how complicated and/or chaotic the recipe is, everything seems to slow down as flour becomes snow. There's palpable peace as Olivia walks into her private little world, her safe haven. You can feel her love, her passion, her dedication... just like when you watch Martin playing the fiddle through Olivia's eyes, how you *hear* him through her very skin.

This novel is so sweet, so *deliciously* tender. It's like a whisper, *It's going to be okay, love. Here, have a seat and a slice. Take a load off, a deep breath. You can do this.*

Imagine you have inherited the recipe of your favorite pie. You find yourself alone, craving the comfort you have known it to always deliver. You have never tried baking it yourself, you never had to. You feel the *need*

to have it, though, and there is no one to ask to do it for you – and so you try. You bring the ingredients to the counter and you start mixing them together, following the recipe and the familiar voice that murmurs the instructions through it. You seem to have created a little storm around you, but for a moment you don't care. It's ready to go in the oven. Doubt starts to creep in as you put it in. You let it eat at you for a moment before deciding on dealing with the before annoying mess that has now become a welcoming distraction. Your heart skips a beat at the sound of the timer. You watch it carefully as it cools off, thinking of everything and nothing. Then you take the first bite. You close your eyes and you can't help but smile. It's like coming back home.

That is how I would describe reading this book: trying to bring a recipe to life while dealing with the grief of having lost its original maker, the fear of disappointment and then... at last, hope, fulfillment, *happiness*.

You can tell that Louise Miller loves what she does. Not only is it evident in Olivia, it *becomes* obvious as it embodies the array of other characters – Margaret, Henry and Dotty being my favorite ones – that end up converting into family. I couldn't be more grateful that Louise Miller decided to share this story – a well-deserved blue ribbon for you!

Do I feel stuffed? To be honest, I could have another slice. And another. And perhaps *just one more* for the way back to reality.

ARC provided by Pamela Dorman Books via NetGalley.

Margitte says

I had to read the first sentence in the book three times.

The night I lit the Emerson Club on fire had been perfect for making meringue.

Each time I read it, I giggled and called out 'What?!' And then I started laughing. That's what I do in dumbfounding astonishment. And I liked the feeling of the book on the spot.

What a great way of starting out a book and setting the tone for what turned out to be a wonderful, relaxing, no-brainer, good read.

Our protagonist was orphaned at the age of sixteen when her father passed away and her mother was sort of missing in action since she was a baby. By the grace of many angels, 32-year-old Olivia Rawlings became a well-known chef in the prestigious Emerson Club in Chicago.

After the Emerson Club disaster with the pistachio baked Alaska, she was asked to take a break. That led her to her best friend Hannah in Guthrie, Vermont, *where everybody knows everything but no one says a word*.

Livvy was not the poster child for good behaviour, and had a few less flowery tales to rather not talk about. Taking care of herself since the age of sixteen, with no adults to keep an eye, she did what all teenagers did when nobody was looking.

She developed her own way of coping with challenges, such as dyeing her hair when it was time for change.

The color could be anything from Manic Panic Electric Amethyst, to Manic Panic Electric lava, or Cotton Candy Pink and the color did not remain long enough on her hair to call it home. The Manic Panic color palette arrived and left through a revolving door on her head as the changes started piling up in her life.

Apart from introducing a new self to a new beginning through an instant new hair color, she discovered the secret of food to win the hearts of the new people she constantly met. Guthrie was not the easiest town to win over, not with her track record.

However, it did not take long to crumble the community's resistance with dishes such as corn consommé, a salad of baby red oak greens, with toasted black walnuts and a maple vinaigrette with goats cheese with croutons made of dried-apple spice bread; prime rib with cipollini au jus, wild mushroom risotto and roasted Brussels sprouts; popovers with chives; cheese plates containing Vermont cheddar with quince paste, fresh chèvre with home-made blackberry preserves, sheep-s-milk blue cheese with pears poached in port; desserts including pumpkin crème Brûlée baked in hollowed-out miniature pumpkins; apple galettes with frangipane in puff pastry; pears stuffed with cognac-soaked figs wrapped in phyllo, baked to a crispy brown, chocolate shells, filled with thick amber caramel, studded with toasted pecans and a layer of dark chocolate ganache just barely sweetened; and huckleberry clafouti. (I am a bit concerned about the frangipani in food, since in Africa it is a beautiful fragrant flower but highly poisonous, so I need to check that recipe out on the internet - haven't done so yet).

Chef Albert at the Sugar Maple Inn, where Livvy found a job as a pastry chef, made sure that her first serious performance as chef at the Guthrie Harvest Festival, capped off by the Harvest Dinner afterwards, would be a success.

But Livvy had one more challenge to prove that she was the best pastry chef for Sugar Maple Inn. The apple pie competition at the Coventry Country Fair. Margaret Hurley was the owner of Sugar Maple Inn, and since her husband's passing lost the competition for three years in a row. It was a disgrace in the eyes of the town. She was determined to appoint a chef that would bring back the blue ribbons once again.

And then there was the elusive neighbor, Martin McCracken, who invited her to become part of the Hungry Mountaineers band, performing at the Contra Dance events in town. Livvy could play a banjo putting many masters to shame.

Livvy's change of scenery, from a sea of impersonal stainless steel in impressive kitchens in cities, to country houses where the stoves had minds of their own and equipment might have been purchased at yard sales, or country auctions, would slowly allow her to rethink her own life, and discover the value of family, friendships and bonding - something she never experienced in her life before. She finds a surrogate father and an accepting family in the McCrackers, with a bond slowly developing between herself and Margaret Hurley.

(view spoiler)

A cozy, sweet read, with a little romance added to spice up the pastries and her life.

COMMENTS

I had to watch a few Contra Dance events on Youtube to get behind the mystery (for me) of this dance form. But after watching it for a while I decided to rather get out there and do a few rounds myself of the feisty boot scootin boogie, and line dancing on the wild rhythms of 'Achy Breaky Heart' with Billy Ray Cyrus

looking deep into my eyes. I nearly fainted. Well, okay I'm a bit unfit too! But oh those eyes... and the beat ... of my heart. I considered calling a doctor and faint with a smile right around my head! And do it again! And again!

Nope, so the Contra Dancing did not do it for me, but the baking had me wild with excitement!

And the story was okay. A feel good Sunday read for me, with a little bit of my WILD WILD side bursting out in the open. Jeans, cowboy hat an' all. I just need the real boots!

Well okay, Line dancing with Billy was not part of the book at all, but it ensured a happy four star rating for this book. Because sometimes life is just INCREDIBLY GOOD! This book lead me to an important reminder to just be happy for no reason whatsoever!

Diane S ? says

3.5 When Livvy, the pastry chef at an inclusive Boston dining club, drops a lit baked Alaska setting the room on fire, she runs to Vermont the safest place and person she knows. Her best friend Hannah. Hannah quickly finds her a position at a gorgeous inn, called Sugar Maple, located in the Vermont countryside.

The descriptions of the desserts will have you drool, the food, entice, the beautiful setting and family atmosphere , envious and the banjo music and square dancing, tapping your feet. Still all os not sweetness and light, that would not be real life, there is an odious woman named Jane White, there are the secrets the Inn's elderly owner keeps and there is a family tragedy. Livvy herself is a colorful character, she dyes her hair the most outrageous colors, fierce fuchsia, banana yellow, pine green, changing to suit moods and seasons. On her own since the age of sixteen she just wants a place and a life she can call her own. Oh yes, and must not forget a wonderful dog called Salty. Of course there has to be a love interest as well.

Still, a much lighter fare than that in which I usually indulge, always gravitating more to salty than sugar. But I have to admit I enjoyed this brief foray to the sweet side.

ARC from Publisher.

Dana says

3.5. A cozy little Fall foodie book...although a little on the sweet side. I took this book on a trip to the mountains last week and it was perfect for reading by the lake, watching the leaves fall around me and smelling woodsmoke as I read about apple pie and Thanksgiving in Vermont.

Chessa says

4.5 stars, but I'm rounding up to 5.

This is the perfect cozy foodie small town romance. Seriously, delicious food + banjos + small town

shenanigans? In New England?!?!? I feel like this book was written for me. My heart felt warm every time I read it, and I looked forward to getting back to it every time. If you like Gilmore Girls (and who doesn't like Gilmore Girls?!?), definitely check this one out!

The characters drive the bus here, but it's certainly not just a character study. Loved the New England setting - the sugarbush, grange halls, taverns and the Inn - perfect. Oliva's love of music and food just shines through, and you can't help be swept along in her passions.

The ending felt a teeny bit rushed, but it's my only real complaint (other than a few missed copy edits - missed quotation marks a couple times and a misspelling).

Reading this has made me desperate to dust off my banjo, revisit my home state of NH, bake apple pie, and find the local contra dance society here in MT. So, you know, totally freaking awesome.

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

PorshaJo says

What a delicious, fun read! I was hooked by the blurb on this one after I read 'pastry chef extraordinaire'. If it has anything to do with food, I'm going to read it. And if it's baking....come on.

Livvy is the pastry chef extraordinaire, who is having a rough go of it. Her parents are gone and she seems a bit lost. After a mishap at her current place of employment, she travels a few hours to visit her friend and find comfort, but instead, she finds a job as the head pasty chef at a Vermont resort. Livvy describes in detail all the mouth-watering delights that she bakes. And she bakes a lot in this one. There is even a large apple pie baking contest at the annual fair which seems to be the biggest competition around. The story is not something I would normally read - it's a bit sweet in terms of girl leaves one guy, finds another guy, heartbreak, and then.....well, it was a bit predictable. But it had a big focus on baking so I gave it a shot. And I was happy to read this one. Sometimes you just need a feel good book. And if includes details on making apple pies, it's just the whipped cream on top. So to speak. Plus, I learned a great new tip on pie/dough making that I can't wait to try out.

I listened to this one on audio. It was an OK audio. I could have either listened or read the print.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

This is the perfect foodie cozy romance novel. The author is a pastry chef and it shows; I was so pleased to find the apple pie recipe in the back and can't wait to make it.

Olivia was sleeping with her married boss and caused a fire at an important event and flees to rural Vermont, where she ends up finding a job at a small inn that just happens to need a pastry chef. And before you think it is a ridiculous notion, I once had to relocate to a town of 10,000 people in rural Indiana and found a job as a pastry chef at a tea room, so let's just say I found a lot to love here. It's the dream - the perfect job with free housing, with room for creativity, friendly locals who happen to play the same music she learned from her father, and a love interest who is just the right mix of talented, strong, loves his mother, and mystery. First

snows, baking contests, maple syrup.... I think this author has a promising future.

Thanks to the publisher for providing a copy through NetGalley.
