



Summer at the Castle Cafe

Donna Ashcroft

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The cosy, crumbling Castle Café is a place like no other. With stunning views of the sparkling sea and sandy beaches, you're guaranteed a warm welcome, delicious cake and plenty of laughter as soon as you step through the door...

When **Alice Appleton** escapes to the gorgeous seaside town of **Castle Cove** it's the change of scenery she didn't even realise she needed. Taking up a job in the charming **Castle Café**, Alice finds herself surrounded by cream teas, chocolate cake and quirky characters. Could this be the perfect place for Alice to embrace the summer?

Mysterious and hunky **Jay O'Donnell** has lived in picturesque Castle Cove since he was a child. As a volunteer on the lifeboats, his days by the sea are far from predictable. Haunted by a tragedy from his past, he's on a mission to save as many people as possible. But when Alice Appleton walks into his life - and turns his world upside down - he begins to realise that perhaps it might just be his turn to be rescued...

As Alice and Jay find themselves unexpectedly falling for each other, will they learn the importance of letting go to make way for second chances? And will Alice find the life she's always dreamed of in Castle Cove?

Heart-warming, hilarious and utterly romantic, you'll fall in love with *Summer at the Castle Café* and want to return time and time again. The perfect read for fans of Debbie Johnson, Lucy Diamond and Phillipa Ashley.

Why readers are falling in love with *Summer at the Castle Café*:

'**OMG! A stunning debut**, this gorgeous book invites ever reader to escape to Castle Cove to follow their dreams!' Erin Green

'**Warm, funny and sparky** - I LOVED this summer romance!' Jules Wake

'**Wow! A beautiful setting**, appealing characters and an intriguing story. A delightful new voice.' Katie Fforde.

Summer at the Castle Cafe Details

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Author : Donna Ashcroft

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From Reader Review Summer at the Castle Cafe for online ebook

Shalini says

A sweet feel good romance which drew me into the book with its gentle breeze, swaying me till I immersed myself into the pages where there was love and fun and humor.

Alice comes to Castle Cove after her mother's death, finds a job in the local cafe, and participates in the triathlon. And then there is Jay who has his own sad past and it was wonderful to see both the main characters struggling to go beyond their pasts and forge a new life together.

The book had it all, laughter and tears, sadness and happiness, grief and love. A complete warm book which would get the heart move slowly towards hope and warmth of love.

My first book by Donna Ashcroft and I loved it totally!!

Emma Crowley says

Summer at the Castle Café is the debut novel from Donna Ashcroft and I hope this wonderful, warm story is just the start of a series of books that will be set in and around the seaside town of Castle Cove. Right from the very first page I felt very drawn to Alice Appleton and her story. Immediately, I wanted to know just what made her tick and why was she so motivated with one clear common goal in mine which had to be achieved in a certain time period as set down by herself?

This book has such a gorgeous, feel good cover that would instantly catch your eye if you were glancing through the bookshelves of your local bookshop over the coming weeks or even if you are rushing to grab a book in the airport as you jet away this summer. Summer at the Castle Café is just the perfect holiday read. The main plot line is not taxing or challenging, yet there is just enough here to avoid it straying too far down the road of being overly sentimental or lacking in any depth or substance. The setting is just so idyllic and the author has created a cosy, inviting, feel good community vibe where people genuinely care for each other and will look out for and support each other in times of trouble, strife or as Alice faces – a monumental challenge.

Alice has worked in the Castle Café since she moved to the small Dorset town from London just over four months ago. She is incredibly efficient, so well organised and on top of her game when it comes to anything to do with work. She always likes to keep busy, presumably there is something that she is worried about but the reader does not discover what until later on in the book. Alice has a place for everything and everything must be in its place, she can't stand disorder or things going off track. So to Cath Lacy (her own little story was lovely but I would have liked to get to know Cath even better), Alice's boss, who runs the restaurant for castle owner Simon, Alice is a godsend considering just how busy the café is becoming now tourist season is in full flow.

Given the title one would have thought that the dominant feature of the story would have been the café and perhaps it might have been going through tough times and therefore the women would have to come up with some ingenious ideas to save something so valued in the community. Not the case here and I mean this in a good way. There have been so many café books published in the first five months of this year, all with more or less the same plot. Thankfully Donna has written something different and refreshing from the café sub genre as I like to think of it. Instead we focus more on Alice, and get to delve beneath the façade of being so methodical and perfect to see just what is really creating so much anxiety for her behind the scenes.

Six months ago Alice was running a restaurant in London, now she is in Castle Cove and it couldn't be more

different from her previous life. She feels at her lowest ebb but she has been absorbed and welcomed into the Castle Cove community but is she willing to let go of all her fears and share the load that is weighing her down. Alice has set for herself the task of competing in the famous triathlon which is run in the area. I thought she was admirable to put in place this goal for herself but I did wonder what was her focus and inspiration behind this? As we read further through the book, Alice does her utmost best with training and it seems as if she is driven by an internal force that she must do this no matter what. When the reasons for this became apparent, I applauded her for doing it and the main inspiration was a fitting one. The only problem is Alice is struggling with the swimming aspect of her preparations. She has an all encompassing fear that leaves her frozen, unable to enter the water. If she cannot overcome this she won't be able to participate in the triathlon. In the first half of the book I did think oh just give up, why continue on if this fear is so strong? It's only as Alice starts to open up that I fully understood her motivation and in turn my respect for her as a person grew.

Of course, the entire story just couldn't focus solely on Alice and thankfully we had a handsome, intriguing male to also focus on. Jay O'Donnell is the local carpenter and also volunteers for the lifeboat service. He was such a brilliant sparring partner against Alice. They each gave each other as good as they got and the banter that flew between them was funny but also highlighted the chemistry steaming between the pair even if Alice didn't want to give into it in any way shape or form. At the end of six months she was going to Thailand to stay with her Dad and that was that. She was not going to deviate from her plan, no matter what life had in store for her.

Jay, himself, had something in his past that caused certain reactions in the present and until this became clearer I did think at times that he was being very harsh and abrupt in some of the things he said and how he responded/reacted to certain situations some of those which involved Alice. No doubt about it though he did have a kind, caring and supportive side and I loved how he could see that Alice was struggling and he wanted to do something to change all that. Jay wants to save Alice and aid her in a way that he found impossible to do for someone else. He was a brilliantly written character whom many readers, myself included, will develop a soft spot for.

There were several other characters introduced/mentioned at various points in the story and the inquisitive part of me wanted to know more about them. I soon realised that maybe by having a small or brief presence in Alice's story meant that they might appear in future books. Ben Campbell from the Little Treasures Antique Shop, Marta West from the Picture Perfect art gallery and Claire Sims from Castle Cove Vets are all characters I want to learn more about in the future. Aside from not knowing more about certain characters, there wasn't any fault I could find with Summer at the Castle Café. It was just such a lovely enjoyable book to read and I felt Alice went through a real journey in a bid to transform which deep in her heart she knew she needed to do to let go and put the past to bed. Sound advice appeared when I least expected to read it - Fill your world with people you love, keep them close and make them happy. I hoped Alice could do this as change is the hardest thing of all but maybe she would have the strength to see things through to the bitter end. Whether she did or not you'll only discover by picking up this charming, captivating, sparkling little gem of a book.

Amanda says

This is the first book written by Donna Ashcroft that I have had the pleasure of reading and reviewing. Judging by how much I enjoyed this book, this will not be the last book of hers that I read. I absolutely, totally and utterly adored this book but more about that in a bit.

Alice Appleton is a quiet girl who seems to have built a high wall around herself. It's obvious that something has happened in her past which has affected her greatly. She is extremely sensitive and seems to have the

weight of the world on her shoulders. Alice is also overly harsh on herself and very self critical. If she has an accident she thinks that it is automatically her fault and she can't stop apologising for messing up. Her boss takes everything in her stride and does her best to reassure her. Alice has a fear of the water but she tries her best to overcome this fear by training for a triathlon. It's during this training that she meets the rather enigmatic and dashing Jay O'Donnell, who volunteers for the lifeboat crew. Jay is haunted by something that happened in his past. He has resolved to save as many people as he can in tribute to the one person who he was unable to save. Jay is shy and comes across as a bit abrupt but I think that his abruptness is a defence mechanism. He avoids letting anybody getting too close to him because he doesn't want to run the risk of being hurt again. There is no doubt that sparks fly when Alice and Jay meet and I was crossing my fingers that they would get together. What has happened in Alice's past to make her so fearful of the water? Why is Alice so jumpy? What happened in Jay's past to make him want to save as many people as possible in his role as lifeboat crew? Will Alice & Jay get together and live happily ever after? Well you are just going to have to read the book for yourself to find out as I am not going to tell you.

From the moment I picked this book up, I was entranced by the story and I found that I couldn't put the book down. It wasn't glued to my hand but it might as well have been because my Kindle came everywhere with me. I picked this book up at an ideal time because I was feeling a bit fed up and in need of a distraction. What a distraction this book proved to be. I totally immersed myself in the story and I really did feel that I was part of the story myself. There were several times that I found myself arguing with the book or wanting to shake Jay or Alice by the shoulders to make them see what they were missing. This book had a bit of everything- there was drama, there was romance and there was humour with the occasional odd character thrown in for good measure. The author uses such vivid descriptions that she made the place of Castle Cove sound idyllic and I was all for booking myself in for a stay there but had to remind myself was a fictional place. The characters are so realistically written that I could literally picture them in my head and they seemed to come alive.

In conclusion 'Summer At The Castle Cafe' is the perfect light hearted summer holiday type read and I can't recommend it highly enough. I can't wait to read the next book in the series and here's hoping that we don't have too long to wait. The score on the Ginger Book Geek board is a well deserved 5* out of 5*.

Els says

How I love the covers of those feel good books. They already make me feel good even before I have read one single word. I adore the sun and the sea, so this setting is one of my favourites.

Of course you know from the start that you are in for a fairytale ending but you never know what you will get before you get there.

I have to admit that the story felt so real. I could see everything I read and I felt the hurt, the danger and the love as if I was a character in the story myself and the funny bits made me laugh out loud sometimes.

The characters could have been your neighbours because they were so down to earth and it's true that you often think that what you don't have is something you really want. By doing so you don't see what's under your nose and you don't realize that you already have what you are looking for.

At the last page I kept tapping on my Kindle. I hoped that it would make pop up, miraculously, the sequel, because I want more ...

Thank you, Netgalley and Bookouture.

Nicola Clough says

This is the first book I have read by this author as not heard of her before and will read more for sure amazingly well written with great character and you believe when you are reading the story you are transported to the beautiful seaside village. Very heartwarming, funny, realistic and very romantic. Highly recommend reading this and worth far more than the five stars.

Alice moves to the beautiful seaside village to retreat and sort her mothers house out as she has passed away but she's set on doing this and then travelling and visiting her father. She starts working at the castle cafe which is so beautiful and she organises them all and they realise they need her working there. She is set for doing a triathlon apart from she is frightened of the water. The cafe is perfect for Alice to work in for the summer and she soon meets some lovely people including Jay. Jay is living in the village with his own business and he lost his brother down by the sea a number of years ago but he's always blamed himself for his brothers passing and he can't forgive himself and this his parents blame him to. Alice and Jay soon become friends as he does some work at the cafe and he's out walking his dog and sees Alice running. Problem is can they both open up to each other and support each other through the hard times. Alice really wants to swim and prove she can do it and Jay wants to move on but he can't open up it takes his mother saying something to Alice that makes him start to open up. Alice decides before the triathlon she is going to go travelling as she can't see a future with Jay as they just can't move forward but once she's gone can they both realise what they are missing and get back together or not.

Well worth reading from the first page to the last and so highly recommend this book perfect for curling up on a lovely day and reminding you of summer.

Berit??? says

4.25 Lovely Stars ????25

This was a wonderful love story that really showed you the power of guilt over somebody's life.... first of all what a lovely setting... The seaside village of Castle Cove.... The sun, the sea, the sand, and this wonderful café, how can you help but fall in love?

Alice and Jay both have so much guilt and grief in their lives, it pretty much has dictated how they've lived to this point.... Alice feels the need to live an adventurous life... that is what her mother would have wanted for her... A life filled with triathlons and traveling to exotic places... it definitely does not include living a "boring" life in Castle Cove or falling in love.... Jay is consumed with guilt and the need to keep everyone around him safe.... can he let someone new into his heart? And will he be able to let go of his need to keep control of everything around him? Even Superman couldn't keep everybody safe and had an occasional day off...

This love story was so charming and real... and admittedly frustrating at times... there were times in this book I wanted to reach through those pages and knock some sense into both Alice and Jay... how could they not see what was right in front of them? Thank goodness that Jay's mother and Alice's father could talk some sense into them (sort of) Beautiful romance in a lovely setting... hope to see some more books set in Castle Cove....

Strongly recommend to those who enjoy a very realistic romance?

*** thank you so much too Bookouture and Net Galley for a copy of this wonderful book ***

Robin Loves Reading says

Please see all of my reviews at <http://www.robinlovesreading.blogspot...>

Before Alice Appleton's mother died, she kept promising to join her in a triathlon. Now Alice it determined to participate in the town of Castle Cove's upcoming triathlon. This will be especially difficult, as she has a morbid fear of the sea. Once she meets her goal, and settles her mother's house, she plans on spending time with her father, and then traveling. Meanwhile, Jay O'Donnell sees her at water's edge during an impending storm, and as a volunteer lifeboat skipper, shows great concern. She then runs into Jay at her job, the Castle Café, as he is the carpenter hired to do repairs.

Alice and Jay like each other just fine, but they both have issues facing them. For starters, Castle Cove is only a pit stop for Alice. Also, Jay's previous girlfriend up and moved, so, although he'd really like to date Alice, the fact that she will be moving is enough for him to try and resist her. Each of them have other serious issues facing them that could derail their relationship before it even gets off the ground..

I so loved this fantastic romance! It was a quick, very emotional and engaging read. I thoroughly enjoyed the characters in this story. Their trials were real, and this kept me drawn to this wonderful story. It is not all sweet love, however. There are some serious issues addressed here, and you will read of those in the pages of this book. This provided a wonderful balance that was executed perfectly in Summer at the Castle Café. This is an utterly remarkable debut novel. I thoroughly enjoyed Donna Ashcroft's writing style and I look forward to reading more of her in the future.

Lauren Tess'x says

Wow, what a book! I'm so gutted I've finished this perfect heartwarming read.

?I adored Castle Cove and all the friends I made along my reading journey, Alice and Jay in particular - our two main characters. Both have suffered tragedy in the past but as their paths cross, do they want the same things?

?I enjoyed the friendships Summer at castle cafe displayed and the blossoming romances throughout. Castle Cove has become more than home for me, it's my adventure - I cannot wait to dive into more of Donna's writing.

?In a nutshell, a heartbreaking yet heartwarming read with brilliant characters and a gorgeous location.

?So, are you now wanting adventure, romance and all round brilliant read this summer? You can pick up the ebook here: ?UK <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Summer-Castl...> <https://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/d/B07B8S...>

Kathleen Gray says

This is a feel good book! Alice and Jay both have problems in their past- they've both lost someone close to them. She's now working in a cafe and is determine to do a triathlon, except she's got a fear of the water. That's where Jay comes in. Let's face it- we all know what's going to happen here but Ashcroft has written the plot in a delightful way that keeps you reading because the characters jump off the page. Thanks to Netgalley for the ARC. This is a perfect spring/summer read (although it would be nice in winter as well!)

Dash fan says

5? An Absolute Joy to Read

Summer at the Castle Cafe is a really warm feel good story. I devoured overnight. It has romance, humour, heartbreak, friendship, scrumptious food, loveable characters and a gorgeous pup.

Alice came to Castle Cove after her mum passes away.

Alice promised her mum that she would compete in a triathlon with her before she passed away. So she is now determined to fulfill that wish.

If only she could overcome her fear of the sea!

Alice works at the Castle Cafe, she is a lil bit of a klutz spilling things over a customer and breaking a cupboard off a wall.

But it's a good thing Jay is about to rescue her from her mishaps.

Jay is gorgeous, kind, some might say a hero. As he volunteers as a lifeboat rescuer. But he too harbours a painful secret.

Jay is attracted to Alice. Even though Alice is sarcastic, mean and pushes him away. He can't help running back for more.

Will Alice and Jay ever drop their guard down and have some fun. Or will their past stop them from getting it on!

I adored Alice and Jay and was rooting for them both to be happy.

Alice has a fair amount of issues so it was so wonderful to see her grow as the story progressed.

The story does contain some subjects that some may find hard to read such as grief, death, drowning, divorce.

However they are handled with the right amount of sensitivity to still make an impact.

I adored Summer at the Castle Cafe.

It had a lil sprinkle of everything.

The romance fizzes along just perfectly.

It was an absolute joy to read so much so i devoured it from cover to cover!

It was a warm and engaging story, great characterisation with Genuine and realistic characters that I fell in love with.

Summer at the Castle Cafe is the perfect feel good story.

The Perfect read if your looking for some escapism.

So if your looking for a compelling, funny, warm, Rom com then you definitely need to snuggle up with Summer at the Castle Cafe!!

Thank you to Bookouture for this copy which I reviewed honestly and voluntarily.

My Review is also on my Blog Website:

<https://dashfan81.blogspot.com/2018/0...>

Alison says

Alice Appleton has moved to Castle Cove, Dorset following the death of her mother unexpectedly. Her mother's death has been a huge wake-up call and she realises that her life has become very narrow, she was too busy with her work in a busy restaurant to visit her mother until it was too late. Now she has big plans, to run the annual Castle Cove marathon in honour of her mother and to visit her father in Thailand. If only she could get over her pesky fear of the sea.

Jay O'Donnell has lived in Castle Cove practically his entire life. A carpenter and a volunteer with the lifeboats he is constantly disappointed by the risks people take with their lives, swimming and sailing when the sea is too rough. When he sees a woman in a wet suit at the water's edge when the sea is far too choppy for swimming he can't help but express his exasperation. The next day he can't believe it when he sees the same woman riding a bicycle without any lights through the countryside, in order to keep her safe he follows slowly behind her allowing his headlights to light the road for her.

Poor Alice is standing at the water's edge desperately trying to get up the courage to get her toes wet when an incredibly sexy man starts yelling at her and won't listen to anything she has to say. The following day she is nearly run off the road on her bicycle by the same man who followed her all the way to work, scaring her half to death.

Despite their inauspicious start Jay and Alice are also attracted to each other, but they each have their own issues to deal with which could easily tear them apart.

I was in a real reading slump, starting lots of books and giving them up half-way but this book lifted me right out. What's not to love about an OCD waitress and a carpenter who wants to save everyone falling in love in a small Devon town?

If you like the idea of cosy communities where everyone gathers at the local pub for food, live music and gossip, where school friends live and work closely together, and where the local postman can tell you the contents of your mail before you open it - then this is definitely for you!

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Bumped for release.

Gaele says

Far less about the café and it's workings, this is a story about finding yourself and accepting challenges that take you on a path to happiness. Alice has moved from London to Castle Cove after her mother's death – a stopgap to clear out her house and find a tenant before heading to Thailand to spend time with her father. After her parent's divorce six years back, Alice has buried herself in busywork, using her ocd tendencies to organize, arrange and make her way in the world. Riddled with guilt that she hadn't spent more time with her very adventurous mother, she's decided that competing in the local triathlon, a regular event for her mother, is a way to make up for the lost years and lack of adventure in her life. But, she needs to stay busy, and training won't do that – so she works with Cath at the Castle Café – occupying the ground floor of a turret in Cove Castle.

Jay O'Donnell is a member of the lifeboats crew, a carpenter, and been in Castle Cove since childhood. He's always been one who was 'responsible' and protected others from harm: even if they don't want it. When he comes across Alice biking to work in stormy weather, without headlamps, he takes it upon himself to follow her and keep her from harm. Thus begins their back and forth, as both have walls up and secrets that keep them from actually trusting or engaging fully. Through challenges and rescues, Alice is convinced there's more to Jay's story than she knows, yet the seeming complicity to keep her in the dark is frustrating. Through struggles and growth, the attraction between the two cannot be denied, but Jay's walls and pushing Alice further and further away become too much, and she heads off to Thailand, triathlon unfinished and weeks earlier than planned.

Throughout the story Alice's odd tendencies become less of a shortcoming for her and others, as people rely on her 'quirks' and organization – since most of it makes sense and their lives easier. Fitting in comfortably with Cath, and welcomed (mostly) by the locals, there's plenty of opportunity for Alice to grow and discover that adventure isn't everything, and perhaps finding a place with friends, love and potential is all she needs. Clever plotting with issues that are large, but not insurmountable, Alice's need to organize becomes less a disorder and more her personality – as she comes to learn that being busy isn't actually solving anything, and perhaps thinking and talking things through are more important to her future and potential. A lovely debut that has me wanting more from Castle Cove just to see how everyone has fared.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

Between The Pages Book Club (Gemma M) says

Summer at the Castle Cafe is the perfect read for summer 2018... The perfect book for chick-lit and comedy lovers. I love this cover and its making me want summer and to visit the castle cafe myself!

I loved the sound of the setting and all the characters. From the beginning you could tell not everything was perfect in Alice's world. Then you have Jay who keeps trying to help Alice unexpectedly and more of a hero, hunk figure in the book! Both have been through horrible events in the past... Will this bring them together? Or will Alice playing hard to get scare him away?

It been a while since a book made me laugh out loud but this story made me chuckle throughout and brought a smile to my face! It was nice to read a different genre for a change instead of thrillers, very refreshing. A brilliant debut. I would highly recommend to you all! A well deserved four stars. I look forward to reading more by this author in the future.

Monica Mac says

This really was a feel-good kind of book, but it had surprising depth as well.

I feel like this was a book about second chances, a story about feeling the fear, but doing it anyway, and I loved that.

Alice and Jay were solid, real characters who had both been through the mill, in different ways. They both had things to overcome and they helped each other beautifully. I also enjoyed the fact that both of these people were surrounded by others who had their backs, and the importance of community really played a part here. It made me want to move to Castle Cove!

I loved this book, 4.5 stars from me.

Thank you to NetGalley and Bookouture.

BIBLIOMANIAC MJ says

What a lovely, sweet romance novel!

This book easily drew me in from the get go and I was swept away by the descriptive scenes, imagining myself on the sandy beach with a gentle breeze blowing, giving me the summer feels whilst reading this cute, entertaining romantic comedy.

As a newcomer to Castle Cove, we get to watch Alice as she struggles to make changes after her mom's death; taking up a job working at the local café ; setting a goal to participate in a triathlon and also failing at her attempt to keep to herself. Friendship and romance come knocking and we get to witness the charming although sometimes frustrating love story between Jay and Alice. With grief and guilt overshadowing both their lives, are they able to drop their guard, get past the past and move forward?

With a touch of sadness, this warm, humorous and heartfelt romance novel, set in a beautiful setting with totally loveable characters, was a joy read.

Many thanks to Netgalley, Bookouture and the author for an ARC in exchange for my honest opinion of this book.
