



Cooking with Caroline

Katharina Marcus

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Not much stuff ever happens in Gull Cove.

Not in the town, not in its one and only secondary school, and definitely not in the life of 16-year-old Kirsty Matthews.

Pancake-faced and too chubby from being fed too much beige food over the years but not grossly overweight yet and planning to keep it that way, Kirsty is more of a people watcher than one to watch. Opinionated, with an eclectic taste in oldie music and an acerbic wit, she has one friend only and that's enough. Life is comfortably dull.

But when Caroline Connelly, of *Cooking with Caroline* fame, comes home to Gull Cove to teach a cookery class, Kirsty is teamed up at the stove with resident pain-in-the-arse Jake Deacon and suddenly, between chicken roast and fishcakes, her world is turned upside down and inside out with an abundance of stuff that changes her life forever.

Cooking with Caroline Details

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From Reader Review Cooking with Caroline for online ebook

Michael Gardner says

Like a perfectly balanced plate of food

A cooking analogy seems like a fitting way to start this review. As Caroline tells us, cooking good food is about combining the right mix of ingredients and letting them simmer until perfectly cooked. Marcus does the same with this YA romdrama, which I learned is a romcom without the funny bits.

This reader is rather inclined to think this is a rather beautiful romdrama masquerading as YA though, as our hero and heroine are very mature for their age. The book also deals frankly with more 'adult' subject matter than you'd expect to find in the average YA read. It works well though. As I said before, good ingredients simmered until perfect.

What binds and completes the dish is the honest sincerity and tenderness Marcus brings to her characters and the story. If the Moon Pool chapter doesn't melt your heart, then it's time to get a transplant. The ending too, which could have easily left me with a ready meal taste in the mouth if not handled with the same care, was perfectly balanced.

What may trip some readers up is how the narrative switches between first and third person perspectives. It tripped me up at first, mainly because Kirsty, who is telling the tale, apologises for the intrusive first person narrative... which speaks directly to the 'don't think about a blue elephant' negative to positive workings of the human brain. You can't help thinking about the blue elephant. The same brain process applies to Kirsty saying the intrusions are annoying.

The changes of perspective also catch the reader off guard because people who speak about themselves in the third person are either the royal family or in need of a shrink. My advice is: roll with it. Treat it as you would an unusual flavour combination on a fine-dining menu, like roast venison with chocolate jus. It may seem weird at first, but once you try it, it works.

Cheyenne Blue says

Kirsty is bumbling along through secondary school in the quiet town of Gull Cove, when she has the opportunity to participate in a cooking course run by the star of her favourite TV cooking show. Caroline, the TV host, went to school in Gull Cove and now she wants to give back to the school and community. Kirsty and a rag-tag bunch of teens have a chance to learn to cook, something that none of them know how to do. The teens all have different reasons for learning. Kirsty is at first horrified to find she is paired up with Jake, the bad-boy of Gull Cove, for the class, but the two swiftly form a friendship. If they were Aussies, you'd call them best mates.

Jake's reasons for joining the class are shrouded in mystery for much of the book, but as the story develops, we learn more about him and his situation, all told through the eyes of the very shrewd and observant Kirsty.

The story opens with Kirsty waiting on a bench. Something bad has obviously happened, but it takes time for this to be revealed.

I loved this story, although if I had to pick, I'd say I loved the cooking class scenes the best (although as

someone who grew up cooking, I'm baffled at the lack of basics these teens have!) I loved the friendships and antipathies that sprang from the class. I particularly liked Maisie the wanna be prime minister and the two geek boys who admitted they were doing the class simply to someday have their own cooking show.

I have read and enjoyed Katharina Marcus's young adult horse stories, and it's good to see her stretching her wings away from horses. However, I hope there will be more horse stories from her in the future.

I thoroughly enjoyed this young adult book and I'm sure teens to adults will too.

Kinna Blue says

Klasse Buch, nicht nur für Jugendliche!

Momo says

Read this book for the second time now, loved it. I think it was even better the second time round because you read it from a whole nother perspective. I want a Jake.

Caroline Easton says

This is the first book I've read by this author but it will not be the last! Beautifully written with very realistic and likeable characters. The author's writing style is very appealing and she manages to pull you in from the very beginning making it a very difficult book to put down.

Anna says

I was a bit worried about this but actually it is brilliant. A book to devour. I wish I'd had someone like Kirsty to read about when I was a not-so-skinny teen.

David Rose says

Up front - I'm a huge Katharina Marcus fan, for good reason: she's an exceptionally talented (and diligent) author. That doesn't mean that I won't review critically if it were called for. Naturally, I bought this on pre-order as soon as I saw it. :)

Kirsty is 'pancake-faced and chubby', as it says in the blurb. Not your usual YA romantic lead, but she's also bright and sharply observant. Jake Deacon is an atypical bad-boy type one rapidly warms to.

The story is presented through Kirsty's third- and first-person alternating narratives; the third-person voice being the unfolding tale and the first-person sharing Kirsty's present, until they collide at the book's climax. Got your doubts about this? You're not the only one, Kirsty was also a bit dubious. Don't worry, it works a treat, with the author generating huge suspense in the process. This book is a page turner.

The characters - all of them - are ordinary people with fairly unexceptional talents. Katharina Marcus's great gift is bringing characters like these to life. That's an understatement. Kirsty, Jake, Phoebe, Sophia, Caroline Connelly and Mr. Simms, well, all of them really, become people you believe you know, and might go visit next weekend just, you know, to see how things are going along. I wish!

Of the secondary characters, I have to say that Caroline Connelly is as much a work of literary art as her cooking is in the culinary field. Even Shannon, brief though her appearances are, has a palpable presence.

Few writers in any genre are capable of creating such a convincing and immersive experience. I read this book almost in one sitting, and I doubt any reader would be able to put it down for long.

The content is quite 'clean', if one allows for a little nudity, and while it has some adult themes they are handled in a way that I believe is appropriate for 13+ readers.

A great romantic story, beautifully written with sharp observation of modern social life in the British Isles.

P.S. I loved that one of my playlists has almost all of the songs mentioned in the book!

Maggie K says

This is my review as published on Amazon...but it all applies here too. I do know the author and she excels at writing about loyalty, love and teenagers. She just gets better and better with every book she writes. She gets inside the head of her characters and lets her readers do the same too, so that you care about what happens to them.

Kirsty is a 16 year old who knows her own mind, most of the time, and doesn't follow the crowd. She's also a bit overweight, and doesn't have loads of friends. But everything changes when she takes an after school cooking class with a celebrity chef and finds herself partner to bad boy Jake. Is he really so bad? The book is told in two view points, Kirsty in the first person, in the here and now, giving a drip feed of something that has already happened, and a third person narrative leading up to what's happened. It works really well. I had my heart in my mouth in fear and anticipation as I read it, because I was so drawn to the main characters. And I loved all the detail of her school life and the teenage angst,

I devoured this swiftly and when I finished I wanted more. This is definitely Katharina's best yet.
