

## **Kid Books on the Front Burner**

By Denise Marchetti, Children's Librarian

There is a huge selection of cookbooks for budding chefs and some delicious reads for middle grade foodies who prefer fiction. In addition to including recipes and cooking techniques, many of these food infused novels explore themes of friendship, competition, resilience, and self-discovery.

Fans of reality TV cooking shows may enjoy sampling *The Next Best Junior Chef* series by Charise Mericle Harper. There are three books (episodes) about four preteens being filmed while competing in cooking challenges to decide the grand prize winner. In *All Four Stars* by Tara Dairman, sixth-grader, Gladys Gatsby loves to cook despite her parents' preference for fast food. The adventure begins when she is mistakenly hired to review a New York City restaurant. Gladys sets out to do it while dealing with the trials of school life. In *Phineas L. MacGuire...Gets Cooking!*, the fourth book in the series by Frances O'Roark Dowell, Mac, a science whiz, reluctantly turns foodie when his mom asks him to cook the family dinners. He is happy to discover the connection between cooking and science, but then must confront the school bully who keeps demanding his homemade brownies. Foodies who enjoy graphic novels can snack on *Rutabaga the Adventure Chef* by Eric Colossal. There are currently two books in this fantasy/adventure series about a traveling chef and his pet cooking pot, who are in search of the most unique and delicious ingredients. The anime style art helps to convey humor as they find themselves in many sticky situations involving knights, dragons, and monsters.

There are many sweet reads for middle graders with an appetite for dessert. *The Whizz Pop Chocolate Shop* by Kate Saunders is an entertaining fantasy about twins Oz and Lily, whose family inherits their great-great uncles' house, including a chocolate shop. They discover that their uncles were sorcerers who made magical chocolate, and now they must stop an evil gang from stealing their secret recipes. Another mystery with a secret recipe is *Pie* by Sarah Weeks. When Alice's Aunt Polly dies and leaves her famous pie recipe to her cat, Alice and her friend Charlie must find a way to preserve it while everyone in town is in a frenzy to win the annual pie baking contest. Fans of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl may enjoy *The Candymakers* by Wendy Mass. The setting is a chocolate factory, where four twelve year-olds are competing to create a new and delicious candy. The story is told through each character's point of view as many mysteries are unraveled. The adventure continues in the sequel, *The Candymakers and the Great Chocolate Chase*. Lisa Graff's *A Tangle of Knots* is set in a world where everyone has a special Talent. Cady, an orphan who is

searching for a family is able to bake the perfect cake for everyone she meets. There are lots of plot twists, eccentric characters with intertwining stories, and one Talent thief on the loose.

Please visit or call the Wyckoff Rizzo Children's Library at 201-891-4866, x3 for more suggestions. Ask us about Novelist, a database that children can use to find their next great read.

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