

A Taste of Trafford – Book Choice

In conjunction with National Year of Reading

The titles marked with an asterisk* are not currently in stock in Trafford Libraries.

Starters

Devil's Larder

Jim Crace

A sumptuous, scintillating stew of sixty four short fictions about appetite, food, and the objects of our desire. All great meals, it has been said, lead to discussions of either sex or death, and *The Devil's Larder*, in typical Cracean fashion, leads to both. Here are sixty four short fictions of at times Joycean beauty — about schoolgirls hunting for razor clams in the strand; or searching for soup-stones to take out the fishiness of fish but to preserve the flavour of the sea; or about a mother and daughter tasting food in one another's mouth to see if people really do taste things differently — and at other times, of Mephistophelean mischief: about the woman who seasoned her food with the remains of her cremated cat, and later, her husband, only to hear a voice singing from her stomach (you can't swallow grief, she was advised); or the restaurant known as "The Air & Light," the place to be in this small coastal town that serves as the backdrop for Crace's gastronomic flights of fancy, but where no food or beverage is actually served, though a 12 percent surcharge is imposed just for just sitting there and being seen.

"Disquieting yet somehow affirming, this is poetic manna for the imaginative soul, and if not from heaven, then from an even more tempting, voluptuous recess."

David Vincent, *The Guardian*

Bread and Chocolate

Philippa Gregory

A collection of short stories from one of our most popular novelists -- the perfect gift. A rich and wonderful selection of short stories. A TV chef who specialises in outrageous cakes tempts a monk who bakes bread for his brothers; a surprise visitor invites mayhem into the perfect minimalist flat in the season of good will; a woman explains her unique view of straying husbands; straying husbands encounter a variety of effective responses. Just some of the delicacies on offer in this sumptuous box of delights...

Main Course

Monsieur Pamplemousse

Michael Bond

In the first of the series blending comedy with mystery and **featuring retired Sûreté member Monsieur Pamplemousse and his dog Pommes Frites** has a tricky task in sampling the appalling cuisine of the Hotel du Paradis. Tricky due to the fact that it's run by his Director's formidable aunt, and intriguing given the tales of the effect of the hotel's food on it's guests. There are currently 19 Monsieur Pamplemousse novels.

The Bobby Gold novels

Anthony Bourdain

Bobby Gold is a lovable criminal. After nearly ten years in prison, he's no sooner out than he's back to work breaking bones for tough guys. His turf: the club scene and restaurant business. It's not that he enjoys the job — Bobby has real heart — but he's good at it, and a guy has to make a living. Things change when he meets Nikki, the cook at a club most definitely not in his territory. Smitten, he can't stay away. Bobby Gold has known trouble before, but with Nikki the sauté bitch in his life, things take a turn for life or death. A fast, furious, pitch-perfect story of food, sex, crime, and mayhem.

Liquor

Poppy Z Brite

Liquor was the first (Soul Kitchen, Prime) of Poppy Brites novels set in the restaurant world and featuring New Orleans natives Rickey and G-man. Lifetime friends and down-and-out line cooks who are desperate to make a quick buck when Rickey concocts the idea of opening a restaurant in their alcohol-loving hometown where every dish packs a spirited punch, they know they're on their way to the bank. With some wheeling and dealing, a slew of great recipes, and a few lucky breaks, Rickey and G-man are soon on their way to opening Liquor, their very own restaurant. But first they need to pacify a local crank who doesn't want to see his neighbourhood disturbed, sidestep Rickey's deranged ex-boss, rein in their big-mouth silent partner before he runs amok, and stay afloat in a stew of corruption in a town well known for its bottom feeders.

"Once both cult-worshipped and mainstream-reviled for her edgy investigations into supernatural and human horror, Brite, now more concerned with the more-or-less ordinary side of life and her home turf of New Orleans, emerges as a writer of honesty and wit." Publishers Weekly

The Food Detective

Judith Cutler

When Josie Welford settles in an idyllic West Country village she honestly believes she can bury her past. She becomes the owner of the local pub, and becomes a thriving and welcome member of the community. That is until Inspector Nick Thomas, the man who put her husband in jail appears on the scene. But Nick has a new agenda and is no longer after Josie. In his new position as inspector for the Food Standards Agency, he convinces Josie to change her local suppliers, a far from popular move in the close-knit community. Almost immediately she finds herself ostracized. When the village vet disappears without a trace, Josie begins to wonder what the village and its erstwhile friendly occupants are the hiding? Reluctantly, she finds herself having to turn to Nick in order to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Fasting, Feasting

Anita Desai

Fasting and Feasting tells the moving story of Uma, the plain older daughter of an Indian family, tied to the household of her childhood and tending to her parents' every extravagant demand, and of her younger brother, Arun, across the world in Massachusetts, bewildered by his new life in college and the suburbs, where he lives with the Patton family

"rich in the sensuous atmosphere, elegiac pathos, and bleak comedy at which the author excels" (The Spectator).

From the overpowering warmth of Indian culture to the cool center of the American family, it captures the physical -- and emotional -- fasting and feasting that define two distinct cultures. (Times Literary Supplement)

Mistress of Spices

Chitra Banerjee Divakarani

The *Mistress of Spices* is unique in that it is written with a blend of prose and poetry. The book has a very mystical quality to it, it follows Tilo, a magical figure who runs a grocery store and uses spices to help the customers overcome difficulties. Tilo provides spices, not only for cooking, but also for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants in her shop experience. In the process, she develops dilemmas of her own when she falls in love with a non-Indian. This creates great conflicts, as she has to choose whether to serve her people or to follow the path leading to her own happiness. Tilo has to decide which parts of her heritage she will keep and which parts she will chose to abandon.

Like Water for Chocolate

Laura Esquivel

The number one bestseller in Mexico and America for almost two years, and subsequently a bestseller around the world, "Like Water For Chocolate" is a romantic, poignant tale, touched with moments of magic, graphic earthiness, bittersweet wit - and recipes. A sumptuous feast of a novel, it relates the bizarre history of the all-female De La Garza family. Tita, the youngest daughter of the

house, has been forbidden to marry, condemned by Mexican tradition to look after her mother until she dies. But Tita falls in love with Pedro, and he is seduced by the magical food she cooks. In desperation, Pedro marries her sister Rosaura so that he can stay close to her. For the next twenty-two years, Tita and Pedro are forced to circle each other in unconsummated passion. Only a freakish chain of tragedies, bad luck and fate finally reunite them against all the odds.

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café

Fannie Flagg

Folksy and fresh, endearing and affecting, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* is the now-classic novel of two women in the 1980s; of gray-headed Mrs. Threadgoode telling her life story to Evelyn, who is in the sad slump of middle age. The tale she tells is also of two women--of the irrepressibly dare devilish tomboy Idgie and her friend Ruth - who back in the thirties ran a little place in Whistle Stop, Alabama, a Southern kind of Cafe Wobegon offering good barbecue and good coffee and all kinds of love and laughter, even an occasional murder. And as the past unfolds, the present--for Evelyn and for us--will never be quite the same again...

Fannie Flagg has preserved a whole community of them in a richly comic, poignant narrative that records the exuberance of their lives, the sadness of their departure.

Playing with Pizza

Jonh Grisham

Grisham's novel about a disgraced NFL quarterback who heads off to Italy to play for the Parma Panthers is filled with delights and surprises, including opera, mouth-watering food, fine wine, romance, football Americano, and extremely small cars. "DELIGHTFULLY COMIC...a deeply satisfying story." —*The Boston Globe*

Bread Alone

Judi Hendriks

The life of 31-year-old trophy wife Wynter Morrison suddenly changes course when her husband announces one evening that their marriage is over. Emotionally devastated and desperate for a change of scenery, Wyn moves to Seattle where she spends aimless hours at a local bakery, sipping coffee and inhaling the sweet aromas of freshly-made bread. These visits bring back memories of her long-ago apprenticeship at a French *boulangerie*, and when offered a position at the bakery, Wyn quickly accepts -- hoping that the rituals of baking will help her move on. Working long hours among the bakery's cluster of eclectic women -- Linda, the irascible bread baker; earth mother Ellen and her partner Diane; and Tyler, the blue-haired barista - Wyn awakens to the truths that she missed while living the good life in Hancock Park. Soon Wyn discovers that making bread possesses an unexpected and wondrous healing power, helping her to rediscover that nothing stays the same... bread rises, pain fades, the heart heals, and the future beckons.

Recipes for a Perfect Marriage

Kate Kerrigan

In 1930's Ireland, beautiful cook Bernadine was married off to the local schoolteacher after her family were unable to raise a dowry for her to marry her true love, Michael. Seventy years on, her granddaughter Tressa, a New York food writer, returns from honeymoon worried that she has married her impossibly handsome new husband Dan out of late-thirties panic instead of love. During the first year of her marriage, Tressa distracts herself from her stay-or-go dilemma by working her way through grandmother's recipe book, searching for solace and answers in the preparation of these wholesome dishes.

Kate Kerrigan's delightful and critically acclaimed novel challenges the modern ideal of romantic love as a given and ponders whether true love can really be learned.

Debt to Pleasure

John Lanchester

If nothing else, read this one for its black humour. It is wickedly, deliciously deviant and hilarious. It was described as a skilful and wickedly funny account of a man's life, revealed through his thoughts on cuisine as he undertakes a mysterious

journey around France. The revelations become more and more shocking as the truth about the narrator becomes apparent. He is a monster, and yet an appealing and erudite villain.

Turning Tables*

Heather & Rose McDowell

Pilfered cocktails. Sex in areas normally reserved for vegetables. Gossip and backstabbing among the staff and management. It's just another shift at Roulette, where every guest is a crisis waiting to happen and the rules change like le poisson du jour.

"Turning Tables ought to be required reading for restaurant reviewers and lousy tippers. It's the work of identical twins Heather and Rose MacDowell. Together, the MacDowells have more than 10 years of experience waiting tables at some of the best (and worst) restaurants in Manhattan, San Francisco, and Nantucket. They've put in the time, they've suffered, they've taken notes, and Turning Tables is the entertaining result." - Diane White, The Boston Globe

Serving Crazy with Curry

Amulya Malladi

Between the pressures to marry and become a traditional Indian wife and the humiliation of losing her job in Silicon Valley, Devi is on the edge—where the only way out seems to jump. . . .

Yet Devi's plans to "end it all" fall short when she is saved by the last person she wants to see: her mother. Forced to move in with her parents until she recovers, Devi refuses to speak. Instead, she cooks . . . nonstop. And not the usual fare, but off the wall twists on Indian classics that her mother considers a culinary sin. Now family meals are no longer obligations. Devi's know-it-all executive sister and her professor husband make it to dinner every night; her father can't get enough; even her mother has to admit the cooking is irresistible. *Suddenly their lives become as surprising as the impromptu creations Devi whips up in the kitchen each night. Then a stranger appears out of the blue. Devi, it appears, had a secret—one that touches many a nerve in her tightly wound family. Though exposing some shattering truths, the secret will also gather them back together in ways they never dreamed possible. As satisfying as Devi's homemade blueberry curry—and interspersed with delicious recipes—this story mixes food, humour, warmth, and leap-off-the-page characters into a rich stew of a novel that reveals a woman's struggle for acceptance in her family and herself.*

The Chocolate Lovers' Club (sequel *The Chocolate Lovers' Diet*)

Carole Matthews

The Chocolate Lovers' Club brings together four very different women with one thing in common: they can't resist chocolate. This is an irresistible novel for anyone who wishes they were a member! Lucy Lombard can't resist it - rich, creamy, sweet, delicious chocolate. For her there's nothing it won't cure - from heartache to a headache - and she's not alone. Sharing her passion are three other addicts: Autumn, Nadia and Chantal. Together they form The Chocolate Lovers' Club. They meet in their sanctuary, Chocolate Heaven, as often as they can, and with a cheating boyfriend who promises he'll change, a flirtatious boss, a gambling husband and a loveless marriage, there's always plenty to discuss!

The Last Chinese Chef*

Nicola Mones

You may know Chinese food; you may even love it. But The Last Chinese Chef will take you into a world of Chinese food you never even knew existed. Here is the hidden universe of one of the world's great cuisines. Its philosophy, its concepts, and its artistic ambitions are all illuminated in a story that's entertaining, emotionally satisfying, and erudite.

When widowed American food writer Maggie McElroy is hit by a paternity claim against her husband's estate, she has to go to China immediately. She asks her

magazine for time off. They counter with an assignment: to profile rising culinary star Sam Liang.

In China Maggie teases apart the knots of her husband's past, finding out more than she expected about him and about herself. With Sam as her guide, she also journeys deep into a food culture rooted in its own principles and traditions. She is transformed - by the cuisine, by Sam's family, a querulous but loving pack of passionate cooks and diners, and most of all by Sam himself. She begins to feel her soul coming back.

Death by Chocolate

Toby Moore

We have seen the future, and it's a scary place. In DEATH BY CHOCOLATE, being fat in most States of America is now a crime, and Health Enforcement in New York enforce weight licences and track down humonsters for forced re-education. Brown (chocolate's street name) is only available from smugglers and illicit dealers. Illicit eateasy's are hidden all over town, serving burgers, fries and other illegal substances. The boring, day to day existence of Health Enforcement Officers Devlin and Strong is disrupted in a big way when Cupid Frish, pulled over just days before for a random weight check, is found, dead, coated in a brown bikini and dumped in an alley.

La Cucina

Lily Prior

For Rosa Fiore, the kitchen in her family's farmhouse in the Alcantara valley on the island of Sicily has been a haven since childhood. It was in the *cucina* that she found solace, cooked and captured bittersweet memories of her overpowering mother, hapless father, six older brothers, and younger Siamese twin siblings. When her first lover, Bartolomeo, was murdered, Rosa retreated into her *cucina*, and later to the city of Palermo. She remained there for twenty-five years, working as a librarian at the Biblioteca Nazionale by day and cooking sumptuous meals alone in her small apartment at night. But her solitude ended when a mysterious Englishman, known only as L'Inglese, arrived at the Biblioteca claiming to be a scholar researching the history of Sicilian cuisine.

L'Inglese beseeches Rosa to instruct him in the ways of Sicilian cooking, and they embark on a journey of exquisite sensual and sexual awakening in the heat of a glorious summer. Their passion for the culinary arts is rivaled only by their hunger for each other, and L'Inglese brings out the essence of Rosa's beauty in a way she never imagined. "We had both learned our lessons." Rosa says, "L'Inglese had become skilled in the arts of the Sicilian kitchen, and I, the librarian, had learned what it is to love and be loved by a man. What a banquet of the senses it had been."

When L'Inglese suddenly disappears, Rosa returns to Castiglione to mend her broken heart in the cocoon of her beloved cucina. There she makes new discoveries about her loved ones and herself.

The Apologist

Jay Rayner

Marc Basset is a restaurant critic. When a chef is driven to suicide by a critical restaurant review, Marc embarks on an odyssey of apologies to all the people he has wronged. From there its only a hop skip and a jump to Marc being appointed Chief Apologist at the UN. Not that Marc skips or jumps very much, given that he is a rather portly fellow who loves his food. Marc proceeds to apologise his way through a whole smorgasbord of the world's wrongs and learns that sorry doesn't always make it better. (Stopping often to eat along the way.) Often cynical, sometimes insightful, this book is a reminder never to get mixed up in bureaucratic fads and always have a good PR consultant on your pay-roll. The food descriptions are to die for, especially the chocolates and of course the author has very thoughtfully added a list of suppliers. All in all, a very entertaining read- if you like your fiction flavoured with a dash of sadism- believe me it gets really ugly at the end there, proving once again that sorry really is the hardest word.

Rayner has taken an impossible synopsis and somehow turned it into something funny, clever and ever so slightly chilling.

Charlie Lee-Potter – The Observer

A Market for Murder

Rebecca Tope

Karen Slocombe has taken a stall at the local farmers' market, selling the vegetables she grows on land adjacent to Drew's natural burial ground. During a morning market, one of the stall holders is shot, and the killer seems to simply vanish, without trace. Set against the backdrop of local food politics, the power of supermarkets and the demands of organic production, this story sees Den Cooper in limbo and Karen taking a more central role.

Desert

The Food of Love

Anthony Capella

A handsome waiter, a chef too shy to follow his heart and a beautiful American student: A four-course comedy of errors in the trattorias of Rome. Laura, a twentysomething American, is on her first trip to Italy. She's completely enamoured of the art, beauty, and, of course, food that Rome has to offer. Soon she's enamored of the handsome and charming Tommaso, who tells her he's a chef at the famed Templi restaurant and begins to woo her with his gastronomic creations. But Tommaso hasn't been entirely truthful — he's really just a waiter. The master chef behind the tantalizing meals is Tommaso's talented but shy friend Bruno, who loves Laura from afar. Thus begins a classic comedy of errors full of the culinary magic and the sensual atmosphere of Italy. The result is a romantic comedy in the tradition of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Roxanne* that tempts readers to devour it in one sitting.

Thyme Out

Katie Fforde

For years, things have run quite smoothly for Perdita and her organic gardening business. So what if her hair needs a complete overhaul, her sweater has more holes than Swiss cheese, and there's no hope of a boyfriend on the horizon. The last thing Perdita wants is a meddlesome man in her life-but she's about to get one, in the form of her completely infuriating ex-husband, Lucas.

Lucas is disagreeable, curt, arrogant, and smolderingly gorgeous. He's also the new chef at Grantly House, Perdita's number one customer. Worse, Mr. Grantly has the insane idea of starting a television cooking show that will put Lucas and Perdita together as *The Gourmet* and *the Gardener*.

Now, things are heating up in the kitchen-and elsewhere. With the bright lights blazing and old feelings stirring up the pot, it could be a recipe for disaster...or absolute delight...