

Chef's Corner



As I write this article it is early July and I am wondering if the sun and summer weather will ever come. After 3 solid weeks of gray damp cool weather, all I really want to write about is preserves, or hearty stew like one would do at the end of summer going into the fall. However I shall keep the faith and pray to the sun gods for fairer weather very soon. So in keeping with a summer theme, let us bake up a sweet treat from the orchards. This peach melba crisp is divine, and you can baked it outside on your covered gas grill, so no need to heat up the house with the oven on for an hour.

Chef Darren is Chef/Co-owner of Chives Canadian Bistro, 1537 Barrington St., Halifax, N.S. Voted "Establishment of the Year 2008" by the Nova Scotia Association of Chefs and Cooks; awarded two out of three stars "Where to Eat in Canada 2009"; new member of "La Chaine des Rotisseurs International." Reservations (902) 420-9626.

Peach Melba Crisp

The topping:

1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup flour
1/2 cup butter
1/4 cup rolled oats
1/4 cup ground pecans or almonds

The filling:

3 cups peaches (peeled, pitted and sliced into wedges)
1 cup whole fresh raspberries
1/3 cup white sugar
1 Tbsp corn starch
2 tsp peach schnapps -pinch salt

Method

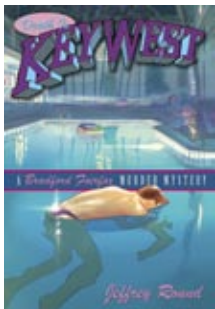
Method 1. Combine all of the ingredients for the topping and pulse in a food processor just until the ingredients are combined to make crumble topping. 2. Toss the peaches and raspberries in the white sugar, corn starch, salt and schnapps, and fill the bottom of a 8"x8" ceramic or glass baking dish. 3. Lay the topping evenly over the entire surface of the fruit and place the dish on the top rack of your 350F pre-heated gas grill. Bake with the cover down for 35-45 minutes until the topping is dark golden brown and the fruit juices are bubbling around the edges. Remove from the grill and let cool in the baking dish for 20-30 min before serving.

Serving suggestions

At the restaurant I would serve this crisp with a home made nutmeg frozen yogurt, but at home I like sweetened whipped cream or a high quality vanilla ice cream. Enjoy!

Reviews

Death in Key West by Jeffrey Round Cormorant Books Inc. www.cormorantbooks.com www.jeffreyround.com review by Ralph Higgins



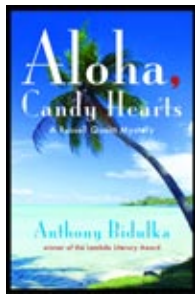
Nothing ruins a vacation like murder. When Bradford Fairfax travels to a clothing optional resort in Key West all he has on his mind is relaxing by the pool with his hunky boyfriend, Zach, and maybe working on his tan during his New Year's break. The handsome twosome meet James Quentin Ashley Vanderbilt III, a fey creature with a talent for drag and singing soprano opera arias and who confides one night, after an affecting rendition of the suicide song from Madama Butterfly, that his father wants him dead. Brad and Zach dismiss the story as attention seeking histrionics, until James ends up dead.

Brad, who is a special agent for an international company – think a sexy James Bond with gay sensibilities – finds he must mix his personal and professional lives as he searches for the killer. Aided by Zach, he sifts through the possible suspects: the pool boy cum masseur whose talents seem to lie in his Speedo rather than his hands, a gay sheriff, a New Zealand business man who has an un-gay vibe, the owner of the resort who behaves like a shrill Shelley Winters, a lesbian who runs a wildlife preserve, a Russian bodyguard and, of course, the dead man's father and brother who are not averse to wielding their considerable financial and political power to obstruct the investigation.

Death in Key West is a suspenseful, campy, rollicking ride with the perfect blend of serious and silly. The mystery is well-crafted, the writing assured and the comedy relief is full of originality and wit.

Jeffrey Round was educated at Dalhousie University and now resides in Toronto where he is a writer, director and playwright and the author of the critically acclaimed novel Cafe of Bones. Death in Key West is the second in the Bradford Fairfax mystery series which began with P-Town Murders.

Aloha, Candy Hearts by Anthony Bidulka Insomniac Press www.insomniacpress.com www.anthonymbidulka.com review by Ralph Higgins



While Russell Quant is flying home from Hawaii and trying to absorb the shock that he has received

a marriage proposal, he is distracted from these personal concerns by his seat mate, an elderly, odd-looking man that he privately calls Mr. Magoo. Once on the ground two surprising events happen: one, Mr. Magoo is murdered and two, Russell discovers that Mr. Magoo has slipped a handwritten map and list of clues, as if for a treasure hunt, into Russell's pocket. It very quickly becomes clear that someone else wants this list and map and is willing to kill to get them. Quant realizes that the only way to

thwart the killer is to solve the clues and find the "treasure" even when this leads him deep into Saskatchewan's sometimes unsavoury past and may put his friends and family at risk.

Aloha, Candy Hearts is the sixth in the Russell Quant series of mysteries, and like all its predecessors, it does not disappoint. The now familiar Quant insouciant wit and humour is here in strength as is the well-constructed plot. From the first novel, Amuse Bouche, Bidulka demonstrated his skill in creating realistic scenarios and writing the kind of dialogue that amuses the reader as well as moving the action along. But, what lifts Bidulka's books a level above other well-crafted mysteries is the human element he has created in the character of Russell Quant. With each book, Quant has grown

and developed and, while each novel may be read as a stand alone mystery, for those of us who became devoted fans early on we have watched Russell move from a hard-headed PI who attempted to hide his heart to a much more vulnerable human being. We have become Russell's friends – or, at least, Bidulka has created that lovely illusion. We rejoice with him on his successes, we grieve with him when he is troubled and when, as in Aloha, Candy Hearts, he is uncertain about choosing his future we share in his very human dilemma of balancing his own happiness against not wanting to hurt those he loves.

Aloha, Candy Hearts delivers on many levels and is the best addition yet to what is already a very strong series. It is a novel full of intelligence, wit and heart. Bidulka continues to top himself.

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