



Death by Rhubarb

Lou Jane Temple

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At Cafe Heaven, the souffles don't fall, but the bodies do.

Heaven Lee is sassy, brassy, and street-smart. She's also one of Kansas City's premier caterers. With a string of failed careers and stalled marriages behind her, Heaven's finally found her true love-Cafe Heaven, a trendy restaurant on midtown 39th.

Open-mike night at Cafe Heaven gets pretty hairy, but Heaven is shocked when lovely lawyer Tasha Arnold drops dead from poisoning med-dinner. With the law and word-of-mouth threatening to close her down, Heaven does what any chef worth her salt would-she turns sleuth.

But asking questions on a mean street like 39th gets Heaven into hot water. Somewhere out there is a killer who would turn Kansas City's favorite caterer into Kansas City's freshest corpse!

Featuring original recipes for such tempting treats as risotto with mushrooms and asparagus, gingerbread upside-down cake and pumpkin piccadillo.

Death by Rhubarb Details

Date : Published August 15th 1996 by St. Martin's Paperbacks

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Author : Lou Jane Temple

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From Reader Review Death by Rhubarb for online ebook

Jessie Wilkens says

It was cute, but it didn't interest me to continue the series.

Ladiibbug says

#1 in the Heaven Lee, cozy restaurant mystery series

An OK book, but I quit reading at page 30. If I'm not really into a book these days, that's it - I move on to the next one.

Lou Jane Temple's other historical mystery series ("Spice" series) is fantastic -- I've read both of them and am hoping she's writing more!

Drew says

I don't usually read culinary mysteries, but this one takes place in nearby Kansas City, and I love reading fiction books that use a location that I live in or near. However, I was enchanted by Heaven Lee, the main character.

Pam Bales says

Heaven Lee Culinary mystery series, number 1, this is a great cozy mystery with a food theme set in one of the world's best barbecue locations - Kansas City. If you are a fan of cozies and enjoy a good read about food, this is a series for you.

Linda Famous says

This was an easy-reading mystery. The writing was well done but I didn't like the way recipes were randomly inserted into the chapters. I also thought there were a few too many characters - all the mentions of all the ex-husbands wasn't so bad (although it took quite awhile to get to the story about the order of them, so that was a little confusing). But all the people who worked in the restaurant were difficult to remember - in a movie they'd be reduced to two characters.

And thinking about it now, the title is rather funny because nobody actually died from rhubarb (they died other ways) - that's not a spoiler, and if you read it you'll see why.

BJ Rose says

Heaven Lee may be sassy, brassy, and street-smart, but she just didn't do it for me as a main character. There were plenty of suspects to choose from for the crime, but Heaven's obsession with suspecting all of her exes was a bit much - in fact, she had a few too many exes! But what brought the book down from a weak 3* to my 2* rating was the insertion of the recipes into the story itself. Do I skip the recipes so the story flows, or do I read the recipes in case I want to try any of them?! After a while, I ended up skipping them because I knew I wouldn't search back through the story for a recipe I might try, which was a shame because I might have missed something good, but I got tired of losing the thread of the story.

Lynn Demsky says

Characters weren't introduced well enough (plus too many of them) that you had any idea of who they were. The murder weapon had nothing to do with anything on going on in the story – the recipes were garbage and just thrown in where ever any one was making them. Just plain ugh!!!

Pat says

This was a cute story, with interesting characters. Particularly, the main character- "Heaven Lee".... Her real name is Katherine O'Malley Martin McGuinne Wolff Steinberg Kelley.
(see page 5 of the paperback version for verification on this one)

Anyway, it is a fast little book and the author packed so much into a mere 213 pages, it almost makes you head spin! But- I would call it cute. Fun. And fast paced!

Dez Nemec says

Holy crap, this was bad. So, so bad. I generally give a book at least 100 pages until I quit. I couldn't even get to the crime in this one. I hated everything about it. Normally, I wouldn't give it a rating, but that 3.62 stars is misleading so I'm leaving 1. Seriously, go somewhere else for a story. Anywhere else.

DNF

Homewood Public Library says

Chris and Joe were dressed as Barbara Bush and Hillary Clinton in a skit they were presenting. The 39th Street League of Decency Fudge Patrol were present handing out fudge and two of Heaven Lee's ex-husbands wanted to talk with her. One of them wanted to introduce his new associate named Tasha. As TV station camera crews were on hand to film the fudge patrol protest to vulgarity, Tasha collapsed on the front sidewalk. Of course, food poisoning publicity is not good for a restaurant. Surprisingly, business was not hurt-yet. But police were threatening to shut down Cafe Heaven if the killer was not caught soon. So Heaven

and her staff and other business people on 39th street set out to learn who was responsible for Tasha's death and smearing Heaven Lee's good name. Someone in the know had supplied rhubarb leaves in the salad greens-someone who wished more people to die.

Darren says

For someone in Kansas City, this is especially fun. Not sure why it took me 21 years to get around to this!

Clare O'Beara says

I really liked this story of a mid-life lady running a restaurant. A sudden poisoning occurs - was this a personal attack, a tragic error, or someone getting at the business that served the dish?

The title reminds us that while rhubarb stems are great cooked, the leaves are full of oxalic acid and should never be eaten, even if they do turn up temptingly in your salad.

There are recipes and good characters, a well-written location and sleuthing galore. Enjoy.

Lynn says

originally read: _____ - ___, 1999

re-read: June 4-6, 2014

Re-read notes.

I remember enjoying this book very much when I first read it. It was an interesting method of murder and very good whodunit and why. It was no less enjoyable on the re-read. I had forgotten who did it and exactly how, so it was very much like reading it for the first time. Good books are like that, each re-read brings new discovery. This re-read was a bit more enjoyable for me because in between reading and re-reading I had been to Kansas City and knew the places, products, and things mentioned in the book. It's always nice to be personally familiar with the settings of the book.

Overall, definitely worth the read (or re-read).

Piepie says

I love Kansas City, and I liked reading this book where several of the places mentioned I've either heard about or visited. And the food... anything about food grabs me and I loved the descriptions of what Heaven served in her restaurant.

As at least one other reviewer has said, there was a lot of characters... I think really too much for a small little book, just over 200 pages. I did like how Heaven and her staff all tried to be amateur sleuths and put their heads together to figure out who was the poisoner.

Inserting recipes right in the middle of text was really distracting, and I eventually skipped over them. Why couldn't she do what Joanne Fluke does and put the recipes at the end of chapters?

Heaven is quite a character. Married five times, and in love with a Vietnamese man some 20-odd years her junior. This book was not the best I've ever read, but definitely not the worst. I want to continue reading this series.

Tabby Kat says

Heaven Lee one of Kansas City's premier caterers. With a string of failed careers behind her, Heaven's finally found her true love--Cafe Heaven. Open-mike night at Cafe Heaven gets pretty hairy but Heaven is shocked when lawyer Tasha Arnold drops dead from poisoning. With the law and word-of-mouth threatening to close her down, Heaven turns sleuth to find a killer who could turn her into Kansas City's freshest corpse
