



Death Al Dente

Leslie Budewitz

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Death Al Dente Leslie Budewitz **FIRST IN A NEW SERIES!**

The town of Jewel Bay, Montana—known as a Food Lovers' Village—is obsessed with homegrown and homemade Montana fare. So when Erin Murphy takes over her family's century-old general store, she turns it into a boutique market filled with local delicacies. But Erin's freshly booming business might go rotten when a former employee turns up dead...

Murphy's Mercantile, known as the Merc, has been a staple in Jewel Bay for over a hundred years. To celebrate their recent makeover as a gourmet food market, Erin has organized a town festival, Festa di Pasta, featuring the culinary goods of Jewel Bay's finest—including her mother Fresca's delicious Italian specialties.

But Erin's sweet success is soured when the shop's former manager, Claudette, is found dead behind the Merc on the Festa's opening night. With rival chef James Angelo stirring up rumors that Fresca's sauce recipes were stolen from Claudette, Erin's mother is under close scrutiny. Now Erin will have to hunt down some new suspects, or both her family and her store might wind up in hot water...

INCLUDES FRESH, DELICIOUS RECIPES!

Death Al Dente Details

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Author : Leslie Budewitz

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From Reader Review Death Al Dente for online ebook

Sue Ross says

Death al Dente is the first book in what I hope to be a very long series. It takes place in a state that I don't remember any other cozy mystery having taken place....Montana. It also doesn't offer a romance between a police officer and the main character. That's what makes it good to me. Also, the fact that there are so many suspects to two different crimes. Living in a small town can cause many rumors and the rumors going around are about Erin's mother and her. What happens next may bring Erin's best high school friend and her back together or it could totally tear that fragile friendship apart. If you are looking for a new first book in a series, may I suggest this one? Can't wait for the next book in the series to come out. Well done Leslie Budewitz. :)

Edith Maxwell says

What a great read from a debut mysterista. A foodie cozy set in a Montana village, it introduces us to a quirky set of cast characters, including protagonist Erin, her mother Fresca, bar owner Ned, and others. The plot keeps you moving along, the food descriptions make you hungry, and the personalities enchant. It's not one of the too-cute cozies, thank goodness. I'm already looking forward to the next installment!

Jonathan says

Really 3.5 stars, but I rounded it up to 4.

An okay start to a series, *Death Al Dente* was an Agatha Winner for Best First Book in 2013 and I honestly can say that I expected a bit more. This wasn't a bad book in any way, however it was simply average for a first book and it started off slow.

The MC, Erin, started off sounding extremely stuck-up. She seemed to criticize many things and thought that her store's products were the only way to go. However, in the last 2/3 of this book she took 20 steps forward and I found that I really liked her. The other characters were great, I didn't really have a problem with them; however they lacked the "wow factor" for me.

The mystery was also okay. I didn't find the killer that surprising, but the mystery was plotted well. The book also started slow, but once I reach that halfway mark it accelerated quickly, and I was eating it up. Jewel Bay sounds like a wonderful place to live; Ms. Budewitz did a stellar job of describing the setting and making me want to move there!

Overall the first half of the book was a solid 3 stars, but the last half was 4 stars which leads me to my rating of 3.5 stars. Not my favorite book, but I've heard wonderful things about this author's work, so maybe it was my mood that made this a simply okay book. Because of the things I've heard, I definitely will read the next one!

LORI CASWELL says

Erin Murphy has come home to Jewel Bay to manage the family general store and revitalize it by providing what the community wants, products made in Montana. She even convinces the town to add a festival to start the summer season, Festa di Pasta. She chairs the committee and organizes the first evening's party featuring the culinary goods of Jewel Bay's finest—including her mother Fresca's delicious Italian specialties.

The party takes an awful turn when a woman is found dead behind the store just outside a gate where the party is being held. The woman, Claudette, is a former employee of Fresca's, who left town recently with a married man. Rumors start to fly. Fingers are pointed. People start to take sides. Erin's friend Kim is the officer in charge of the investigation. Erin can't believe Kim actually thinks Fresca is the prime suspect.

Erin decides to do a little investigating of her own. She better be careful or she could be the killer's next target...

Dollycas's Thoughts

Glacier Mercantile (The Merc) sounds like a perfect small town store going through some growing pains as Fresca still wants to do things her way and Erin is trying to modernize both the store itself and the bookkeeping. Change is always hard. A murder certainly adds some unneeded pressure to the situation.

I have to say Erin is a wonderful protagonist. She has layers that are just starting to be revealed. She couldn't wait to leave Jewel Bay behind a few years ago but working side by side with her mom is just the place she needs to be now. She is excited about the opportunity to use what she learned as a buyer for a huge grocery chain to make The Merc and the other shops in Jewel Bay a place where locals and tourists will want to shop.

The author has surrounded her with an eclectic group of supporting characters. Fresca's recipes will make your mouth drool!! Erin's friend Kim is in a bind trying to stay impartial. I think she is going to have that problem a lot because with cozy mysteries you know the next book is going to put Erin in the middle of another crime. Tracy works at The Merc and sure loves her Diet Pepsi and she keeps a can right on the counter next to the register. Diet Pepsi is not a home grown product so it drives Erin crazy. I can't wait to get to know her better. Several other Jewel Bay residents were introduced to us readers as well.

Budewitz has also written a great mystery. There were clever twists that keep me engaged. It is hard to to delve deep into a whodunit and lay the proper foundation for stories going forward but this author has pulled it off. I can't wait to shop again at The Merc!!

Gary Sundell says

Enjoyable start to the Food Lovers' Village Mystery series. Plus one point for not having a hunky cop boyfriend. Minus one half for a possible triangle. Looking forward to book 2.

Fred says

I normally enjoy food related cozies. But with Death al Dente there was too much talk of food that I just could not get into this one.

Tracy Weber says

It was nice to have read a mystery set in Montana. Not sure I've seen any of those before!

Nicole says

I "read" this via Audible. Nicely narrated by Rebecca Mitchell, Death al Dente is the first book in Leslie Budewitz' Food Lovers' Village series. Set in Jewel Bay, Montana, Erin Murphy has returned home to run her family's store, the Merc, when her mother's friend and former employee, Claudette, is found dead the first evening of the inaugural Festa di Pasta, and Erin must investigate to clear her mother's name. Clear, concise mystery, and very well-written, I really enjoyed it and am looking forward to the next book, which I'm downloading even as I type this! 5 stars!

Doug Hosie says

This one was a little hard to follow at times, but the author tied things up nicely at the end.

I was a little surprised that the main character didn't have an authority figure boyfriend, but rather the police officer was a high school friend.

Overall a decent read and I will likely continue with the series.

James Thane says

When Erin Murphy returns home from Seattle to Jewel Bay, Montana, to take over the family business, she can't begin to anticipate the obstacles that stand in the way of her potential success.

The business is the Glacier Mercantile, known locally as "The Merc," and it was established a hundred years earlier by Erin's great-grandfather. Recently the store has been run by Erin's mother, Fresca, but Mom has appealed to Erin to come home and take over. Erin is ready and anxious to do so, but the first problem she encounters is her mother who, in spite of asking Erin to take over the business, has some trouble letting go of the command and control function.

Jewel Bay, loosely modeled after Bigfork, Montana, is known as a food lovers' village and Erin wants to reinvent the Merc into an artisan market for local and regional foods. Mom, though, wants to keep stacking boxes of gooey, huckleberry-filled chocolates, loaded with chemicals, preservatives and God-know-what-else, right by the register as a featured draw. She has difficulty accepting the fact that this sort of thing doesn't exactly mesh with Erin's new marketing plan.

Erin is determined to make a success of the store and of her vision for it. As a means to that end, she has convinced the Chamber of Commerce and a number of other local businesses to sponsor a new festival--

Festa di Pasta--to kick off the summer season in Jewel Bay, which does a huge tourist business in the summer months.

The festival is poised to be a huge success until on the opening night, one of the Merc's former employees is found stabbed to death. Rumors abound that there was bad blood between the murdered employee and Erin's mother, and before the festival is even over, Fresca emerges as a prime suspect.

Worried that her mother has been targeted unjustly, Erin begins her own investigation of the events that occurred on the day of the murder. In the process, she turns up a jealous rival chef, a spurned wife, a really bad Elvis impersonator, and a host of other quirky characters who seem to populate small towns like Jewel Bay. Along the way, Erin must struggle to keep her business on an even keel and may even find herself a target of violence as she attempts to sniff out a killer and restore a sense of peace and calm to her family and to the village of Jewel Bay.

This is a book that will appeal to large numbers of people who enjoy an entertaining and well-written cozy mystery. In Jewel Bay, Budewitz has created a particularly well-drawn setting that would entice loads of visitors, and she has populated it with a cast of memorable characters, led by Erin Murphy who serves as a very appealing protagonist.

My only complaint about the book is that it probably caused me to gain about five pounds. It seems like every other page contains a reference to some mouth-watering gourmet treat, and reading it I was up and down every fifteen minutes, raiding the cupboards or the refrigerator. Tomorrow I may have to run all the way to Jewel Bay and back to burn off the calories.

Dawn Michelle says

Things I liked about this cozy:

**It is set in Montana. Montana seems like a neat place. Cold and snowy and such, but neat.

**It has a food theme. Yes, lots of cozies have a food theme, but this one is based in local foods, homemade foods and trying to get back to nature and eat locally sourced foods. ALL very cool things.

**The family is Italian. ;-)

**One of the characters is a herbalist. Also very cool.

**The MC doesn't come home because she is divorced, her spouse was cheating, the boyfriend left her etc etc etc. She came home because her parent genuinely needed her.

I had guessed one person, but not the why, and the second mystery was totally a **WHAT THE HECK moment for me.

Things I DID NOT LIKE about this cozy:

**The MC. Yep, that is a problem. I get that. She is annoying. And she says the stupidest things. Both to herself [she talks to her self WAY more than I do and that has got to be some kind of record] and in her slang vernacular. I was annoyed many time while reading just because of how she phrased things and such.

**The MC is a massive snoop. M A S S I V E. And has absolutely no qualms about invading someone's privacy at all. THAT was bothersome.

**The MC let dumb things really bug her until she totally blew up at people. Yes, I get that a lot of people IRL are like that, but really? If the girl squeezing her diet coke can is bugging you, JUST FREAKING TELL HER!!! Geesh.

**The people in the town are not really nice people. They are the "let me hug you whilst stabbing you in the

back" kind of people. Maybe Montana is *NOT* the place to go? LOL [I am not serious; I am sure there are many wonderful people in Montana].

Overall, it was an okay book. Not great, not horrible. Just okay. I am reading the second one because I own it AND it has an audiobook available, but unless the second one is better, I will not be reading any more of this series. Which is sad because I love the premise of the series, just not the execution of it.

Liz says

There was a good premise here and it started out ok, but a mess of plots and confusing prose left me scratching my head.

I think one of the biggest issues was that it often felt like paragraphs didn't belong together or just skipped from one subject to the next with no real reason. Similarly, there were regional sayings so specific I needed some sort of backstory to them. I mean "jell-o up"? I couldn't tell if it was just something I didn't know or an author invention.

The vacillating between calling her mother by "mom" and her first name was jarring and annoying.

I also didn't entirely understand why Erin didn't trust Kim. There was no blatant abuse of her power or incompetence that you often find with police in mysteries like this and so Erin's "investigation" felt odd and unnecessary, almost vindictive because of the rift between them.

Not enough good to outweigh the bad here, unfortunately.

FangirlNation says

In **Death al Dente**, the first of Leslie Budewitz's Food Lovers' Village Mystery series, Erin Murphy returns to her hometown of Jewel Bay, Montana, to run Murphy's Mercantile for her mother, Fresca Murphy, which has belonged to Erin's family for over a century. She focuses on trying to revive "The Merc" by promoting locally grown and prepared food. As things start to get off the ground, Erin organizes the Festa di Pasta to celebrate the particular cooking of local chefs and restaurants. But then, just as the festival is set to take place, along comes the couple who created the greatest scandal in Jewel Bay in a long time.

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Linda says

Very enjoyable first book in the series. I enjoyed the small Montana town setting and the characters were all very likeable. The mystery was good although I did easily pick up on the clue identifying the murderer but not on the motive. Looking forward to reading more in the series.

Vickie says

I am already a big fan of the Spice Shop Mystery series by Leslie Budewitz and had been looking forward to reading this series as well. I love having a Nook as B&N offers up introductions to series at a reasonable price and this one popped up not too long ago. I snapped it up. And pretty much immediately began reading it.

It takes place in a new-to-me cozy setting, Montana. Most of the cozies I read tend to lean towards the east coast. I think it's cool that this town is called Food Lovers' Village and it's not in the nominal setting of Connecticut or Maine or Vermont. It's in a town that could easily be a town full of bars and barbecue or steak joints. But it's a neat town that's not too kitschy. I would love to visit this place. Heck, I could live here and get to know the residents and become friends with Erin. I like her a lot and that's key to my cozy enjoyment and definitely key in me coming back for more in the series.

Definitely recommend.
