



# Dinner for One

*Meg Harding*

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## **Dinner for One** Meg Harding

Bastien isn't used to bad reviews. His French restaurant is the toast of the town, and when a well-known critic insults it, he's left off-kilter. Luckily for him he's found a distraction. He's just met an attractive writer at his niece's school bake sale. He's into food, into Bastien and the touch of kink they share, and there's a chemistry between them that might make the perfect recipe.

James isn't expecting to meet a good-looking French chef at a bake sale, but he's not going to let the chance slide. It comes as a surprise when the chef turns out to be the owner of a place he knows—and has reviewed—and it puts James in a sticky situation. So he might have to omit some pertinent information to make it work... at least for now.

## **Dinner for One Details**

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# From Reader Review Dinner for One for online ebook

## Lucy says

Bastien owns one of the best French restaurants in town. He has so many excellent reviews but the one he keeps focusing on is the bad one. The critic for the New York Times called the place pretentious because they speak French “This place has French pouring out of it’s cracks.” He further decided the waitstaff pretentious and the food expensive and bland. Ouch.

Bastien knows his food is good and his restaurant excellent. But he still focuses on that. Luckily, he is busy making religieuses pastries for his niece’s school bake sale. I love that he makes these because his family wants them – they are the pastries on the cover of the book and my, but we need to try these.

While helping at the bake sale he meets James and sparks fly. As the conversation progresses, James comes to realize he gave Bastien the bad review. He doesn’t mention it, but he knows. And he gets knocked down one step right away when he realizes Bastien’s family is French; hence they speak French. He gets another when he tries Bastien’s pastries and realizes, this man is a chef. He can cook. He vows not to come to the restaurant when Bastien invites him because where can this go?

And so we begin the bonding of Bastien and James, who share a love of food, cooking and kinky stuff. Of course, that secret is hanging over them like a lead weight. James and Bastien both have supportive, aggravating, amazing families and James often takes his brother, Laurence, with him for review dinners. Bastien’s place was one of those and Laurence liked it. James asks his brother for advice and I have to admit, I would have given 4 Hearts to this just because of the family interaction. Laurence’s initial response: , This is hilarious. I mean, probably not for you, but for me. Pure gold.” That is such a response I could envision my family giving when there’s a situation. Laurence, of course, blabs to the whole family and James takes their advice.

I really liked both James and Bastien. They have super hot chemistry in bed (and whew, hot!) but they also have things in common and like each other out of bed. I normally hate the whole lying issue but I could see where James was coming from. “If he waits, a bit longer, Bastien might like him enough to overlook it.” And then the longer you wait, the harder it gets. And on it goes. I did question at one point, did they never exchange last names? Because I feel especially when Bastien was telling James about getting a bad review, that the names might have come up.

I liked the way James and Bastien are regular guys. “Then he thinks it’s unlikely he’s going to be able to move anytime soon. If he had his phone, he’d call Laurence and ask him to come over and retrieve it for him.” Haven’t we put ourselves in that position? Bastien handles it more like I would. “I’m still hungry.... You’re eating your feelings.” Yep. Recommended for foodies and for the fluffy romantic lovers especially.

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## Gigi says

**Release day! I hope you enjoy!**

Let's get straight to the point, shall we? **I fucking LOVED this book.** It is steamy, romantic, refreshing perfection.

Quick overview: James is a renowned food critic for the New York Times and writes gay romance novels on the side. Bastien is a renowned French chef who owns a restaurant called L'amour Dans La Ville (Love in

the City) in New York. James writes under the pseudonym Harper Carlisle and wrote the first bad review of L'amour Dans La Ville since it opened a year ago. The review makes Bastien angry and cranky since he thinks the reviewer is way off track.

James and Harper meet at a bake sale at the elementary school where their nieces and nephews attend. The attraction is there and Bastien makes a small overture for James to visit him at his restaurant. After encouragement from his siblings, James decides to go back to L'amour Dans La Ville as James, not Harper, and get to know Bastien a little better. The two men find themselves in bed together and the sex is *ridiculously* hot.

**I want to make you come again, and then I want to fuck you while you're over sensitive and begging for it.**

And Bastien **DOES** beg for it *IN FRENCH*. Fuck...

**His back arches off the bed at the first touch of James's tongue over his hole. It's hot and wet, and he hasn't been touched like this in so long. James isn't hesitant or slow. He goes right for it. One of Bastien's hands goes to his headboard, bracing himself, and the other tightens in James's hair. "S'il te plaît, S'il te plaît," he gasps, legs clenching around James's torso.**

At this point, Bastien does not know James is Harper, which is the major plot point that causes the future angst (and romance, believe it or not).

#### **Points that need to be made:**

1. The sex here is kinky and delicious, but not so kinky as to throw off folks who don't like the BDSM genre. There are no whips or chains, just a bit of spanking and toys and a *touch* of orgasm denial. Jesus, it's hot as hell, let me tell you!
2. This book is a romance to beat all romances. These men were *adorable* in their courtship and genuinely liked and felt real affection for one another. They listened, confided and worked hard at winning the other over. And it worked, in spades.
3. James and Bastien's family and friends were the perfect kind of crazy in their love for James and Bastien. I honestly felt only love and affection from all the siblings/spouses/friends towards James and Bastien.
4. Now, when I say refreshing, I really mean it. I'm going to put a spoiler tag here, not because it gives away a plot point but because I want those who haven't read it yet to experience it themselves and (hopefully) come to the same delightful, refreshing realization.

(view spoiler)

*Read this book.* It is heartfelt, fluffy, sexy and utterly romantic. It will definitely be one of my top 10 books for 2016.

## **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!**

*This review is also posted at Gay Book Reviews*

*Galley copy of Dinner for One provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange of an honest review.*

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### **Renée says**

So promising. This was a 4.5 - 5 star read for the first 60% of this book. I was all smiles at being introduced to this gem.

The blurb says it all, so I won't rehash it, but I LOVED the relationship build with these two. The banter, the awkwardness, the sex! It was all so well written. Simple but amazing. When these two flirt, it's all shy smiles and cuteness galore, but when the clothes come off.....holy hell, they light the sheets on fire. I was fanning myself.

So of course I was expecting what happened at 60%. This isn't a spoiler since the blurb fully prepares you for it. But it was like the story came to this abrupt halt. And then it dragged. **And dragged. AND DRAGGED.**

All of the magic that I had been riding on for the first part of the book was kinda gone. It wasn't bad, mind you. It was still cutish. But it was boring and had lost its luster.

I got my HEA. I lost my smoking hot smexy times. I lost my banter. I lost my awesome relationship-build, until it picked back up again after the 90% mark.

So I have to deduct a star for that nonsense. Otherwise, I do highly recommend this story, and I will be on the lookout for other books by this author. I really enjoyed the writing. And man, can she write a sex scene. Cheers!

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~☆~Danni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

~2.5~

One dissenting opinion coming right up.

I can see how this book would appeal to many readers. James and Bastien are two very nice guys who like to cook. James is a well known food critic. Bastien owns a French restaurant. The two meet at an elementary bake sale of all places and begin a steamy affair.

**There's spark and romance; there's sex and more sex (and not just vanilla lovin'; we're talking plugs and paddles here, people).** These two barely exchange three words before the toys come out. Abrupt much?

But I found the story less than compelling. I consider myself a foodie. I LOVE watching cooking shows and cooking competitions, and I've read books where cooking takes stage center, but the pages upon pages of Bastien cooking for James or James cooking for Bastien or James and Bastien cooking together ... well, I started skimming because I just couldn't take another French dish described in minute detail.

**Even though these MCs are in their mid- to late-30s, they act younger. They giggle and blush, and really don't seem to do anything but cook and make out.**

James' family is so OTT cutesy, I had a hard time believing adult siblings would act like this. His younger twin brothers, especially, acted like tweens.

For all the talk of these guys being all cut and sexy, they eat a LOT of heavy food, and there's only one mention of Bastien going to the gym. And I don't care. Perfection isn't required for me to fall for a main character, but how realistic is that really? There's a reason so many chefs carry a few extra pounds.

Once Bastien finds out James has been lying to him (not a spoiler; this is the "sticky situation" mentioned in the blurb), there's a long period of separation where not much happens. The epilogue is sweet, of course it is, but the story rang hollow.

**Despite my complaints, I would have rated this book a solid three stars had it not been for the third-person, present-tense POV.** This is hands down my least favorite narrative style. It's jarring and frantic; it asks the reader to believe that whatever is happening is happening RIGHT NOW, when of course we know it isn't.

If you like super easy stories and aren't picky about the present-tense POV like I am, this one is worth checking out. It wasn't my thing, but it might well be yours.

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## Lelyana says

I loved the idea of a chef and a food critics as a main characters for the story, loved the cover as well. It was good in the beginning of the story where Bastien got so mad after James wrote a review, a bad review of his restaurant.

Their real first meeting was also interesting and I was hoping that I can get more to see what's going to happen with the two guys.

And I've got so many cooking lessons (not that I'm complained), but with so many cooking and dining and nothing's really happened with their 'instant relationship', I felt bored easily. And the food didn't appealed me anymore.

The sex parts was hot. That's why I keep reading this and finished the story.

There's no angst after Bastien found out who James really are. There's some silent moments and then James cooked for him instead of talking (that's probably how chefs saying they're sorry though), and then Bastien forgave him. The end.

If you're a cook or chef or you're into this kind of story, you'll probably going to love this one. Give it a try, and let's see, and I hope you'll enjoy the story.

And there's plenty of food and cooking tricks, what's not to love?

*\* Review Copy provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange for an honest review. Reviewed by Lilly from Lelyana's Book Blog. \**

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### **Heather the Queen of (Smut)Books says**

2.5

It took me forever to finish this book. The writing style (third person present tense) was awkward and disjointed. I couldn't even enjoy the sexy times. They were a bit confusing. And the food....it was too much. I felt like I was watching a romance on the Food Network. I liked the main characters though so it was okay but I won't be finishing the series.

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### **Mirjana **\*\*DTR - Down to Read\*\*** says**

**\*\*\*3.75 Stars\*\*\***

Bastien and James were just too damn adorable together!

Just the perfect blend of sweet and sexy!

Be warned to have food on hand while reading. All the food talk and recipes had me hungry!

However, I do have to say that I enjoyed the first 70-75% more than the last 1/4 of the book. I felt the aftermath of the big reveal of James's job as a food critic was a bit over-exaggerated. Maybe it's because I didn't think it was *that* big of a deal...I dunno.

Buuuuuuuuut, James's method of apologizing was so sweet. I loved the idea, I loved Bastien's reaction to it...ALL OF IT!

Unfortunately, instead of focusing more on the message and emotion behind the grand ol' plan of apologizing, the last 1/4 of the book was more about the food than the relationship. I didn't need so much

detail about the execution of the plan.

But back to the bright spots of the book....I gotta give a shout out to James's meddling family. They were hilarious....a little too up in his business, but they had me laughing nonetheless.

Did I mention Bastien and James were hot together? Yes? No? Who cares....it should be mentioned again! HOT!!

James's dirty talk....A+

"I want to make you come again, and then I want to fuck you while you're over sensitized and begging for it."

Bastien's hunger for James...A+

"What do you want?"

"I want you to take me apart."

He asked....and it was good.

And that epilogue? More adorable cuteness and sexiness.

This is my first time reading Meg Harding, but it certainly won't be my last. I'll definitely keep going with this series and will be checking out her backlist.

If you're looking for a combination of sweet and sexy, with a small dash of angst and some great recipes, this is a book you need to pick up.

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**Tanu Gill says**

\*I received a copy by the author in exchange of an honest review.\*

This book - Oh My God! I've been on a stomach-aching journey of laughing out loud, making a pitstop at sobbing land, and then getting back to laughing out loud; only this time, it was with a blocked nose and



throat! ;-)

This is the second book in a row whose every dot and comma and letter I've simply devoured! I just couldn't get enough of it all. The book is just utterly tailor-made for me, it seems.

I come from a huge family of nosy yet loving cousins, so I thoroughly enjoyed the antics of James's family. I love to eat and sometimes bake cakes, so I loved Bastien and his dishes. I loved the writing. Not for a single moment did I feel a need to take my eyes off the book so I could take a short break. Nope (with a popping sound just like James made! ;-)). Not at all. I had to sleep, but other than that, I read this in one breath, so to speak.

The witty and humour bits just kept the book going. Bastien was so cute and shy sometimes, I wanted to simply gobble him up. And James was oh so snooty at times that I felt the need to pinch his cheeks!

This book is an adventure ride. "Strap your seatbelt tight and enjoy the ride" are my words for whoever starts to read this. It is one of the books that I know I will reread as soon as I am done with my reading challenge! ;-)

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## **Ula'ndi Hart says**

**Overall book rating: 3.5**

**Audio Book: N/A**

**Book Cover: 3.8**

**Mixed feelings again... I do hope this isn't a new trend for me.**

**If you read this review after this warning it's YOUR problem not mine. It contains spoilers galore, so stop here if you haven't read it yet!**

I loved the idea of the story. The French Chef and the Food Critic. I really enjoy the whole idea surrounding food and wine. It can be so so hot as well. I even liked the MC's. LIKED being the operative word here.

Bastien was sweet and I enjoyed his brand of "shy" - James, mmmm I liked him well enough but - saying that though...I have to agree with some of the other reviews on the ages of the MC's. I do feel that the blushing and giggles made it a tad difficult to keep in mind that we were dealing with 30 something characters both in well established careers.

James's family was a little weird. I like weird. But again..the twins are supposed to be 26'ish and their actions at times didn't make me bring to mind a late twenties male. I understand and appreciate "fun" characters. But maybe this just went a little askew? I don't really know how to put it, read it and make your own assumptions.

**I understand the whole plot around the "Lie to him till he likes you enough to overlook it" thing. It was kind of fun to sit back and see where this was going to end up. But I felt...that it was missing something? The relationship went WAY too fast for my personal taste. They basically did the first date, directly hop-skip-and-jump between the sheets and don't really surface again till the shit hits the proverbial fan?**

There were brief and funny attempts to change this “the baseball game” but it never really took flight.

**I am still in awe of Bastien’s (and everyone he shares the news with” amazing capability of perception. He takes ONE look at the names in front of him. “James Harper Carlisle” and he immediately knows that in the whole of New York City, this is THE Harper Carlisle who gave him a bad review. Seeing has he also likes food. It’s the only logical explanation. AND...he does all this while under shock/stress of a personal family emergency!!!! WOW.**

**This guy isn’t just an amazing cook! He should have been a FBI agent! LOL**

Following this whole power of perception, this full grown 30-something man, decides that he will simply not mention it and move on. There isn’t any other way of handling this matter after all.... (Hormonal drama much? ) Hell I understand disappointment and anger as much as the next person. I can even understand the family drama more deserving of his immediate attention. But man up and tell the lying bastard what you think of him at least before crawling into a hole a having a pity party?  
I did like the cooking spree brought on by his disappointment though.

The whole stepping in and saving the day thing initiated by James’s twin brothers was a bit eyebrow rising to me, but I went with it. Leave your phone at home for a week and drink ridiculous amounts of alcohol. Then deal with the problem. Hmmmm I don’t know about that but apparently it worked for James. (Again...the age thing?)

**I LOVED how James fixed his mess. I think that was sweet and personal to Bastien and it meant something.**

Overall I did actually still enjoy the story. I just think it could have been so much better? You know? Not sorry I read it at all. That I can honestly tell you. It was sweet with very little external factors bringing in unnecessary drama. I liked that about the book as well.

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## **Serena Yates says**

“Critic meets artist” is a wonderful trope, and with a chef and a food reviewer as the main characters of this novel, what can go wrong? I hoped for (and got!) some excellent descriptions of fabulous dishes, creative recipes, and playful uses of food in the bedroom – all of which would have had me completely happy about reading this book. But there is more! Bastien, the chef, and James, the food critic, are fun characters with a few quirks each, but they have to deal with a shock to their barely-begun relationship when James has to admit he was the one to write the first negative review Bastien’s restaurant ever received. This twist leads to a very unexpected and delightful turn of events that made this novel doubly enjoyable for me. Absolutely

scrumptious!

Bastien works hard, takes his food seriously, and wants his restaurant to be a success. He was born in France but has lived in the US for a few years and is determined to present French cuisine in the best light possible. He has received only raving reviews, until one comes along that is mediocre, and it makes him angrier than he can express in words. Meeting an attractive man at his niece's school bake sale cheers him up, and even though he has not dated in a long time, he and James hit it off from the beginning. Until he finds out who James is... and that is the end of everything as far as Bastien is concerned. The bad review is one thing, but lying to him about it afterward? Bastien is not going to take that lightly.

James likes food, he's even a pretty decent cook himself, so his job of reviewing restaurants is ideal for him. He usually takes his brother with him, who is far less critical, but the two of them together discussing some of the places they go to is utterly hilarious. When James meets Bastien at a bake sale at his nephews' school, he realizes he has given the good-looking man's restaurant a less than glowing review. But he doesn't want to ruin his chances, figures he can always tell Bastien later – if there is a later, so he doesn't say anything in the beginning. Until it all comes out, and Bastien is livid. James can't blame him, but he is also determined to make Bastien forgive him – and he has an ingenious plan to achieve it. I laughed out loud when I realized what he was up to, and enjoyed every second of the long road back into Bastien's good graces.

If you like chefs and the men they date, if you think that two men who start off on the wrong foot (without one of them even knowing it) deserve a second chance, and if you're looking for a read that is funny, very sexy with a side of kink, and utterly sweet and adorable, then you will probably like this novel as much as I do. It went straight into my reread-when-cheering-up-is-required file.

NOTE: This book was provided by Dreamspinner Press for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

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## **MaDoReader says**

Otro que no era para mi.

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## **Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says**

### **4.5 Hearts**

#### **Let me just start with three incredible words-Ginger French Chef.**

French chef who's a little bit kinky is what drew me to this one; the ginger was a bonus. Bastien wrapped me around his little finger almost immediately. He's a nervous baker. He blushes adorably and often much to James' delight. He fastidious without being fussy. He's almost as sweet as his confections. Almost.

Bastien is executive chef and owner of L'amour Dans La Ville, a quaint French restaurant with a wait list a

mile long. Naturally this garners the attention of the New York Times food critic Harper Carlisle. He gives a mediocre review which to any chef is the equivalent of being slapped in the face with ensuing ire. Were it not for a chance meeting at their niece and nephews school bake sale they might never have met. The only problem is James goes by his first name so Bastien has no idea who he is, but James does.

James grapples with whether or not to pursue his crush and return to L'amour Dans La Ville ultimately deciding anyone who can make religieuses a religious experience had to have had an off night. Plus, cute ginger who blushes. So second chance it is and it made James' toes curl it was so good.

To say they have chemistry would be an understatement. They click. There is a synergy between them that translates to the page. Harding painstakingly builds this relationship from the ground up. They date and pay attention to each others likes and dislikes. They talk and have comfortable silences. She shows their connection, how attracted they are to one another and she paid attention to the details. Those details that I tend to forget I love so much until an author puts them into words like how when you're really into someone you want to be close to them, touch them, feed each other, spend time with them not necessarily doing anything exciting or adventurous, but watching *Friends* or cooking.

**And they are hot as fire.**

He doesn't think he's ever come so hard in his entire life. He might be crying a little.

"I want to make you come again, and then I want to fuck you while you're oversensitive and begging for it."

I think I just swallowed my tongue. That was just the tip of the iceberg, my friends. As their relationship progresses they start dabbling in the kinky shenanigans. I wouldn't characterize James as a dom, but the way he takes care of Bastien turned my innards to goo. Bastien is his priority. It says something about a person that's willing to push the envelope and put their needs aside to please their partner.

Needless to say I completely invested in them and was just as heartbroken when the conflict happened. Harding again showed how devastated both of them were, how they didn't really know what to do with themselves now that their routine was disrupted and how their sadness affected those around them.

I was amused by the secondary characters before but they really shined during the conflict. James has a huge family and they all pitch in to help him formulate a plan to win back Bastien while Bastien's sister and staff encourage him to at least hear James out.

James gives it his all. He puts thought, sweat and an ungodly amount of money into wooing him back. Bastien doesn't make it easy on him and that makes their reunion that much sweeter. Harding made me believe they missed each other.

I didn't want to let them go and I don't think Harding did either because the epilogue is a little extended which is why I'm deducting half a heart. I enjoyed it but it slowed the pace down significantly.

Nevertheless, I **loved** this book and did from the beginning. I actually had another review to write while reading this and was fussy about it because it was keeping me away from James and Bastien. I commend Harding on making ordinary events remarkably entertaining to read about. *Dinner for One* is a great comfort read that I know I'll read again.

Recommend to fans of contemporary romance, gingers, cooking and those who like a little kink in their romance.

*An ARC was provided in exchange for an honest review.*

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## **Daphne says**

I had to think a little bit about how to review this - I did not love this book like so many others did. All of the elements were there (honestly, too many, almost like the author was going down a checklist of what trips reader triggers - ginger, check, light bdsm, check, quirky family, check), but they didn't form a cohesive whole. It was all just too much.

James and Bastien met and fell into bed getting freaky deaky with toys etc immediately. I'm not saying it doesn't happen or I'm the arbiter of sex or trying to determine how anyone does or should have sex. I'm just saying that, for me, it seemed off that someone would go from bashfully stuttering to say hello to butt beads and light power exchange in an hour or two. Along those lines, confident James was over the top to cocky and that was off putting.

The families - so, so much family. I felt like I missed some prior books explaining who all of these people were. The twins were interesting - they were described in such a way that they reminded me of the Bobo brothers from *Dora the Explorer*. Maybe there will be other books to come featuring these characters but it was easy to get lost with all of the siblings in this story when they really didn't add much.

The cooking - and cooking and cooking. If you are a foodie, maybe you will enjoy this. For me, there was so much talk about making food that it overpowered the story. I was left with a craving for cinnamon apple crepes.

I enjoyed the last 20% of the book more than the rest, I think. A more humble James was a more enjoyable James, IMO. And the resolution was very sweet.

So many people enjoyed this book, it's possible that you will too. It just wasn't for me.

2.5 - 3 stars.

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## **BWT (Belen) says**

Well, that was absolutely delightful! Low angst, humorous, sexy as hell, plus the whole deception plot is really, really well handled.

I would recommend this...but maybe eat first? Because the food descriptions are plentiful and may make you ravenous!

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**Ami says**

**3.5 stars**

I really liked both men.

Bastien could easily be written as a pretentious snob so finding him awkward and rather shy with James was adorable. And him owning a cat is another winning point \*lol\* #catlover

And while I am not a big fan of romance that involves or contains secret (which of course will end up blowing up on the MC's face as climax), I could understand why James kept his identity a secret. I mean, reviews can be sacrilegious for restaurants, right? It can make or break them. Besides, James showed that he could do good groveling. Although the idea came from his brothers \*lol\*

Speak of James's siblings, I thought they were awesome! I loved reading about MC's siblings too.

However, I also found the numerous sex scenes to be distracting and ended skimming most of them. Like Bastien's sister said, adult relationship is more than just sex, and I found those slightly lacking here. The groveling part also took a little too long, even if James successfully making me hungry.

Oh, and like my friend Irene texted me... Why did suddenly James's occupation as the food critic faded away while he was with Bastien? He turned into a cook rather than a critic introduced in the beginning...

Anyway, I heard this will become a series. Well, I will definitely be there for the sequel. I really enjoy Meg Harding's stories so far :)

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