



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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Just in time for the holidays we have Sarabeth Levine's beautiful 'Baking, From My Home to Yours' and Ina Garten's latest cookbook, called 'How Easy is That'. Levine's cookbook is a serious tutorial on the craft of baking, but with a sense of fun. Eye popping photos will inspire and give confidence to any cook looking to expand their repertoire beyond brownies. The Barefoot Contessa's typically cheery approach to meal preparation gets another airing in 'How Easy is That'. The title is a hint that many of the recipes are very simple, with a few even using prepared ingredients. As always, there are many you want to try right away.

Matt Lewis and Renato Polifato have done it again with 'Baked Explorations'. Their follow up to 'Baked' is joyful and gorgeous – as much fun to read as it is to cook from. The premise is to rethink original American cake, cookie, pie and candy recipes and make them even more delicious. Having tried the orange olive oil bundt cake and the turtle bars I can say they succeeded.

'Solomon's Oak' by Joann Mapson is the story of recently widowed and still grieving Glory, her newly arrived foster child Juniper and recovering cop Joseph Vigil. The wonderful CA setting and terrific animal characters combine to produce a good page turner with a sense of humor. Dog lovers will especially warm to the gradually thawing hearts of these characters as they find their path to happiness.

'First Family: John & Abigail Adams' by Joseph Ellis is accessible, page turning history. This endlessly fascinating couple spent many years of their married life separated, allowing for a voluminous exchange of surviving correspondence. John and Abigail were aware they were living in historically significant times, with John especially concerned with his legacy. Ellis examines the virtually perfect partnership of their marriage and the tempestuous times they left their mark on.

'The Emperor of all Maladies: A Biography of Cancer' by Siddhartha Mukherjee is a fantastic book. It's unusual to strongly recommend a 500 page book about cancer, but this work is an inspired combination of medical history and research written by a renowned authority on this dread disease. The author is an excellent writer who doesn't assume a knowledge of medical jargon. It traces the history of human understanding and treatment of cancers, interspersed with the stories of actual patients. It's a massive amount of material that is well organized and written with real compassion for the patients and doctors who come into contact with this elusive and



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devastating disease. It is both terribly personal and scientific – a high wire act that Mukherjee pulls off brilliantly.

'Freedom' by Johnathan Franzen is the saga of Walter and Patty Berglund's marriage, friends and family, told over a period of several decades. Franzen is a talented writer; there are many passages where his prose really shines. I thought he needed a more aggressive editor for his first book 'The Corrections', and my opinion hasn't changed. There is too much digression and too many characters introduced whose function seems to be to articulate stands on issues of importance to the author but not to the novel's plot development. For a reader with patience to wade through these sections there is an intriguing book with astute observations about life and morals in contemporary America. Walter and Patty's struggles are realistic and not overdramatized, and the book is ultimately hopeful about commitment and the future.

'Unbroken' by Lauren Hillenbrand is the life story of Louie Zamperini, a heroic Army Air Corps bombardier who served in the Pacific during WWII and was a prisoner of the Japanese. It has a similar story arc to one of our favorite books called 'The Railway Man', an autobiography by Eric Lomax, a Scot who was a WWII prisoner of the Japanese. Man's ability to withstand unbelievable suffering and an astonishing capacity for forgiveness are the hallmarks of both of these remarkable books. Highly recommended for general interest readers, not just history buffs.

'Kind of Blue' is a memorable thriller by Miles Corwin. Introducing LAPD detective Ash Levine, back on the job after an 11 month hiatus, the book is a tense police procedural with well developed characters. Fans of Michael Connelly's Det. Harry Bosch will welcome the arrival of another sharp, interesting cop prowling through the LA underworld righting numerous wrongs and fighting corruption. There are enough twists and turns that easily keep your attention during the hectic holiday season.