Cookbook serves up 'murderous' recipes

(TNS) — Mystery writers like to eat. So do their characters.

Here's an opportunity to meet and greet both without having any calories heading towards your waistline. "The Mystery Writers of America Cookbook," edited by Kate White, includes 109 writers and more than 100 delicious recipes.

This is more than just another cookbook. It's an introduction to a vast number of mystery writers, their personal backgrounds and their written creations.

Some sleuths are cook exotic concoctions. Felix Francis' ("Dead Heat") chef, Max Moreton, makes Beef Stroganoff with deep-fried potato straws. Katherine Hall Page's catering sleuth, Faith Fairchild, includes Chevre Endive Spears with Rubies, containing cheese, cream and pomegranate seeds.

Hello, Whole Foods!

Some writers are also cooks. Charles Todd, who is a former chef and caterer, gives us an updated-from-WWI-history Chicken Oscar Roulade with Chesapeake Sauce Hollandaise. Chris Pavon, a book editor specializing in cookbooks, provides a recipe for a rich Rigatoni a la Bolognese that begs to be taken to a party.

There are those who want simple pleasures. Ben H. Winters, who wrote the Armageddon series "The Last Policeman," includes a three-egg omelet. Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone eats peanut butter and pickle sandwiches, which are not complicated to make.

By the way, there are no calorie counts on these recipes.

The cookbook also includes entertaining stories and tidbits about historical mysteries, the sleuths or the writers themselves. You'll find that many writers are former press. Editor Kate White worked for Cosmopolitan, and horse racing writer John McEvoy is the former editor of the Daily Racing Form.

For those abstaining from meat, Alan Orloff provides Killer Tofu.

Kerrville Folk Festival helps singer-songwriter find her voice

By Donna Gable Hatch
Features Editor
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Singer-songwriter Amy Coffman said the Songwriter's School at the Kerrville Folk Festival helped her transform grief over the death of loved ones into music and move beyond her sadness.

Courtesy photo

Amarillo-based singer-songwriter Amy Coffman performs from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday at 1011 Bistro, 1011 Guadalupe St., as part of a two-week tour through Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

"I have attended the Kerrville Folk Festival a number of times and jammed around campfires, but this will be my very first time to play in Kerrville on a paved surface," Coffman said. "Actually, this is a great 'getting back to Kerrville' spring for me, because after this show at 1011 Bistro, I'll be back on May 22 with Larry Martin (as the duo formerly known as Everything That Rises), to play at Azul Lounge, and then to attend the Festival that weekend. I haven't been to the Folk Festival since 2007, and I'm really looking forward to it."

Nashville recording artist Celeste Krenz, who produced Coffman's debut album, "The More Things Change," said Coffman's songs "are little stories with a backbeat; well thought, effortlessly crafted and real."

The album — which is best described as acoustic folk-pop — features songs written over a period of more than 20 years, Coffman said.

"It encompassed some personal turmoil for me and a lot of loss, including the deaths of both of my parents and several others close to me. I would say the unifying theme of 'The More Things Change' is an attempt to make sense of those losses and changes. I've always reached first for a guitar in times of grief."

Two of the album's tracks pay tribute to loved ones who have died: In the song "Record," Coffman recalls sitting on the piano bench next to her musician mother and her realization that the mother might continue to live on through the daughter's music.

"I was very lucky in that my mom and my older brother, Lawrence, were both musical, so we had various instruments around the house already: a piano, guitars, my mom's accordion, which no one else touched, my brother's drums which no one was supposed to touch," Coffman said. "I'm not sure why guitar spoke to me, but I suspect part of it was that it was an instrument I got along with better than piano. My initial interest was in piano; my mom played beautifully, and could read. I have lots of very early memories of being elsewhere in the house and hearing songs from 'The Jimmy Webb Songbook' floating through the walls and vents on acoustic piano. In fact, that album he released a few years ago of greatest hits done on solo piano is a favorite of mine and it occurs to me that's probably why. Sometimes I'd go into the back room where the piano was and she'd be half sitting in the dark because she was too absorbed to turn on a light."

Coffman said taking part in the Songwriter's School offered at the Kerrville Folk Festival helped her find her voice — and it helped move her from a place of depression following the death of her mother to a place of healing through music.

"I'm a huge believer in what I think of as 'the whisper,' which I think we all have if we can get quiet enough to hear it. I think it was there when I signed myself up for the Songwriter's School, even though I was still fairly flattened by depression and as disconnected from music as I'd ever been. There have been so many times during my journey back to music that I have made a decision or changed course because of a sudden, almost random voice in my head," she said. "Two other instances that are the ones I always think of first: when I bought my first pretty-good acoustic guitar, which I was only buying for myself, to play alone in my living room, and a few years later, I was having lunch with a friend who happened to own the small restaurant where we were eating, and kind of out of the blue, he asked 'so what do you want to do?' Without any thought whatsoever, I just blurted, 'I want to play solo shows, and sing my own songs.' I wasn't even playing in a band and hadn't been in a long time. It totally startled me… He got this big smile and said 'OK, let's book a date,' and suddenly I had a solo gig in his restaurant. That was in 2009"

Recording in Nashville, she said, "was absolutely one of the peak experiences of my life. I loved just about everything about it — the studio is a blast. Celeste is a great producer and vocal coach and really positive."

The "whisper," she said, has never steered her wrong.

"The whisper has gotten a bit louder as I've become more open to hearing it and following its guidance. It hasn't steered me wrong yet, and in many ways now I'm having the best, most fulfilling life I've ever had," Coffman said. "It feels like I'm finally in my stream."

At a glance

➤ **Who:** Amy Coffman
➤ **When:** 7-9 p.m. Friday at 1011 Bistro, 1011 Guadalupe St.
➤ **When** 9-11 p.m. Friday, May 22, at Azul's Lounge, 202 Earl Garrett St.
➤ **Info:** Visit www.amycoffmanmusic.com

Book signing set for Saturday

Anne Elizabeth Dodd will sign copies of her children's book, "Angel of Winter," from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday at Hastings, 501 Main St.

The book is about a harsh bitter winter in the Scottish highlands, where Benjamin and Carol, two poor young twins, live in a time of poverty with their older sister, Molly, and loving father. When their loving father dies, they feel alone, but the Angel of Winter is at their side.

The book is $8.99 and available at Tatepublishing.com, doddanne.tateauthor.com and will be available for purchase at the booksigning.

Bestsellers

Publisher's Weekly

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. The Girl on the Train. Paula Hawkins. Riverhead ($26.95)
2. NYPD Red 3. Patterson/Karp. Little, Brown ($28)
3. All the Light We Cannot See. Anthony Doerr. Scribner ($27)
4. Last One Home. Debbie Macomber. Ballantine ($26)
5. Prodigal Son. Danielle Steel. Delacorte ($28)
6. The Assassin. Clive Cussler. Putnam ($28.95)
7. A Dangerous Place. Jacqueline Winspear. Harper ($26.99)
8. A Spool of Blue Thread. Anne Tyler. Knopf ($25.95)
9. The Buried Giant. Kazuo Ishiguro. Knopf ($26.95)
10. The Nightingale. Kristin Hannah. St. Martin's ($27.99)

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. Dead Wake. Erik Larson. Crown ($28)
2. Pioneer Girl. Laura Ingalls Wilder. South Dakota Historical Society ($39.95)
3. The Hormone Reset Diet. Sara Gottfried. HarperOne ($27.99)
4. Get What's Yours. Kotlikoff/Moeller/Solman. Simon & Schuster ($19.99)
5. The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up. Marie Kondo. Ten Speed ($16.99)
6. Better than Before. Gretchen Rubin. Crown ($26)
7. Being Mortal. Atul Gawande. Metropolitan ($26)
8. The 20/20 Diet. Phil McGraw. Bird Street ($26)
9. Killing Patton. O'Reilly/Dugard. Henry Hold ($30)
10. H Is for Hawk. Helen Macdonald. Grove ($25)

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Business in Review

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Dale Groll, owner.

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