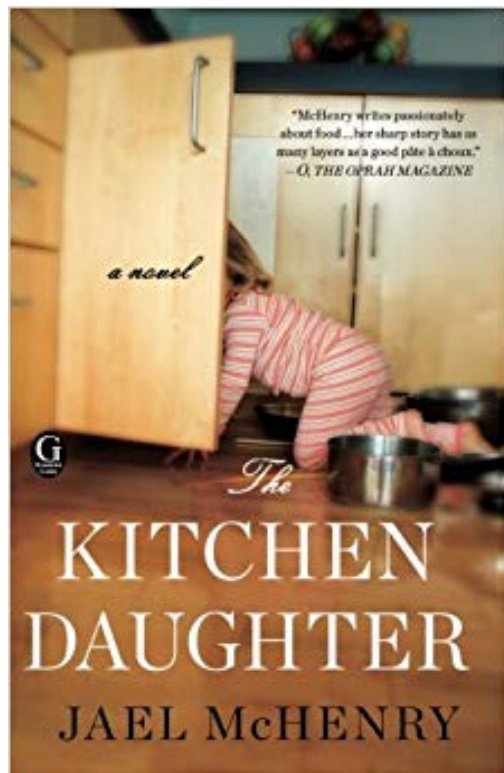


The Kitchen Daughter by Jael McHenry



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Now in paperback, a poignant and delectable novel with recipes, chronicling one woman's journey of self-discovery that begins at the stove. After the unexpected death of her parents, painfully shy and sheltered 26-year-old Ginny Selvaggio seeks comfort in cooking from family recipes. But the rich, peppery scent of her Nonna's soup draws an unexpected visitor into the kitchen: the ghost of Nonna herself, dead for twenty years, who appears with a cryptic warning ("do no let her...") before vanishing like steam from a cooling dish. A haunted kitchen isn't Ginny's only challenge. Her domineering sister, Amanda, (aka "Demanda") insists on selling their parents' house, the only home Ginny has ever known. As she packs up her parents' belongings, Ginny finds evidence of family secrets she isn't sure how to unravel. She knows how to turn milk into cheese and cream into butter, but she doesn't know why her mother hid a letter in the bedroom chimney, or the identity of the woman in her father's photographs. The more she learns, the more she realizes the keys to these riddles lie with the dead, and there's only one way to get answers: cook from dead people's recipes, raise their ghosts, and ask them.



Reviews of the **The Kitchen Daughter** by Jael McHenry

Frdi

A young woman with Asperger's coming to terms with herself while grieving the death of her parents. Ginny has always been "different". What has been apparent to her parents, has been kept from Ginny. Ginny has coping skills which include food, it's tastes, textures and smells. So when situations threaten Ginny she conjures food or she cooks.

Reluctantly brought out of herself by circumstances and those around her, Ginny slowly starts to see life beyond the walls of her family home. A healthy dose of magical realism is introduced as Ginny inadvertently conjures her deceased Nonna while cooking.

The author's look into normality was well done. The author invites her reader to look at themselves through the character's eyes. What is normal after all? I think the edges of normal are ever expanding. I thoroughly enjoyed this poignant story.

Ziena

4.5 stars. This book is a slowly simmering delight for the senses, with brilliant, evocative writing. Ginny is not "normal," (whatever that is), and upon her parents' sudden death, is faced with decisions and challenges she's largely been sheltered from. Including pressure from her frazzled sister to turn her life upside down.

She escapes, as she'd done before, into the comfort and ritual of cooking. As a reader who does NOT like cooking, I was still drawn in and soothed, intrigued by the wonderful recipes - and what happened as Ginny prepared them. Several twists and turns that I did not see coming, and an ending full of hope.

Orevise

I loved this book from page one and it got better after that. The writing is truly beautiful and the story is engaging. The writer could have taken the easy way out in her plot and made the sister a villain, but these flawed characters, like all family members and friends, each have something to offer, something redeeming.

This is the sort of rare novel that I can recommend so readily, to a broad range of readers, even those with magic-free brains, like mine. The supernatural is super wonderful and I didn't want it to end.

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I read this book in one sitting. It tells the story of Ginny, who seemingly suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, but it has never been diagnosed. Ginny's parents are killed in an accident and Ginny's sister Amanda wants to sell their house because she thinks that Ginny cannot live on her own. The sisters begin a power struggle. As if that is not stressful enough, the gap between the siblings widen when Ginny sees signs of her syndrome in Amanda's older daughter. Ginny finds comfort in cooking and is surprised when she is able to see ghosts when she cooks their handwritten recipes.

This book would appeal to fans of magical realism such as Sarah Addison Allen or Alice Hoffman's books. Ginny is an interesting character and I found the way she lives fascinating. The writing is engaging and will keep readers interested from start to finish.

[...]

Otiel

I loved this book from start to finish!! The characters were so real and I felt like I knew all of them. I'm a fan of cooking also and the author couldn't have been more descriptive of the taste and smell of everything she was cooking. It just drew me in and didn't want it to end. Great book about family, challenges and such a well rounded book. Please continue to write more because great authors are hard to come by these days.

Thoginn

Ginny's life has been upended when her parents die while on vacation. Her sister, Amanda descends on the family home where 26 year old Ginny has lived her entire sheltered life, and decrees that they will have to sell the house and Ginny will have to come live with her and her family. During the funeral reception at the house, Ginny becomes overwhelmed with all of the people and retreats to the safety of the kitchen, cooking one of her grandmother's recipes from her handwritten card. She is shocked to see the ghost of her grandmother materialize and give her a warning. The shock of this sends her to hide leaving food to burn in the kitchen. It becomes clear that Ginny has some form of high functioning autism/Asperger's, and that cooking is one way she copes with the world. As the sisters work to pack up their parents' belongings, Ginny finds some unexpected items that begin to make her question what she knows about her family. Ginny and Amanda continue their tug of war over the house, as Ginny tries again to conjure some ghosts to answer her questions. Ginny is an intriguing character that we see grow in the face of adversity as she begins to make friends and tries to figure out her own way in life.

Kanek

Ginny Selvaggio is different. She doesn't like to be touched. She doesn't look in people's eyes when they speak to her. She finds socializing excruciating. But she's also a wonderful cook and finds solace in the kitchen. At twenty-six, she's never been on her own, but her parents die in a car accident while on vacation, and Ginny has trouble coping. Her sister Amanda wants to sell their parents' house and have Ginny "evaluated" for Asperger's Syndrome. Ginny is afraid it's a tactic to prove that she's incompetent so that Amanda can sell the house. Meanwhile, Ginny befriends David, the son of her cleaning lady Gert. He's a wounded soul, mourning the death of his wife a year earlier.

I really liked Ginny. I related to this book on a more personal level than some readers might because I have two children on the autism spectrum. Another aspect of the *The Kitchen Daughter* I really loved was all the food, cooking, and recipes. Each chapter is focused around a different dish that Ginny cooks. She discovers that she is able to call forth the ghosts of the people who created the recipes when she cooks, and she is able to learn some important things about her family and herself.

I did truly enjoy this novel. I read it in three or four gulps. It has something to say to everyone about what normal truly is, what grief can do, and the importance of living for those left behind after loved ones die. It's a really impressive debut. I can't wait to read more from Jael McHenry.

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