



Cookie Dough or Die

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Olivia Greyson is the proud owner of The Gingerbread House—a quaint shop that specializes in all things cookie—and her best friend, Maddie, is her sidekick, baking up scrumptious treats for their cookie-themed parties. But now they must take a break from baking and turn their attention to recreating a recipe for murder...

No one is more shocked than Olivia when prominent business owner Clarisse Chamberlain is found dead. It was Clarisse who encouraged Olivia to open The Gingerbread House—and she was one of her best customers. The sheriff is ready to call the case a suicide, but Olivia's convinced there's a murder to solve.

Then word spreads that Clarisse left Olivia a large sum of money, along with a collection of valuable, antique cookie cutters. Suddenly, Olivia is the prime suspect, with some fingers pointing to Maddie when the local postman falls ill after sampling one of their cookies. If the cookie-loving duo doesn't find the real killer, their reputation—and quite possibly their lives—will be battered for good...

Cookie Dough or Die Details

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From Reader Review *Cookie Dough or Die* for online ebook

Jonathan says

Really 3.5 stars but I rounded up.

I really enjoyed this book. It suffered from a few first-book blunders, but overall it was an enjoyable read.

The characters were excellently written. I especially loved Livie and Del. Maddie could get a little bit annoying, but for the most part she was an enjoyable character. However, at the same time I absolutely detested Lucas and Hugh, I don't know what it was about them, but I just did not like them.

The mystery was simply alright. The MC did a good amount of sleuthing without being too obvious about it and the ending was well-thought out, but the killer was kind of a meh moment. I thought that there were a few other characters in the book that would have made a lot more interesting killers than the actual killer.

Overall an enjoyable read. Not at the top of my favorites list, but I'll read the next book in the series.

Isis says

It was a decent mystery, but not all I'd hoped it could be. Some parts of the story were implausible, and could have used more editing.

Robin says

I found the whole situation unbelievable. How could a store completely devoted to selling cookie cutters plus a few baking utensils support two employees? The characters are suppose to be in their early thirties and have the experiences of people of that age (college, careers, failed first marriages) but act as though they barely in their twenties acting like moon-sick calves with their new love-interests, throwing caution to the wind trying to catch a dangerous murderer, and even eating nothing but pizza and cookies. All of the characters are shallow and generally unlike-able. Then there is the dog. Please get rid of the annoying dog!

The crime itself could be plausible - if the initial clues left by the then victim-to-be weren't so weird. The main character's inability to use the internet is so far-fetched that it is almost funny, but her ability to get around the police and the hospital staff is just pathetic.

I could go on. I finished the book because I felt compelled to read a book I was given as a gift.

LORI CASWELL says

Olivia Greyson is the owner of The Gingerbread House which occupies the first floor of her Victorian home in Chatterley Heights. It is a shop that features cookie cutters and other baking items. Olivia lives upstairs

with her tiny dog Spunky. Olivia (Livie) and her friend Maddie run the shop and Maddie bakes and creates the most yummy cookies. Olivia gets to be close friends with prominent Chatterley Heights citizen and business woman Clarisse Chamberlain who also has a passion for cookie cutters. She often helped out at Livie's shop and gave her business advice.

No one in town is more shocked than Livie when she learns of Clarisse's death. The sheriff calls it an accident, maybe suicide, but Livie can't wrap her head around those ideas. Clarisse was too meticulous and too strong, neither of these options fit. She knows Clarisse had something on her mind of late but until Livie can figure out what that was she can't be sure, but her gut is telling her this was not an accident. Someone killed Clarisse Chamberlain and she is going to find out who before the last cookie crumbles.

I really liked this story. It is a wonderful debut to what I am sure will be a wonderful series. Cozy mysteries are my favorites and I am continually amazed by the variety of settings used for each series. A simple cookie cutter shop is an excellent setting and I can see many possibilities for future mysteries.

The foundation has been well laid in this first story. Letting us get to know just enough about the main characters to want us to keep reading more about them to learn who they are below the surface. The supporting characters in this story were fun, quirky, opinionated, smart, and witty. I hope they are around in future installments.

This is not only a new series but a new author. An author I can't find anything about. Not a web page, a Facebook page or email. Leads me to wonder if this is a new author or an author we already know using a pseudonym. If Virginia Lowell is indeed a brand new author, this is an excellent written mystery for a debut. I hope we can learn more about her in the future and that she continues to write books as good as this one. Through my research I did find out that book two in this series *A Cookie Before Dying* is slated to be released December 6, 2011.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from Berkley Prime Crime, A Division of the Penguin Group. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

QNPoohBear says

Somewhere between 3-4 stars. Enough to want to read more but not enough to say this book was great.

Olivia Greyson has returned to her hometown after her divorce to open The Gingerbread House, a quaint boutique shop that sells vintage and modern cookie cutters. Her best friend Maddie is the baker and creative genius behind the shop's scrumptious treats. Olivia owes her success to a local businesswoman, Clarisse Chamberlain. It was Clarisse who encouraged Olivia to start a business and who helped mentor her. Livie is shocked to learn that Clarisse has been found dead in her home. The Sheriff is quick to label the death an accident but Livie is certain the death was not an accident. She's determined to figure out who murdered her mentor and why. The Sheriff is worried about Livie's well-being when a local tabloid all but accuses Livie of

being the killer.

I liked the plot of this story well enough. The mystery kept me guessing though once all was revealed, it seemed rather obvious. The death happens right away so the plot moves quickly. The writing style is good but not spectacular. It's a bit funny in parts, especially when Maddie is around. It's the characters who really make this story shine.

Livie is a good character. She's intelligent and I enjoyed her literary comments. She doesn't behave stupidly like most heroines in cozy mysteries. She is determined to be a sleuth but when the Sheriff becomes worried, she's willing to compromise. She doesn't put herself in danger unnecessarily. She stands up to her ex and doesn't pine after him and is a good and devoted friend to her childhood besties, especially Maddie. Her rescue Yorkie, Spunky, is adorable and helps drive the action. I just loved him!

Maddie is a fun character but she really drove me crazy. If someone came into my place at 4 am and started banging around the kitchen singing, I would not have been so nice as Livie. Maddie's little romance is sweet but seems so odd! Maddie adds the comic relief to the story.

I also really liked Bertha, Clarisse's housekeeper. She seems very sweet and devoted to the Chamberlain family. She also adds a bit of comic relief with her innocent comments. The male characters were OK but not great.

I'll have to see how they develop in the series to really get to know them better, except the Chamberlain sons who are typical spoiled rich kids ugh! I did not like them or Tammy and I failed to see why Livie was still friends with Tammy.

I can't wait to read the next book in the series.

Suzanne says

Olivia Greyson and her Best friend Maddie own The Gingerbread House. A store inside a quaint Victorian home that sells cookie cutters and bakes the best cookies around Chatterley Heights.

When Olivia's friend and mentor is found dead She can't believe it's a suicide and takes it into her own hands to find the killer.

The story is good and I liked the characters. Maddie with her crazy color combos for the cookies and Livie's mom Ellie. Who may be short but oh what a personality. The surrounding characters are well written also. I wish the MC would have been given more of a personality. I really didn't get a true sense of her. And the solution of the crime and surrounding mystery didn't leave me wanting to read the next in the series.

Jessica says

I really hate to give a bad review... that's why I'm not... I just really think it was me this time and not the book. I just couldn't get into the plot and the characters. I will have to pick it up and re-read it at a later date... so...

Dear Cookie Dough or Die,

I sincerely regret to inform you, that I am finished reading you (for now). It is just not working out between us and to be truthful... I'm just not that in to you. Fortunately it is not your fault... this time it's all me. Don't worry... I'm sure I will pick you up again and re-read you at some point.

Sincerely,

Jess ;)

Rage says

like pretty much everyone else has already said: can a shop that only sells cookie cutters survive? and, can the main character survive when she only eats pizza and cookies? the story makes a point out of how she can still fit into a fitted dress, so good for her. I didn't really get involved in the mystery or characters - I found the cookie-themed reveal kind of bizarre. at some point in time I might keep reading this series, but it's not first on my list.

Cathy says

The mystery itself was fine; plenty of suspects, plenty of motives and red herrings to keep the reader guessing.

But I am a knit-picker, so I question whether a town that is so small that it only has two officers of the law could really support a store that specializes in cookie cutters (Unless it is a known tourist destination, but then wouldn't there be more than two police officers?) and provide enough income for two people. Also, did Livie and Maddie sell the cookies they made or only use them as samples? I couldn't figure that out. In any case, I can't imagine that the health department would let them keep a dog in their kitchen.

Inconsistencies and bad editing really bothers me. I didn't see any glaring typos, but at the beginning of the story Livie's friend Stacy is described as a teacher at the same school as her other friend, Tammy (p.32). Later, she is described as the office manager (p. 201). Which is it? And the redundancy in the following sentence grated: "A lot of our customers lately are overly curious right now...." (p.221) Either "lately" or "right now," not both.

I was disappointed that there was no recipe for the cookies Maddie kept making (C'mon! Any book with cookie dough in the title should include a recipe.) and I felt the author did not take full advantage of her setting. I would have enjoyed more tidbits about cookie cutters and their history.

Will these flaws keep me from reading the next book? No.

Sapphyria says

Olivia (Livie) Greyson is the owner of The Gingerbread House, a store on the main level of her Victorian

home in Chatterley Heights. The Gingerbread House is a quaint little store that specializes in cookie cutters; from brand new to antique. Olivia also owns a rescue dog named Spunky who certainly brings his own bit of charm to the story, and his interactions in the park with his lab friend Buddy, who is owned by the Deputy Sheriff, are just awesome. Olivia's business partner is her best friend, Madeline. Madeline (Maddie) Briggs has been friends with Livie since they were 10 years old. Maddie co-owns The Gingerbread House, and even though she doesn't live there, she's in the store often enough to take up residence.

When Livie's friend, supporter, and biggest customer, Clarisse, is found dead, a bit of Livie's world dies with her. The worst part is that Livie doesn't think it was an accident or suicide ~ she thinks it's foul play. And she doesn't think the Sheriff is investigating the scene as such, Livie takes it upon herself, along with Maddie, to figure out what happened. The discoveries made prove that something's afoot in this small town and almost everyone is a suspect, including Livie, herself, forcing Sheriff Delroy (Del) Jenkins and Deputy Sheriff Cody Furlow to change gears.

Some of the suspects include Clarisse's two sons, Hugh and Edward. Polar opposites in everything, they may have gotten wind of changes to the will that didn't make them happy. Before the changes were executed, did one or the both of them execute their mother first?

Tammy Deacons is a childhood friend of both Livie and Maddie ~ the type of friend that you love to hate. She's always been in love with Hugh but Clarisse determined that Tammy and Hugh would not be allowed to marry. Could Tammy's rage have caused her to murder Clarisse, freeing her and Hugh to do as they please?

Lucas, a local business owner, and current flame of Maddie's, is currently paying back a business loan to the Chamberlain estate. This loan is keeping his business afloat. With the death of Clarisse, would this loan be forgiven and forgotten? He certainly has become more relaxed since the death of Clarisse.

Then there is Livie. She's only been back in town for a year and managed to work her way into the life of the most influential, prominent, and business savvy socialite in Chatterley Heights, Clarisse Chamberlain. When the last will and testament for Clarisse Chamberlain is read and reveals that Livie is a beneficiary to a specific amount of money and some antiques, could she have charmed her way into a change of Clarisse's will, then killed her in cold blood in order to collect?

The race to figure out who the killer is is on and must be discovered quickly because Clarisse isn't the only victim. The postman is hospitalized and then Livie also becomes a target.

This is a great cozy mystery. All through the novel I had no idea who did it and was so anxious to get to the end to find out. I was chomping at the bit - hard! I love the possible murderer list and the reasons behind why they were on it. As per usual, the main character who is usually the hero/heroine, is also a suspect. The twists and turns were done well and kept me guessing the entire way along.

The character interactions are great, providing a very solid cast of likable people. It's important for characters to mesh well in their respective roles - whether good or bad. There is a hint of romance between Del and Livie but it is minute and not overpowering. I also enjoyed the snippets of humor thrown in by the author; although, the book could stand to have bit more thrown in.

I will be moving on to Book Two when my schedule allows it!

Review Copy Courtesy Of: My Local Library

Dharia Scarab says

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more, But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It has earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Hilary (A Wytch's Book Review) says

The start of a series with a nice cast of characters, Olivia came back to her home town after her marriage to a surgeon broke down and soon became friends with Clarisse Chamberlain, Clarisse encouraged Olivia to open her cookie shop (selling items for making cookies rather than selling cookies, although a lot of baking does happen, especially as they provide cookies for parties etc), after Clarisse dies suddenly Olivia and Maddie (her best friend and co-worker) start to investigate as an accident seems odd, suicide out of character and that just left murder!

Add in a rescue Yorkshire Terrier named Spunky, the local law enforcement in the form of Del and Cody, Maddie's new boyfriend Lucas and Olivia's Mum (Ellie), stepfather and brother and we have a group of people I want to know more about :D

Jeannie and Louis Rigod says

I found this book very gentle and handled being a new series well. There were murder mysteries and the clues were placed, not obviously, throughout the book. I had a sense of the culprit but was not sure until the ending.

I would make the recommendation that our new friends, Olivia and Maddie learn to eat something other than pizza. I do understand about not being a 'cook' but a baker, however, with the world of take-out at our finger tips, it seems, a lasagna, ravioli, sub-sandwich, something?

Then, I was a bit disappointed in that the author makes the store Olivia/Maddie owns a cookie cutter/cookie shop and never introduces to a single history of a particular cookie cutter. Perhaps, Olivia could say she just learned in a collector's guide of a certain antique cutter and describe it to the readers. I think this would add

more dimension to the story.

All in all, I will look for Ms. Lowells next novel and am certain it will feel more in the flow of things. Promising series.

Julie says

I loved this cozy mystery by Virginia Lowell! I just finished a dark, graphic, violent serial killer type novel and needed something a bit lighter . I couldn't put this one down.

Olivia, (livvy) owns a cookie shop with her good friend Maddie. Since moving back to her small hometown, Livvy became close with Clarrise. When Clarrise is found dead, Olivia can't believe it. It looks like Clarrise either accidentally consumed too much wine while taking pills, or committed suicide. Livvy just doesn't buy it and begins her own investigation.

I actually understand collecting cookie cutters. I have a box of old cutters I inherited from my grandmother. So, I could relate to the value of something like that and it was interesting. I loved the chemistry between Livvy and Del, Livvy 's mother, Maddie and the puppy. The mystery kept me turning the pages as fast as I could. Overall a B +

Stacie Amelotte says

Was it an accident, suicide or murder? This book has been on my “to be read” pile forever, it was released in 2011. I’m glad to finally start this series. Culinary cozies are my favorite so I enjoyed the idea of a shop devoted to cookies and cookie cutters. I must admit the beginning was a little slow and I struggled a bit. Truly I believe my frame of mind influenced me so I was determined to give this book a chance. I’m really glad I did. The plot is enjoyable and will keep you guessing as there are plenty of red herrings. The main character Livie and her best friend Maddie, have a realistic friendship. The peripheral characters, including a rescue Yorkshire terrier named Spunky, are interesting and leave you wanting to get to know them more. I also look forward to seeing how things develop between Livie and Del. The playful tension these two share give the storyline a refreshing potential relationship. One negative for me, I wish the character of Clarisse would have played a bigger role in the series before becoming the victim. I think there was a lot of potential for her mentorship with Livie that died with the character. I will definitely read the next installment eventually.
