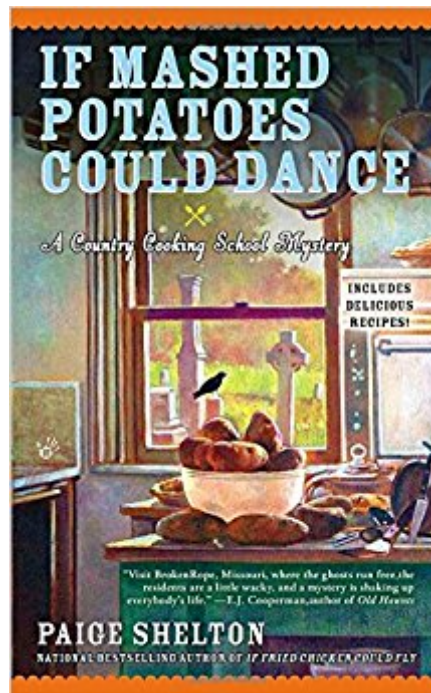




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If Mashed Potatoes Could Dance (Country Cooking School Mysteries)



Synopsis

At Gram's Country Cooking School in Broken Rope, Missouri, Isabelle Betts and her grandmother share the secrets of delicious home-style recipes. But there's one secret they keep from their classes—their ability to talk to ghosts from the town's colorful past. Betts and Gram agree to help their friend Jake at Broken Rope's Historical Society by accommodating some foodie tourists for the night and occupying them with cooking lessons. It couldn't be worse timing when the pair encounter the ax-wielding ghost of Sally Swarthmore, one of Broken Rope's legendary murderers, who pleads with Betts to help find her diary—a diary that could prove that Sally was really a victim, not a villain. But they soon have a modern-day murder on their hands when one of the tourists turns up dead with a noose around his neck and two other tourists are nowhere to be found. Now Betts needs to put the cooking classes on the back burner to untangle two knotty mysteries and rope in a cold-blooded killer.

Book Information

Series: Country Cooking School Mysteries

Mass Market Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Berkley; Original edition (October 2, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0425251616

ISBN-13: 978-0425251614

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.8 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 55 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #986,246 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #88 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking by Ingredient > Potatoes #2014 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Cozy > Culinary #5213 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Supernatural

Customer Reviews

"Visit Broken Rope, Missouri, where the ghosts run free, the residents are a little wacky, and a mystery is shaking up everybody's life."—E.J. Copperman, author of *An Uninvited Ghost*

"Shelton writes with a Hitchcock essence that readers once found missing...until now."—Blogcritics.org

Paige Shelton spent lots of years in advertising but now writes novels full time. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, with her husband and son. When she's up early enough, one of her favorite things is to watch the sun rise over the Wasatch Mountains.

Isabelle (Betts) Winston and her grandmother, Gram run a country cooking school in the historic western town of Broken Rope, Missouri. Tourism is the number one industry in Broken Rope. Second, to the Winston family is talking with ghosts in their town. Yes, Betts and Gram are able to communicate with residents of their local graveyard. Jake, Betts best friend, and portrayor of the Sheriff of Broken Rope telephones Betts and Gram and asks for their help in housing a bus load of retired folks that are foodies. Reluctantly, the Winstons agree. That is until three of the members of the bus go missing. One member is found dead with a noose around his neck in front of Jake's fake Sheriff's office. Betts joins Jake is trying to solve this mystery. Meanwhile another crime is under scrutiny, that of Sally Swarthmore and the killing of her parents a mere hundred years ago. Betts is back and forth with both cases and with the help of her friends and family she just may discover the truth of both crimes. Delightful story and characters with the bonus of delicious potato themed recipes. I truly enjoyed this novel.

If you don't like those two ingredients in a mystery, you may not like this. I do like them, and love this book (and the first one in the series as well). Betts and her Gram live in Broken Rope, Missouri, which has a rich Old West heritage. The two of them also have the ability to see ghosts, and they become involved in mysteries from both the present and the past. The story develops at just the right pace, the settings are interesting, and the characters--live and ghostly--are intelligent and likable. Unlike the central character in so many cozy series, Betts does not plunge pointlessly into danger and does not hide things from the police. She focuses on events of the past, and if those happen to intersect with the present she doesn't use that as an excuse to believe she can do what the police cannot. I hope those characteristics continue in future books in this series!

I would recommend this book even if you've never read any of Paige Shelton's other books. It works as both a sequel and a stand alone. The creative titles are always tied into the actual story. You won't be disappointed with this book although I found myself having to refer back to previous chapters for characters because I was reading to fast to absorb names and their relationships to one another. Like any good mystery, it never ends the way you thought it would. The strong lead

character, Betts, as well as an interesting group of supporting cast members in this book make it hard to put down. Follow Betts and her best friend Jake as they try to unravel a murder that seems to implicate the good-natured Jake and get Betts so curious that she decides to investigate it on her own. You will also like the pre-quel *If Fried Chicken Could Fly*. Shelton has a similar series of *Farmer's Market Mysteries* that are also fast, entertaining reads. Both series have mystery mixed with relationships - friends, foes and romantic interests. Take a chance and come find out why the town of Broken Rope is so infamous. You'll be glad you stopped in to witness a little of what makes the town such a hopping tourist attraction.

Paige Shelton has several series going -- I think she's done a nice job with character development in several of those I've read. This book is the second in a series set in a Missouri town with an old west tourist motif. The young protagonist, Betts, returns to her hometown somewhat adrift. She joins her grandmother, Gram, in her cooking school. The twist in the series is that Gram has a casual acquaintance with many of the ghosts of earlier residents. The ghosts are not always present -- they appear for brief spells in time; they come and go. They often remember only bits and pieces of their lives, and their previous visits. Betts discovers that she, too, can see/hear the ghosts. The ghosts usually have some relevance to present day murders -- or they provide information to help Betts and Gram solve the mysteries. There were different town ghosts in the first two books. I'm looking forward to the third.

This is a cute paranormal cozy with likeable characters. I enjoy an occasional rest from the more psychological, serial killer books that can sometimes leave you a little drained. This is a good "mind cleanser" and I plan on following this series as it develops further.

I'm a bit of a push-over for talking ghosts. Add in high school sweethearts, a wealthy best friend, and law enforcement that does not mutter "leave the investigation to the Professionals".....Just my kind of read.

A tour bus load of "foodies" shows up & Betts has to find somewhere for them to stay. When one shows up dead on the shop stoop of her best friend, she sets about to figure out what happened & why- all the while helping her "new friend"- a ghost named Sally- find out about her past. I continue to love the paranormal twists and additions, the characters are lively (especially Gram), Broken Rope is a great historical setting. Looking forward to the next book in this wonderful series!

The setting moved away from the country cooking school which is really the basis and theme of the mystery series. There were so many characters and secondary characters it was tough to keep track without a cheat sheet. Hopefully, book 3 will return to the country cooking school setting and not used as a jumpstart to another setting.

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