



Magda, Intergalactic Chef: Book 1: The Big Tournament

Nicolas Wouters

Mathilde Van Gheluwe, Illustrator

Graphic Universe (Apr 1, 2025)

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A girl competes in an intergalactic cooking contest in Nicolas Wouters's graphic novel *Magda, Intergalactic Chef*.

Magda is hesitant about participating in her planet's cooking tournament but does so to appease her family. Her confidence grows as she improvises and wins a spot at the grand intergalactic tournament. She and her family make it to the tournament despite space travel troubles, and Magda rediscovers her competitive fire.

Each round of the competition has its own excitement—for example, a preliminary round requires contestants to create dishes to attract a finicky bird that holds the keys to unlock the next stage in the tournament. And Magda learns that there's more to the tournament than it appeared—and that winning the prize could have galaxy-wide effects.

Magda is a compelling heroine who wrestles to decide what's most important to her. While the book ends before the final competition is complete, she is reminded that "it's not the destination ... it's the journey." The quirky illustrations include pitch-perfect humor, as with Magda's singed, proud face as she displays one of her culinary creations. The art also excels at depicting various planets and their exotic flora and fauna, like the "rhinobeetle." Food competitions feature ingredients that are familiar but with distinctive alien twists, as with the "artishock" and "zebulon eggplant"; the visual variety is fascinating.

Magda, Intergalactic Chef is a whimsical graphic novel in which a girl who hopes to be a great chef helps others in the process of pursuing her dreams.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2025)

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