

The Secret to Happiness: Cape Cod Creamery

Suzanne Woods Fisher

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An overachieving chef learns to embrace loss as a chance for renewal in Suzanne Woods Fisher's Christian romance novel *The Secret to Happiness*.

Twenty-eight-year-old Callie is fired from her job as a hotel chef due to a food poisoning mishap at a conference. She also faces health concerns. In hopes of finding reprieve from her feelings of failure, she visits her spirited Aunt Marnie and cousin Dawn who run an ice cream shop in Cape Cod. Dawn presses Callie to join a community college class taught by Bruno, the unflappable author of the self-help guide *Secret to Happiness*, which pushes Callie to relearn everyday gratitude.

Callie confronts her past, including her tendency to pretend to be happy and successful in order to meet other people's expectations of her. At the same time, she changes because of her warm encounters with her family members and colorful Cape Codders. When the shop's customers dwindle during the wintry off-season, the challenge leads to additional personal growth: Callie helps using her impeccable culinary skills.

As Callie learns to slow down and appreciate authenticity in her relationships, she also begins to face her fears. Bruno asks astute questions that steer her toward self-reflection. Their relationship, which develops in a slow-burning manner (they watch the sunrise; they converse), soothes her. Though Bruno himself remains mysterious, disclosing little that's personal, a later revelation about who he really is leads to a happy outcome for one series returnee. But the book's religious elements are underdeveloped, left to suggestions of God's love, having trust for the future, and an implied conversion.

The Secret to Happiness is a sweet romance novel that also includes new friendships, family, and hope.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2023)

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