



# Eat, pray, eat, love, solve a crime in 'The Main Ingredient'



POHLA SMITH  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

APR 13, 2014 12:00 AM

ADVERTISEMENT

An advertisement for a travel or vacation service. It features a scenic landscape with a blue lake, a paved path leading to a small dock, and a dense green forest in the background under a clear sky. The text 'GET MORE AWAY OUT OF YOUR' is in bold, uppercase letters, and 'get away!' is written in a white, cursive script below it. A small 'X' icon is in the top right corner of the ad area.

GET MORE AWAY  
OUT OF YOUR  
*get away!*



With a heavy heart, California food editor Wendy Whitby travels to her childhood home in Weewampum, Wis., to wait for her sick mother to die. Instead her mother recovers. But Wendy has other reasons for staying in her hometown. She also has been helping her two longtime best friends, Amber and Merribeth, with their downtown restaurant, Amberosia's.

On Christmas Eve, the women send their patrons packing because Amber has gone into labor. Wendy and Merribeth take her to the hospital and try to help her with the delivery.

After Star is born, Wendy goes home only to discover that Amberosia's has burned to the ground. The three want to know who was responsible for the arson, but the town's fire marshal thinks they were responsible. It is up to them to identify and find the criminal themselves.

In the meantime, other difficulties for the protagonists arise. There's more to the lives of Wendy, Merribeth and Amber than solving the fire and loving up Star, and those things fill a book. It provides an opportunity for the author to take the reader into what she hopes is an unexpected, but fascinating journey.

**"THE MAIN INGREDIENT"**

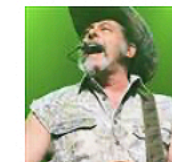
By Margo Wilson  
Ramsfield Press (\$12.99)



**LATEST AE**



Downtown's art scene will be on full display during Cultural Trust's 2023 Summer Gallery Crawl



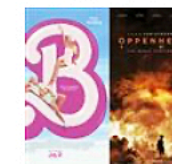
From racing monkeys to Ted Nugent, county fairs are getting wild



Best Pittsburgh concerts this week: Pantera, Foreigner, Lyle Lovett, Gov't Mule and more



Clutch and Dinosaur Jr. is a clash of styles but a hard-rocking night



'Barbie' takes the box office crown and 'Oppenheimer' soars in a historic weekend



"The Main Ingredient" is a thoroughly fun and interesting novel, brought to life by Margo Wilson, chair of the English Department at California University of Pennsylvania, where she teaches journalism and English. But it took more than her current job assignment to provide the material that gives her characters such realistically busy lives.

Ms. Wilson spent 20 years as a reporter and editor for various newspapers in Indiana, Wisconsin, California and Canada, including posts as food editor at two of the papers. The writer-professor certainly is familiar with the restaurant scene as she and her late husband, Michael Kraft, owned a restaurant for three years in Racine, Wis.

As a result, actual recipes for everything from sugar cookies, chef salad, gluten-free lemon bars, spiced cider and fish fry open every chapter, providing a culinary dimension to already vividly drawn characters.

Ms. Wilson, who has been at Cal U for 12 years, has learned different things in her 20 years at newspapers. "I did, at various places, general assignment, government reporting, county reporter, state reporter, higher education and education writer," she said.





"I had a different capacity in features; I was an arts editor, food editor, family pages, family editor. I did copy editing in sports, business copy editing. I did write cops on weekends, and the same with courts. My beats were either government or education and then on features, various things, most of them related to arts and entertainment and then food."

Ms. Wilson's eclectic experience turns up on every page of "The Main Ingredient." It brings a fascinating story of love, friendship, loyalty and arson to a satisfying conclusion, much like one of the recipes that dots the book.

Ms. Wilson's day job at Cal U keeps her busy, but she's already thinking about her next excursion into fiction. She's enjoying the feedback she's getting so far, but she wouldn't mind if Hollywood or some cable channel came knocking with an offer she couldn't refuse.

*First Published April 13, 2014, 12:00am*

**Popular in the Community**

