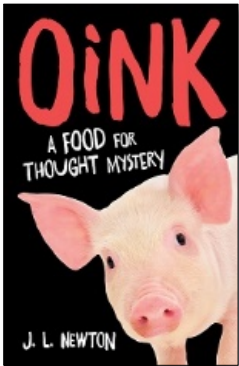


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## **OINK: A FOOD FOR THOUGHT MYSTERY**

The fight over GMOs and the corporatization of the university form the backdrop of this engrossing whodunit.



Emily Addams is the last person you'd expect the police to be circling in a poisoning investigation. A professor of women's studies, a foodie, and a doting mom, Emily has spent her life building a campus community and engaging in peaceful struggles against injustice. But when Peter Elliott, a Professor of Plant Biology at her bucolic Arbor State, is found comatose in a pig pen clutching a piece of Emily's corn bread (unmistakable for its goat cheese and caramelized onions) it's in her direction that the police turn. So begins **OINK:**

**A FOOD FOR THOUGHT MYSTERY** (She Writes Press, April 2017, paperback).

As she comes under suspicion, Emily and her comrades in the women's and ethnic studies programs are fighting the administration's attempt to defund their programs and run their beloved Arbor State more like a corporation than a place of higher learning. Her efforts to save her own skin and to protect the campus community she loves come together as Emily launches an investigation to find out who really slipped the professor a piece of cornbread spiked with pesticide.

She discovers that Peter—whom she had seen argue for corporate ownership of seed stock and genetic technologies at a recent panel on GMOs—was knee-deep in secret corporate funding for his new strain of genetically modified corn. An inveterate philander, he has also betrayed two of his women students and his highly accomplished wife. And if that's not enough, Save the Fields, a militant anti-GMO group, has had him in their sights. As always, Emily turns to food and cooking for solace, pleasure, and building community, and it is her multicultural community that helps her solve the crime.

In the spirit of community, each chapter of **OINK: A FOOD FOR THOUGHT MYSTERY** ends with a sumptuous recipe for a dish that turned up in the preceding pages. Culminating in a twist as curvy as a pig's tail, **OINK: A FOOD FOR THOUGHT MYSTERY** is at once a sly send-up of the corporatized university and a reminder of why community belongs at that heart of human life.

### **OINK: A FOOD FOR THOUGHT MYSTERY**

J.L. Newton | April 2016 | 256 pages | ISBN: 978-1631522123 | She Writes Press | Paperback | \$16.95  
[www.JudithNewton.com](http://www.JudithNewton.com)

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**J. L. Newton** is professor emerita at U.C. Davis. She is at work on another mystery in the Food For Thought Series and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area where she cooks for family and friends. She has published five works of nonfiction. Her memoir, *Tasting Home: Coming of Age in the Kitchen*, appeared in 2013 with She Writes Press, received a starred review in *Publisher's Weekly Select*, and won twelve independent press awards. You can read more about her at [JudithNewton.com](http://JudithNewton.com).

### **PRAISE**

"It has been said that the comic campus novel is no more (things in higher education are verging on the tragic), but *Oink* proves otherwise. A witty combination of a campus novel, a murder mystery, a debate about GMOs, and a recipe book, *Oink* is a celebration of community connected to the joy of food and fellowship. At a time when collegiality is on the decline because of the corporatization of higher education, Newton's light-hearted novel makes the serious point that collegiality is important not only personally but also politically." —**Maggie Berg** and **Barbara K. Seeber**, authors of *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy*

"Food themes abound in this engaging and well-crafted mystery which combines concerns about genetic engineering and pesticides with reflections upon the satisfactions of building community through sharing food and food stories. Recipes are included."  
—**Janet A. Flammang**, author of *Table Talk: Building Democracy One Meal at a Time*

"... a fabulous fictional voyage through the new landscape of contemporary food culture in the Academy with the intrigue of mystery to boot. It's rich in surprises and recipes (you don't want to miss the blini or the cupcakes!) —**Michael W. Twitty**, author of *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African-American Culinary History in the Old South*

"This entertaining GMO mystery novel aptly describes the laid back atmosphere of a small town ag university. Newton, a former professor, captures the distinct traits of academics from both the sciences and humanities. A good read that is both humorous and thoughtful."  
—**Pam Ronald**, Professor, Plant Pathology and the Genome Center and co-author of *Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics and the Future of Food*

"Fans of the cozy mystery will love a plot that keeps on twisting until the end and the bonus of recipes for good things eaten in this novel. But what to my mind distinguishes *Oink* is its insightful and often beautiful creation of the academic characters and settings at a formerly-agricultural California university. The action is played out amid vivid, evocative glimpses of an agrarian Central Valley built-scape where non-human living things also loom and fly overhead as humans pursue and are pursued by each other. *Oink* satisfies in multiple ways."  
—**Elizabeth Harris**, author of *Mayhem: Three Lives of a Woman*

## SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. You are an academic and a professor emerita of Women's Studies. What made you decide to write a mystery?
2. One of the most prominent themes in *Oink* is the corporatization of the university, and while the main character, a professor, is investigating an attempted murder suspect she is also fighting against the administration's bid to run the university like a corporation. How much does the latter come out of your personal experience in the academy?
3. Your main character, Emily Adams, is a foodie who loves cooking and sharing food with her colleagues and loved ones, and each chapter of *Oink* ends with a recipe that has been mentioned in the preceding pages. Talk about how food builds community among your characters and the role it plays in their common struggle to fight against corporate interests.
4. How did you choose the recipes for *Oink*?
5. Many of the characters in *Oink* have a relationship to GMOs. The character of Peter is a prominent developer of GMO corn, and he also is the victim of a poisoning that leaves him in a coma. Members of a militant anti-GMO group have been seen lurking around campus and they may be behind the attack on Peter. These figures represent the extreme pro and anti positions, but Emily the main character, has a far more nuanced view of GMOs. Why was it important for you to show the kind of middle ground on this issue?
6. Do you think GMOs can be a force for good in the world? If so, why?
7. It's pretty clear that Emily and her women colleagues still face a lot of sexism at the university, and they deal with it by creating solidarity amongst themselves. Can you talk about how the academy has gotten better and worse for women since you first started in it?
8. As a writer, how do you balance trying to highlight political themes in your work with the demands of telling a good story? How hard or easy was it for you to do this in *Oink*?
9. While the characters in your book are facing formidable challenges and have relatively little power to fight back against the forces arrayed against them—the police, rich corporations, the university's administration—they find strength in community. This is another fundamental theme in the book. Why do you think community is so necessary and how can it be used as a political tool of resistance?

10. This is the first novel in a series of mysteries, called *Food for Thought*. What's next for Emily?