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**Summer Series: Arthur**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Recording: The opinions expressed during this podcast are the individual’s own and do not represent those of Wyndham City Council.

Johneen: Welcome everyone to Recently Returned and thank you for joining us for this episode of the Summer Series 2022. My name is Johneen and I’m a member of the Adult Program and Services team. Today we are visited by Arthur, a member of the library team creating and delivering wonderful engaging programmes for kids and adults. Lovely to see you today, Arthur.

Arthur: Thank you for having me, Johneen.

Johneen: Thank you for joining us. To commence our chat, we have three quick questions to start us thinking about what we read, how we read, and the impact reading can have. Our first question, Arthur, is: what is your worst reading habit?

Arthur: My worst reading habit is starting to flick through a book and then not finding the time to finish a chapter, for example, when I’ve got other things to do.

Johneen: Many, many people talk about how books can distract us and how they can vie for time but then we also need to remind ourselves of all the benefits of reading. So, it’s a pretty good bad habit I think, Arthur. Our next question is one of reflection: can you tell us a book which you wish you could experience again for the very first time?

Arthur: Yeah look, a story, a book which I really enjoyed reading was Afternoons in Ithaka by Spiri Tsintziras. It’s a story of a woman’s life’s journey as a child of migrants growing up in Collingwood to becoming a young adult and studying and meeting people along the way. Whilst she tries to find her identity in Australia and what it means to be Australian. But also, what it means to be Greek.

And likewise, there’s chapters in the book where she travels back to her parent’s homeland and meets people along the way. So, essentially, it’s almost like a reflection of the Odyssey story with Odysseus leaving Ithaka, his homeland, to fight in the war and then his journey back home. And in almost every chapter there’s some sort of interaction with other people that involves a dinner party, food. Whether it’s a good host or a bad host, it’s all about etiquette that comes with entertaining.

Johneen: That’s a beautiful parallel with Odysseus and the notion of significant journeys. Thank you so much, Arthur. Now our final quick question is about a book which has really challenged you this year.

Arthur: The Pepper Thai Cookbook. Pepper Teigen is a cook whose ancestry is from Thailand and America and her book is filled with the most delicious-looking spicy food on the planet. And each recipe correlates to a theme, a story, an event from her life and again, it’s that connection of people’s life’s journeys and food and that connection to memories of people and things associated with food.

For example, I still remember a wonderful seafood lasagne which I had in a little town called Jesalo in Italy. That was a long time ago, but the memory is still there and the connection to the place is associated to the food. Or having crepes, which my grandmother, cooked in a little cast iron skillet in her fireplace in a tiny little village in Greece up in the mountains. And it was just beautiful. It was snowing outside. She had chestnuts roasting in the fireplace as well, and it was just a lovely memory that I can go back and connect to times from the past.

Johneen: So, I’m thinking, Arthur, that the challenge for you reading this book is journeying back in time.

Arthur: Yeah.

Johneen: So, it’s actually a beautiful challenge and well worth it. Finally, we’d really like to get what you would recommend for listeners for summer reading.

Arthur: Absolutely. I highly recommend Beyond the Greek Salad. Again, it’s another similar book to the aforementioned books. But in this one, it’s a very visually stunning look at different places around Greece. The colours just pop off the page. The recipes are all inspired by real cooks, whether it’s a home cook or a chef in a tavern somewhere in a seaside village with little boats rocking on the waves. And there is the smell of freshly fried calamari and lemon on top of it. Beautiful, with a little Greek salad on the side. Some wine.

Johneen: So, this really is a book to keep us company in summer.

Arthur: I have one more recommendation, and this one is another wonderful book. It’s called Salamati by Hamed Allahyari. I hope I said his name right. And Hamed is a refugee who came to Australia from Iran ten years ago and has since become a very popular chef, has opened his own restaurant/café and cooks the most amazing, beautifully presented, colourful dishes from his homeland and beyond. Again, you’ll want to try all the recipes out. And again, just like Pepper, just like Ruth, just like Spiri, Hamad also connects each recipe to a story of his life’s journey and I think that’s very important to me, for me to be able to enjoy a cookbook. It really can’t just be instructions on how to make this, it needs to be a shared experience. I want to virtually live this moment with this person.

Johneen: Thank you so much, Arthur, for joining us today and sharing some of your reading world. But particularly thank you for taking us on this glorious culinary journey which can keep us company so well during this coming summer.

Just a reminder to everyone to join the Summer Reads Just for You programme so we can send you a personalised list of reading recommendations. You can check this out on our library website. Also please let us know your thoughts on today’s books and also share some recipes that you’ve made from these recommendations. We’d love to hear your favourite reads on recentlyreturned@wyndham.vic.gov.au or drop us a line on the Library Facebook page.

All of the books we’ve discussed today you can borrow from our Wyndham Library collection. Thank you again, Arthur, for joining us and inspiring us and thank you for everyone else and to everyone, happy reading and happy cooking.

[End of recorded material at 00:08:55]