

As interviewed on Map Your Mystery:

1. What is the title of your newest book? How many books have you published?

Sifting Through Clues. This is the 8th in the Cookbook Nook Mysteries. It will be my 19th book published.

2. How did you develop your character and choose your location?

In this series, I started with the shop. I know that sounds "different," but here's why I did. For a book signing for my Cheese Shop Mysteries (which I write as Avery Aames) I went to a darling culinary bookshop in Occoquan, Virginia and fell in love. I knew I had to write about a culinary bookshop. But I set in on the coast of California because California is my home. I've lived by the beach and thought that would be the perfect setting. Then I came up with my protagonist, Jenna Hart, a former advertising executive who has lost her smile. When her aunt asks her to move home to help her open the culinary bookshop, Jenna jumps at the chance. One small problem – Jenna is not a cook. She is a foodie and she adores books. In the first book, she has to learn everything...from scratch.

3. What do you enjoy about the author's lifestyle? What do you not enjoy?

I love working by myself on my hours. I can write at 3 a.m. or 6 p.m. I enjoy being able to talk out loud to myself and not think I'm crazy. LOL There's not much I don't enjoy except when I feel like I'm not "nailing" the story. However, if I have to work to make a story come alive, that's fine. I enjoy a challenge.

4. Do you model your character after yourself or any one you know?

No. None of my characters are "me," and yet they could be. They all love their family and friends. They are loyal. They are curious by nature. I'm over 50. All my protagonists are younger. Maybe I'm reliving my youth?

5. How do you get yourself out of a writing rut?

I don't believe in a writer's block. So if I'm feeling like I'm in a rut, I put my rear end in a chair and write something – anything. A letter, a grocery list. Get my mind in gear. If I have to, I'll reread two to three chapters to jumpstart ideas. When all else fails, I refer to my outline and tweak and tweak until something comes together that feels like inspiration. Mark Twain said, "Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words."

6. If your books were made into a movie, who would you want to play the lead character?

For the Cookbook Nook Mysteries, I'd like to see Angie Harmon. She's exactly who I pictured when I created Jenna. Now, Jenna is not tough like the Rizzoli character Angie played in the past, but she's frisky and smart and resolute.

7. Who is your favorite author?

I have so many it wouldn't be fair to list them all. I have read everything Krista Davis has written. I've read nearly everything Lisa Gardner has written. I enjoy reading Harlan Coben and Daniel Silva. I loved reading Agatha Christie and often reread her work. For individual books: I absolutely adored *The Three Musketeers*, *Rebecca*, and so many more.

8. If you could invite five people – living or dead – to a dinner party, who would they be?

Mark Twain, Shakespeare, Steve Martin, Audrey Hepburn, and Hilary Clinton. Talk about a smart crowd! Can you imagine the conversation?

9. If you could not be an author, what would like to do as a career?

Well, I did cater before becoming an actress and before becoming a writer. So maybe I'd go back to catering. I love to cook. But the hours can be excruciating. I'd love to do standup comedy but someone would have to write my material. LOL I could be a life coach or career guidance counselor for teenagers. I really enjoy this phase of kids. They're so eager to move forward.