

Readers offered meaty mystery

By Burl Burlingame

Sunday, January 30, 2011

"**Captain Cooked**: Hawaiian Mystery of Romance, Revenge ... and Recipes!"

By S.P. Grogan (Addison & Highsmith, \$16.95)

At the risk of calling this novel a potboiler, the title really does add up. It's a mystery whodunit set amidst "foodie" television stars and the Big Island hotel industry, and it contains both recipes and clues to locate a "treasure" somewhere on the island. This last is something of a habit for the publishers.

The heroine is videographer Madison Merlot Dayne, whose father is a globe-trotting food-TV personality, and they're in Hawaii for a special cook-off linked to a major resort opening.

They get there just in time to witness a beloved, size-large Hawaiian musical personality succumb to poi poisoning. The author manages also to tie in multinational investing and a rather unique underground Hawaiian nationalism movement that is investing in the tourism business.

As mysteries go it's not exactly Agatha Christie, although there are enough false leads and clues to keep the reader guessing. There's a side plot involving geocaching, a treasure-hunting game using a GPS, that feels as if it were shoehorned into the narrative and unnecessarily overcomplicates the solution. The book is also written in a rather odd, overly cute style that might wear a reader's patience. Like whipped cream on poi, it doesn't quite mix. The recipes look tasty, however, and the meat of the novel is novel enough to spark interest among filmmakers. (Author Grogan will be in Honolulu on Feb. 25 and 26 for book signings at Barnes & Noble and Borders.) Visit www.CaptainCooked.com for signing dates and times. Verify with bookstores.

