

Library Lines

By Amy James, Kirkland Town Library Staff

Why is it that the minute we start talking about getting healthy we spend all of our time thinking about restricting ourselves and very little time thinking about nourishing ourselves? Maybe this is the juncture to be gentle, to enter into things quietly and without proclamation, to be proud of and grateful for the bodies we have.

In Andie Mitchell's *It Was Me All Along*, we're taken on a sometimes harrowing journey of the author's relationship with food from the time she was a child. Eating was a source of emotional comfort, and later shame, for Mitchell, who began trying diet after diet from middle school on. Her memoir details not only her love of food but her complicated relationship with her elusive father who shared the food with her. Mitchell's steadfast mother, although dealing with multiple challenges in her own life, attempts to guide her daughter through various programs and fresh starts, but in the end only Mitchell can decide.

Ideas for nourishment abound in Terry Walters' *Clean Start*, the follow-up to her cookbook, *Clean Food*. Walters urges us to re-imagine healthy food as delicious, energy-giving, and good for us and for the planet as well. Both of Walters' books provide recipes by season so that we can tap into the fresh foods that are available at local farms and on grocery store shelves. *Clean Start* offers more instructions on the whys of eating "clean", organizing a "clean" kitchen, and how to adapt "clean" eating to our own lifestyles. Admittedly, at first glance some of the recipes look complicated or have ingredients that might leave you thinking, "What? Where?" But Walters suggests substitutions for hard to find or expensive items. You can also just google, "Substitute for mirin?" and you'll find something that will do just as well. Trust me, you haven't lived until you've tried the Tofu Pumpkin Pie with Gingersnap Crust in *Clean Food*. Plus, you'll feel virtuous (which will increase your sense of well-being, right?).

It's not only food that contributes to good health but our surroundings as well. In a normal year we might escape to new environs, but for now we'll just have to soothe our senses at home. Enter *The Little Book of Hygge: Danish Secrets for Happy Living* by Meik Wiking. In this small, easily readable (or listen-able) volume, Wiking helps us to re-imagine our homes as spaces in which we are fully present, taking pleasure in small things, and wrapping ourselves in comfort. Make no mistake: this isn't a book about lying on the couch in a fleece onesie eating bon bons and binge-watching *New Girl*. It's just the opposite. It's a book about creating atmosphere, doing lovely things for ourselves and our loved ones, getting rid of chaos (including the electronics that steal us away from the present moment), lighting a candle or ten, drinking something fragrant and warm, and heaving a big sigh.

Anne LaMott's *Bird by Bird* is ostensibly a book about writing, but it's also about life. It's about starting slow, doing one thing well before we move on to the next thing, cherishing small successes. So I say this, my friends: start slow. Eat one nourishing and delicious meal, try one new food, light one candle. Then try the next thing. This is not the year for a total overhaul.