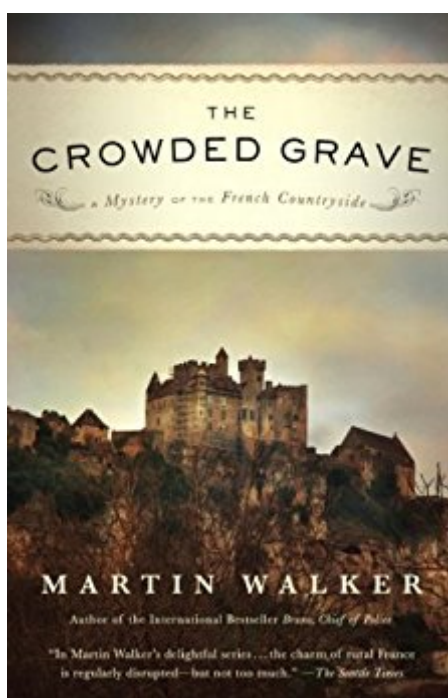


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The Crowded Grave: A Mystery Of The French Countryside (Bruno Chief Of Police Book 4)



Synopsis

The fourth installment in the delightful, internationally acclaimed series featuring Bruno, *le* Chief of Police. It's spring in the idyllic village of St. Denis, and for Chief of Police Bruno Courrèges that means lamb stews, bottles of his beloved Pomerol, morning walks with his hound, Gigi, and a new string of regional crimes and international capers. When a local archaeological team searching for Neanderthal remains turns up a corpse with a watch on its wrist and a bullet in its head, it's up to Bruno to solve the case. But the task will not be easy, not with a meddlesome new magistrate, a series of attacks by animal rights activists on local foie gras producers, and a summit between France and Spain approaching – not to mention two beautiful, brilliant women vying for Bruno's affections.

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Customer Reviews

I've been bingeing on the delightful "Bruno" series, and this 4th installment was chock full of the things that make these books so appealing. First we have Bruno doing what he does best: looking out for the citizens of St. Denis when some student activists target local farmers. Then a dead body is discovered and Bruno switches into "investigator" mode, while juggling security duties for a last minute summit between France and Spain. Phew. Don't worry though, there's still plenty of time for

Bruno to show off his culinary skills, vacillate between the two women in his life and walk his beloved hunting dog, Gigi. I enjoy the way the author reveals more about Bruno's past as the series moves forward. There's so much that explains his strong attachment to the small town of St. Denis and his fierce need to protect its citizens, who are his family of choice. These stories are strongly character based, though the mysteries are not simply window dressing (as they are in a "cozy" mystery). There are a lot of layers to this particular storyline, and the mystery kept me completely engaged. As always the characterization was excellent and the author's vivid descriptions of food and wine had me raiding my fridge in the wee hours of the morning (sadly, I was unable to locate any foie gras or Pomerol, and had to settle for some goat cheese from the supermarket - the shame!). If you enjoy mysteries that have more substance than a "cozy" but still focus on all the charming details that bring a locale to life, then I'd recommend this series. Good, solid mystery storylines that are heavy on the characterization and domestic details and light on the blood and gore. You'll want to start at the beginning: *À Bruno, Chief of Police: A Novel of the French Countryside*. Occasional strong language/swearing. No explicit sexual content.

Bruno's idyllic life as Chief of Police of St. Denis gets seriously interrupted in this latest mystery set in the gastronomic heart of France. He scarcely has time to feed his chickens and ducks, walk his dog, and make love to the local mad Scotswoman - what with attacks on the Périgord foie gras industry by animal rights activists, and a sensitive summit meeting on Basque terrorism about to be held in St. Denis. Bruno is assigned to help plan security for the summit, which brings him into contact with his former lover, Isabella, the Intelligence officer in charge of base operations. Bruno has a habit of falling for strong women who value career or independence over relationships. With two such lovers stirring his emotions in this book, he finds it hard sometimes to keep his mind on terrorist threats. One thread in the complex plot I especially enjoyed evolves around an archeological dig. The Périgord is the cradle of prehistoric man, as well as being famous for its wines, truffles and fine wines. The site of all those prehistoric bones makes an interesting place for a modern skeleton to turn up - a pivotal event in the plot. But what I always like most about the Bruno mysteries is watching Bruno interact with, and look out for, the citizens of St. Denis. Bruno is brilliantly effective at community policing. He never arrests anyone if he can help it. Rather, he promotes peaceful solutions to local conflicts. The locals are his friends. He drinks with them, hunts with them, and cooks them amazing dinners. His gun rarely leaves the office. To appreciate this book fully, I think it would help to know the history of contemporary Europe, and Basque terrorism in particular. Which I don't. But there was enough action to keep me hooked - bombings, a kidnapping

and a dramatic fight, in which not only Bruno, but his dog, his horse and his ex-lover shine.

The Crowded Grave is yet another delight in the Bruno, Chief of Police, series from Martin Walker. Benoit Courreges -- known to one and all as Bruno -- is police chief in St. Denis, a fictional town in the Dordogne region of France, home to foie gras, good wine, and other staples of the quiet countryside where everyone knows everyone else and distrusts anyone foreign, "foreign" defined to mean anyone including other French men and women who don't live there. In fact, the local pastime is figuring out ways of keeping the old traditions alive and well in the face of the EU's efforts to homogenize local products to meet "European" standards. Though a decorated combat veteran wounded in Bosnia, Bruno declines to carry a weapon except under the most dire circumstances, and takes his job of protecting the locals very seriously, moderated by more than a little Gallic whimsy and a preference to enforce the spirit rather than the strict letter of the law. In short, St. Denis is a lovely old town and Bruno does his utmost to keep it that way. Alas, for a quiet country locale, St. Denis has an alarming propensity for attracting thugs, scoundrels, and terrorists, and Bruno has his hands full keeping them from destroying the town's way of life. In the Crowded Grave, poor Bruno and his friends and law enforcement colleagues have to contend with a corpse from the '80s buried in a prehistoric grave, attacks by eco-activists on impoverished local farmers struggling to make a living raising ducks and geese for foie gras, the legacy of the Spanish dirty war against Basque separatists, and remnants of the Baader-Meinhof terrorists. As Bruno might say "Putain!" With a nose for the truth as acute as a dog trained to hunt truffles, he uncovers the threads that pull all this together and saves the day once again, though not without great personal loss. As he races to solve the mysteries, Bruno still somehow finds the time to drink wine and cook delectable meals for his friends. The entire Bruno, Chief of Police, series is a delight and The Crowded Grave is as good or better as any of the others. Bruno is a worthy addition to the small group of truly great police detectives who stand head and shoulders above a field too often crowded by mediocrity. Martin Walker's love for the Dordogne shines through, bringing St. Denis, Bruno, and the cast of eccentrics we come to know very vividly to life.

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