Top 10 Books for August 2014
From delightful fiction tales to enlightening nonfiction, we’ve got you covered.

by Bethanne Patrick

For bookish types, August—not April—is the cruelest month, as it usually means few new releases and less book chatter than usual. I often counsel readers to save a big fat novel for these literary doldrums, like The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt. However, if you’ve been there, done that or (blasphemy!) decided to skip the Pulitzer-anointed third Tartt novel, I’ve got a great list of books out this month—and they’re nearly all by Washington area writers. When you’re tired of reading (more blasphemy!), you can check your local literary calendars and come out for readings and signings by these authors.

As usual, by “Top 10” I don’t mean that I’ve read all the books and deemed this group The Best; I mean that I’ve read a lot of the books and these are excellent and well worth your time. If you know of a book you believe should be on this list and isn’t, please tell us in the comments, or email me at bpatrick@washingtonian.com. I hope your August is filled with lots of reading time.

NONFICTION

Books that Cook: The Making of a Literary Meal by Jennifer Cognard-Black et al

Cognard-Black and her co-authors Melissa Goldthwaite and Marion Nestle have concocted a delicious salmagundi in this combination of cookbook and literary tribute. The volume includes poems, stories, and essays, along with recipes, and some of each are original. There are beloved bits, too, from Laurie Colwin’s classic piece on three repulsive meals to Maya Angelou’s caramel cake. The perfect gift for your summer hostess who loves to read, cook, and consider.