

BOOKS

MOVIDA RUSTICA

Frank Camorra & Richard Cornish
Murdoch Books, hbk, \$59.95.

Only Frank Camorra could make traditional Spanish cooking look this cool. *MoVida Rustica* is packed full of amazing photography and stories that transport you right into the heart of Spain where you meet the people and places that have inspired these dishes. Best of all, it's one good-looking book. From the typography to the patterns and photos throughout, it's a designer's cookbook. *Anna Vu, senior designer*

STEPHANIE ALEXANDER'S KITCHEN GARDEN COMPANION

Stephanie Alexander

Penguin Books, hbk, \$125.

Strawberries have just appeared as tiny green nuggets on the plants I grew from seed – such joy. *The Kitchen Garden Companion* captures the pleasure that food gardeners experience with every successful harvest. In her down-to-earth (really) style, Alexander dispenses frank advice and even sex education – “...break off the male flower, bend back its petals and press it against a female flower,” she writes of hand-pollinating kiwifruit. Recipes show off every root, leaf, flower and fruit, and each ingredient is photographed in the garden and on the plate. True to its name, this book has become my constant (and much-loved) gardening companion. *Kerryn Burgess, chief subeditor*

SEVEN FIRES: GRILLING THE ARGENTINE WAY

Francis Mallmann

Artisan Publishing, hbk, \$79.95.

Seven Fires has the look and feel of a classic. I love Mallmann's intimate description of his journey from haute cuisine back to a style of cooking that is not only part of his own heritage but instinctive to the human race. The title refers to the seven different styles of cooking with fire explored within; for me the pinnacle is the whole grilled beef carcass, raised and lowered over the fire via block and tackle. Not something you're likely to do yourself but inspiring nonetheless. *Rodney Dunn, contributing food editor*

“Nigel Slater has found the tender place in my heart with this book – Santa had better deliver.”

COCO: 10 WORLD-LEADING MASTERS CHOOSE 100 CONTEMPORARY CHEFS

Phaidon Press, hbk, \$75.

The premise: 10 chefs, including Australia's own Shannon Bennett alongside the likes of Ferran Adrià and René Redzepi, “curate” a collection of 100 contemporary chefs and their recipes. All these chefs are to cooking what haute couture is to fashion, and among the local talent are Martin Benn, Mark Best, Robert Marchetti, Andrew McConnell and Ben Shewry. With its “insider” photos and out-there recipes, *Coco* will have you utterly absorbed on Christmas Day while the rest of the family are still opening their presents. *Monique Lane, junior writer*

SNOW FLAKES AND SCHNAPPS

Jane Lawson

Murdoch Books, hbk, \$69.95.

As delicious as these recipes look, I'm not planning on cooking from this book. Like the author, I'm a self-confessed Scandi fan, and I love this coffee table tome for its immaculate design, from the typography to the incredible eye for detail (look out for the “secret” snowflake on every spread). Before summer has even begun, I'm already dreaming of a white Christmas. *Lou Fay, creative director*

AD HOC AT HOME

Thomas Keller

Artisan Publishers, hbk, \$99.

This American chef's exactitude and unwillingness to compromise have made him one of the most lauded names in cooking. *Ad Hoc at Home* presents the simpler, family-style food of his casual

eatery of the same name with home cooks in mind, but it's not exactly *Keller for Dummies* nonetheless. It's all about seeing this formidable technician apply the same armoury of skills to roast chicken and grilled cheese sandwiches as he does to the French Laundry's famously tricky cornets of salmon tartare with sweet red onion crème fraîche. (And it's a damned fine grilled cheese sandwich.) *Pat Nourse, features editor*

TENDER VOLUME 1: A COOK AND HIS VEGETABLE PATCH

Nigel Slater

Harper Collins, hbk, \$59.99.

Nigel Slater has found the tender place in my heart with his first volume of the *Tender* duo. In a form a little like that of *Stephanie Alexander's Kitchen Garden Companion*, Slater pushes aside fussiness and froufrou to produce simple recipes for his ambrosial home-grown vegetables. My personal favourite is the Jerusalem artichokes fried in duck fat – Santa had better deliver. *Alice Storey, assistant food editor*

EATING WITH EMPERORS: 150 YEARS OF DINING WITH KINGS, QUEENS... AND THE OCCASIONAL MAHARAJAH

Jake Smith

Melbourne University Publishing, hbk, \$59.99.

Journeys have always captured me, whether real, imagined or taken through time via books and old photographs – as with this regally bound guide to the gustatory mores of world leaders past and

present. Some of modern history's most significant events, and the mealtimes that accompanied them, are recounted in lively, sometimes gossipy style, from Queen Victoria's revolving breakfast table to the planting of the current White House veggie patch under the watchful eye of Michelle Obama. Accompanying each are paintings, photos, menu cards and recipes, bringing to life such crackpots as Ludwig II of Bavaria who invited imaginary friends to dinner before turning up inexplicably dead in a lake. Just spare a thought for the ortolan that was former French president François Mitterrand's last meal – the songbird caught alive in the traditional way, force fed in the dark and then drowned in Armagnac. What a way to go. *Emma Ventura, deputy editor*

VEFA'S KITCHEN

Vefa Alexaidou

Phaidon Press, hbk, \$84.95.

Its simplicity is what I find most inspiring about this Greek modern classic. Fabulously encyclopedic, it includes recipes for the icons of Greek cuisine, such as dolmades, pastitsio and moussaka, along with recipes for less well-known regional dishes such as an offal-filled traditional Easter soup from Corfu. Like Greek food itself, Vefa's Kitchen is honest, rustic and packed with salty and earthy flavour.

Lisa Featherby, food editor✳

