



The Crafty Minx
 Kelly Doust
 This book is like a cupcake: Sweet, light and moreish. Crafty minx Kelly Doust, a magazine

writer and former PR girl, has been haunting flea markets and op shops since her teens. She gives simple instructions for whipping up cute retro items such as aprons and decorative bunting and upcycling items you already own. She divides her projects by season and theme, with items for hip babies, stressed mums, environmentally minded shoppers and fashionistas. (Murdoch Books, \$45)



For creative-minded people *The Crafty Minx* is a treasure trove of inspiration and advice.



Bookshelf

Eleanor Black Watkin helps you choose the hottest books from among the new releases

Cravat-a-licious

Matt Preston

You might not have known that Matt Preston of MasterChef Australia fame (the one who wears the cravats) had been named Food Journalist of the Year by Le Cordon Bleu, but you won't be able to miss it in this book. He is charmingly aw-shucks about the honour and he is a lovely food writer, although perhaps it would have been best to leave mention of it off the cover. This is a collection of columns from *The Age*, *Delicious* and other publications and covers a large swathe of foodie territory. Personal favourites include an essay on how to throw an authentic 70s dinner party ("garnish as though your life depends on it"), a deconstruction of the perfect hamburger ("the egg is a tricky one given the exploding-yolk risk") and an ode to the ultimate cheese sandwich. (Ebury Press, \$42.99)



Going Rogue: An American Life

Sarah Palin

American vice-presidential hopeful Sarah Palin, or 'Caribou Barbie' as her detractors call her, is the most fascinating force to hit the international political stage since Barack Obama. It doesn't matter whether you like her or not. In her hotly anticipated autobiography she traces her stratospheric rise from small-town Alaska council member to number two on the Republican ticket in 2008. And she takes you behind the scenes on "that interview", when she told Katie Couric she could see Russia from her backyard, hence she was capable of managing international relations for the world's superpower. Thanks to a skilful ghost writer, this is highly readable as well as insightful – in ways Sarah Palin may not have intended. (Harper, \$44.99)



The Nanny Returns

Nicola Kraus and Emma McLaughlin

The Nanny Diaries was to the Upper East Side social set what *The Devil Wears Prada* was to the fashion world. People read the novel looking for dirt on well-known Wall Street financiers and their lunching/gymming/fundraising wives. The follow-up has a less voyeuristic feel, although it is grounded in the current financial crisis and rebukes parents who fob their children off on caregivers to leave them more time to pursue and enjoy their money.

Our heroine caregiver Nan has been travelling the world with her husband (the "Harvard hottie" from the first book) and just returned to New York when her former charge drunkenly stumbles back into her life. Grayer is now 15 and peevish at how his parents have raised him. His little brother, absurdly named Stilton, desperately needs a nurturing figure. Nan steps in once again to fill the void. While this is a funny, entertaining read it is not as heartfelt, or destined to be as popular, as its predecessor. (Simon and Schuster, \$37)





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The Seven Fires of Mademoiselle

Esther Vilar

What a curious little book, and how charming! The Mademoiselle of the title is nanny to the book's narrator, 12-year-old Carlota, the daughter of the Argentinian ambassador to the United States. It is the Christmas before John F Kennedy's assassination and the family has just moved into a fashionable Washington DC neighbourhood. Despite the season, Carlota and Mademoiselle are both struck with ennui; Carlota because she has just lost her best friend and Mademoiselle because she is homesick for Biarritz and her large family.

There is an additional sadness for Mademoiselle: At 24 she is ready for a husband, but though her extraordinary beauty attracts no end of admirers, she's never met a "real man". To cheer her up, the inventive Carlota fashions candleholders for the Christmas tree so they can decorate it in the proper French style, with glowing candlelight. The family is eating Christmas dinner when the tree catches fire. Six firemen arrive to extinguish the blaze – five strapping Adonises and one shorter bald man, their chief Nick Kowalski, with whom Mademoiselle falls in love, despite his



obvious indifference. But in the early 60s when the number one rule for romance is that the man must make the first step, what is a girl with an infatuation for a fireman to do? Pick up her box of imported French matches.

With each fire grander in scale and more outrageous than the last, Mademoiselle must rely on the help of the capable Carlota, but she is not counting on her beloved being engaged to another woman, a New Age hairdresser of all things.

Vilar is an Argentinian playwright who created controversy in the 70s with her book *The Manipulated Man*, a treatise on gender politics. This is her first, surprising novel and it is an absolute delight. (Vintage, \$28.99)