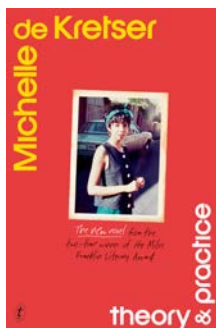


There's nothing tastier than good writing about food, and right now there is a smorgasbord of delicious food memoirs being plated up for us hungry readers. Locally, journalist and media personality Virginia Trioli has penned *A Bit on the Side*, about the sumptuous little moments that make up a life and the comfort food can bring when times are tough. Trioli's friend Annie Smithers, chef, food columnist and owner-operator of Du Fermier – a farm-to-table restaurant in regional Victoria – has followed up her debut *Recipes for a Kinder Life* (2021) with *Kitchen Sentimental*. It's an ode to the many restaurants Smithers worked at over the years – she cut her teeth in kitchens under the tutelage of Stephanie Alexander – and the recipes she's treasured from each post. Meanwhile, Attica's Ben Shewry and his kitchen-memoir-meets-manifesto *Uses for Obsession* is a refreshing antidote to the macho male chef stereotype, and boasts an 8000-word love letter to lasagne and bolognese.

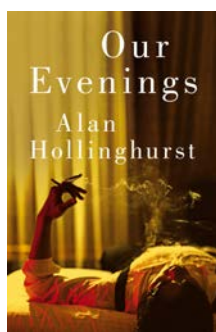
Internationally, actor and foodie Stanley Tucci is back to share 12 months of good eating through a book that documents precisely what it says on the tin: *What I Ate in One Year*. And my personal favourite writer and cook, Nigel Slater, has penned *A Thousand Feasts: Small Moments of Joy... A Memoir of Sorts*, where he treasures the quiet in-between moments – peeling an orange, rubbing butter into flour, the scent of a kitchen – that make time spent in the kitchen a joy. Tuck in! **MF**



THEORY & PRACTICE MICHELLE DE KRETZER

★★★★★

In this hybrid work, Michelle de Kretser blends fiction, essay and memoir through the voice of her fictionalised narrator, a Sri Lankan-born Australian writer. It opens with an excerpt from the narrator's novel-in-progress, a novel that she soon abandons for the book she *needs* to write – about her experiences of theory, particularly feminist theory, being at odds with practice. She casts her mind back to 1986, when, aged 24, she'd moved to Melbourne to undertake a masters about Virginia Woolf. Her relationships at the time also provide fertile material – particularly the love triangle in which she was the "other woman", and her fraught relationship with her mother that is further complicated by their migrant experience. In this ambitious and dazzling work, De Kretser illuminates the ways in which uncomfortable truths of class, race, privilege, desire and shame reside in the gap between theory and practice. She invites the reader to interrogate the breadth of material on offer for the reward of uncovering what she calls "The Story Under the Story". **MEK YIMAM**



OUR EVENINGS ALAN HOLLINGHURST

★★★★★

Class and social divisions have long been recurring themes in Booker Prize-winning Hollinghurst's work, and although *Our Evenings* is no exception, it is the first time he's had the opportunity to explore them in the context of Brexit. The story begins in 1950s England and recalls a meeting between narrator Dave, who is of Burmese heritage, and the entitled and aggressive Giles, when the two are teenagers. Over the following decades, Dave – now an openly gay man – forges a career as an actor in an often whitewashed industry, while Giles rises through the ranks to become a conservative politician whose post as Minister of the Arts seems more concerned with destroying them. There's subtle humour – especially in the banter between gay men aware that their safety and status in society is not guaranteed – though some of the most moving scenes are of Dave and his mother. While by no means a main character, the presence of Giles continues to linger throughout the novel until its devastating end. **MITCHELL JORDAN**

RAPTURE EMILY MAGUIRE

★★★★★

Miles Franklin-shortlisted Maguire's seventh novel is a work of historical fiction that brings to life the legend of Pope Joan: a woman disguised as a man, who was once widely believed to have reigned as Pope of the Catholic Church between 855 and 857, but whom most modern scholars now regard as a fictional figure. In *Rapture*, Maguire immerses the reader in the Middle Ages with her visceral descriptors of both the earthly and the ethereal: protagonist Agnes is caught between the two in her search for meaning and belonging in a violent and ever-changing world made for men by men. This young woman's fierce determination, to be more than the time and place in which she is born, is a story of becoming and transcendence: a call to arms for women to celebrate the cerebral as limitless and their physical desires as indisputable. Defiantly and excitingly, *Rapture* is a story of all that women can be in the places where others think they do not belong. **MANDY BEAUMONT**

