

4

ON THE BOOKSHELF

The month's must reads, for every taste

From the biographer of such luminaries as the Mitford sisters comes the story of another great British family. Mary S. Lovell's **THE CHURCHILLS** (Norton) documents generations of marital tumult and military and political struggle—all leading up to the life of Winston Churchill. Frank McLynn turns the spotlight on another famous Brit in **CAPTAIN COOK** (Yale), by re-creating Cook's journey from his youth in England to his death in Hawaii. Rounding out the month's biographies is Patricia Albers's **JOAN MITCHELL** (Knopf), a portrait of a woman who was not only a steel heiress and a champion skater but also one of the best-known Abstract Expressionist painters of the late 20th century.

Last year the trend in food may have been the pork belly, but **VEGETABLES FROM AN ITALIAN GARDEN** (Phaidon) argues that 2011 is all about the produce. This compilation of recipes, organized by season, highlights the year's best crops.

In fiction, the big news is David Foster Wallace's posthumous novel, **THE PALE KING** (Little, Brown), which features a group of IRS agents whose jobs are so tedious they fail to notice that a coworker has died at his desk. Quintessential New York journalist Pete Hamill often sets his novels in the city he's been reporting on for 50 years; in **TABLOID CITY** (Little,

Brown), the deaths of two women bring together a newspaper editor, a policeman, and a hedge fund manager, who discover that their lives are connected. Another New York story, Molly Jong-Fast's **THE SOCIAL CLIMBER'S HANDBOOK** (Villard), concerns an Upper East Side social fixture's attempts to save her status after her husband's morals put his lucrative finance job in jeopardy. Different husband issues beset the main character of Siri Hustvedt's **THE SUMMER WITHOUT MEN** (Picador), who moves back to her hometown after her partner of 30 years asks for a "pause" in their marriage. There she finds solace among a group of women who help her gain some much-needed perspective.

Loosely based on the story of the first Native American to graduate from Harvard, **CALEB'S CROSSING** (Viking), by Geraldine Brooks, is about a preacher's daughter in 17th-century Martha's Vineyard and her childhood friendship with the son of a chief. The setting for **THE GREAT NIGHT** (FSG), Chris Adrian's retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is San Francisco's Buena Vista Park, where mysterious moods make it seem as though anything can happen. Adrian imagines three strangers, each dealing with loss, who band together to save the world from being destroyed by Titania. **PULSE** (Knopf) is Julian Barnes's newest story collection; it's split between stand-alone pieces and snapshots of a dinner party conversation among friends. In each, Barnes explores relationships (between friends, lovers, in-laws) and the seemingly minute details that define our lives. And speaking of minute details: For the past 21 years Melissa Fay Greene has been raising nine children, both biological and adopted. In her memoir **NO BIKING IN THE HOUSE WITHOUT A HELMET** (Sarah Crichton), she writes of the many parenting obstacles she has encountered, overcome, and met again as the rules change completely for her second wave of children. Talk about a story for the ages. S.W.

