





# Eat, Sleep, Craft, Repeat

BY JULIE LEMEROND



A passionate crafter, Kathy Cano-Murillo has kindly shared her secrets and supplies for years, publishing how-to newspaper columns and books and developing products for national craft chains.

**She Tweets and blogs. She's appeared on two cable TV stations and hosted crafting cruises. And she just published her second book of fiction, set in real locations throughout the Valley of the Sun.**



(ABOVE AND FACING PAGE)  
NO SURFACE IS SAFE FROM  
THE CRAFTY CHICA'S FLAIR  
FOR EMBELLISHMENT.

"I'm sorry, I have paint all over me," she says with a laugh, and lifts her sleeve to show off a swish of blue paint on her forearm. "I've been crafting all afternoon."

It's a classic Kathy Cano-Murillo moment, a manifestation of her Crafty Chica character: the woman as author, artist, crafter, marketing guru, glitter lover, and all-around cheery lady spreading the love.

My first question is, naturally, "Do you sleep?"

"Yes, I do," she assures me. "My motto is 'Eat, sleep, craft, repeat.'"

Between penning chick-lit novels and crafting how-to books, creating her own product line sold at Michaels craft stores nationwide, and creating beautiful works of art on a daily basis, she's a busy gal. And, oh yeah, she also has a family to take care of.

She starts her days with coffee, the news, and joking with husband Patrick and children DeAngelo, 20, and Maya, 17. Then she saunters down the hall of their home in northwest Phoenix to the computer room, where she spends a good hour or so checking emails, posting links on Facebook, Twitter or her blog, and communicating with the outside world. She acknowledges that she has to limit this to an hour in the morning, maybe devote a little more time to it in the afternoon, and then go back to it again at night. The cyberworld constantly beckons, but she must be disciplined; she wants to spend most of her day creating.

A few years ago, she published her first novel, which she describes as "'Ugly Betty' meets 'Waiting to Exhale,' with a dash of Martha Stewart." A work of fiction about subjects she knows well, "Waking Up in the Land of Glitter" revolves around creating crafts and friendships, and stars a third-generation Mexican American living in, and loving, both her Mexican heritage and American culture.

Her newer novel, "Miss Scarlet's School of Patternless Sewing," delves a little deeper into the psyche. Between books, Cano-Murillo dealt with the death of her father, which caused her perspective to change while composing this novel.

"This book is a metaphor for our lives," she says. "So many times we have to crumple up and re-do things, looking at them from a whole new perspective. This book came from a different place within me and it changed the whole tone of my writing."

Both novels are based in the Phoenix area, and several local landmarks are mentioned often. The Rhythm Room, La Perla Mexican Restaurant & Lounge, Cerreta Candy Company and the holiday festival Glendale Glitters all get name-checked within the pages. The author says that she hears often from readers that they can't wait to come to Phoenix to visit some of these locales, or from people who live here, that they see their hometown in a new way.



In addition to these novels, more than a dozen crafting how-to books bear the Cano-Murillo byline. Far outnumbering these books, though, are original works of art—solo, and collaborations with her husband—and Crafty Chica-branded raw materials.

Married for 20 years, Cano-Murillo has been making art with Patrick since the early '90s. Later in that decade she took a job with the Arizona Republic, and before long was asked to write a column about crafting, where her Crafty Chica moniker first gained statewide exposure. The column soon was picked up by newspapers across the country, and she was invited onto local news segments and, eventually, the DIY network and Lifetime TV.

She's no longer at the newspaper. Duncan Enterprises, the makers of Tacky Glue (a must-have product in the crafting world), approached her to start her own line of products, and in 2008 the Crafty Chica collection debuted. It includes paints, iron-ons, glitters and adhesives, and is carried by Michaels craft stores.

The year 2008 also saw Cano-Murillo retaliating against comedian/talk show host Ellen DeGeneres' bold statement that glitter should be banned. The crafter organized a "Safe Sparkle" glitter rally with 20-some similarly passionate crafters outside the host's TV

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studio in Los Angeles, toting signs that said "Glitter is not Litter." It's unclear whether DeGeneres recanted, but she did invite all the ralliers to the next day's taping.

Cano-Murillo builds her recognition and reputation by posting new blog entries daily, and circulating finished works on Etsy.com (an online market for handmade goods) and at a blend of local and national craft events. In January 2011, for example, she exhibited at the California Gift Show and the Craft & Hobby Association's Conference & Trade Show. In April, she was scheduled to host the fifth-annual Crafty Chica Art Cruise: eight days of Latin-themed workshops, swaps, gifts and Mexican ports of call.

She tries to anticipate trends, if not invent them. "In the '90s, there was no competition for Mexican pop art," she recalls. "Now there are lots of artists doing contemporary Mexican crafts. I'm constantly thinking ahead—what can I do that's different?"

And while she's thinking ahead, she's also thinking positively.

"My mission is to inspire people to get creative and find that release," she says. "It alleviates stress, makes you feel better. It's like yoga with creativity."

Or, put in terms a certain talk show host could respect: It's like dancing, with, um, sequins.

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DIVERSION FROM DIRECTIONS:  
CANO-MURILLO'S NOVELS

