

My Life in France Study Guide

My Life in France by Julia Child

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Plot Summary

My Life in France by Julia Child examines Julia's life in France and her connection to French food. Using Julia's own words, the book gives brief narratives of her experiences in France, learning how to cook, writing her cookbooks, and beginning her television program. Not a complete biography, *My Life in France* focuses on the events, people, experiences, and lessons that influenced Julia and that she felt were important to her life.

Julia and her husband Paul arrived in France in 1948. At the time, Julia didn't know how to speak French or much of anything about cooking. Yet, from her first moments on French soil, Julia felt a connection with the people and food of the country. She'd soon start language lessons, and she began exploring the markets in Paris. She enrolled in the famous Cordon Bleu to learn more about French cooking. After learning all she could from Chef Max Bugnard, Julia earned her certificate from the prestigious school.

Julia's time in Paris is also marked by her introduction to Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle. The three women shared a love of cooking. They formed a cooking school for Americans, giving lessons in Julia's kitchen. She also joined them in their efforts to produce a French cooking book for an American audience. Julia spent years working on the book, testing recipes, experimenting with ingredients, editing the recipes for American kitchens, and negotiating the personalities of her friends. She threw herself into the project wholeheartedly and finally saw it published after several initial rejections.

Between Julia's first efforts at cooking to her later television show, she and Paul would live in Paris, Marseille, Germany, Norway, and the United States. They moved from place to place because of Paul's career, until he retired and they moved back to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Throughout their moves, Julia worked on the cookbook with Simca, sending letters back and forth. She also experimented with cooking and food in each place that the couple lived.

Julia continued to teach others about cooking and food after the publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. She and Simca wrote a second volume of the book and Julia worked on her own cookbooks when they finished collaborating. She also brought one of the first successful cooking television shows to an American audience. *The French Chef* made Julia a celebrity and helped teach millions of people the basics of cooking and French food.

In addition to a discussion of Julia's introduction to and growth in the culinary area, *My Life in France* gives private insight into Julia's relationships with her husband, father, friends, and colleagues. Her larger than life personality fills the pages as the reader watches her grow as a person. Julia allows the reader to see her friendship and love for Paul, her differences with her father, her arguments with Simca, and her respect for the French people around her.



Introduction

Introduction Summary and Analysis

My Life in France by Julia Child examines Julia's life in France and her connection to French food. Using Julia's own words, the book gives brief narratives of her experiences in France, learning how to cook, writing her cookbooks, and beginning her television program. Unlike a complete biography, My Life in France focuses on the events, people, experiences, and lessons that influenced Julia that she felt were important to her life.

Julia Child writes that the book is about a few of the things that she has loved most in her life: her husband, France, and cooking. It's also the first book that Julia has worked on that is not a collection of recipes. Instead, the stories in the book are pieces of her life, focusing on the years between 1948 and 1954.

Julia's life was very different before she moved to France. She grew up in California in an upper-middle class family. Her father was a conservative businessman. Her mother didn't really cook all that much and neither did Julia growing up. Julia had no interest in cooking while she was growing up. Although she'd always loved to eat, she didn't cook and wasn't encouraged to do so. The family always had cooks who handled the creation of food, although the dishes weren't refined.

Julia's husband Paul had been born in Boston and his mother was a very good cook. Paul was ten years older than Julia and was much more worldly than she was when they met. He'd traveled all over the world, spoke French, and knew all about good wine and food. Julia considers herself lucky to have married Paul. Paul helped inspire Julia and encouraged her. She feels that she wouldn't have had the career she did without him.

Julia and Paul met in Ceylon, Sri Lanka while they were both working for the government during World War II. Before they married in 1946, Julia took a cooking class in Los Angeles, thinking that she should know how to cook for Paul. Her first attempts weren't very good. Julia continued to cook, using various cookbooks as her guide, while they lived in Washington DC. Although her efforts got better, it often took her hours just to make a simple dish.

In 1948, Paul was offered a job in Paris. He'd be working for the United States Information Service (USIS), running the Visual Presentation Department. Julia had never been to Europe, but decided to go along. In Paris, Julia found that she loved the city. She decided to learn as much as she could about the city and the people. One of the things that she learned was how to cook French food.

Julia and Alex Prud'homme write this book together. Alex is Paul's grand-nephew. Julia enjoys remembering the time, although she feels her memory isn't as good as it used to be. They've used many of Paul's photographs in the book and have read through Paul's

letters to his brother, Charlie. They've used other letters that Paul and Julia wrote to family and friends as well.



Part 1: Chapter 1, La Belle France

Part 1: Chapter 1, La Belle France Summary and Analysis

On Wednesday, November 3, 1948, Julia and Paul arrived in France. Julia didn't know what to expect as she hadn't been to Europe before, but Paul had lived in Paris during the 1920s and it was his favorite city. When the government had offered him the job in Paris, Paul was excited to take it. Julia and Paul thought that if they could survive traveling together, their marriage would be fine.

Julia and Paul met in 1944 while they worked for the Office of Strategic Services. Paul was an artist and Julia was the head of the Registry, where she processed reports and top-secret information. Later, they were both transferred to China. Although they'd lived outside of the United States before, their work kept them very busy and Julia didn't think of it as really living abroad. They'd also lived in Washington DC for two years after they were married.

France was an unknown to Julia. Her father didn't have a good opinion of the country and, despite trying to learn the language, Julia couldn't speak or understand it. From Hollywood, Julia had the impression that the French were picky and the women were all dainty. Julia herself wasn't dainty as she stood six feet two inches tall and was thirty-six years old when the couple moved to France.

Julia and Paul unloaded their blue Buick station wagon (the "Blue Flash") from the ship and drove to Rouen. They stopped to get something to eat. Julia noticed that all of the people there were French. She was apprehensive, but they all treated her and Paul with courtesy. Julia was surprised that everyone drank wine with lunch, and Paul explained to her that it was common. The waiters seemed to carry themselves with joy and Julia found the food delicious. They had oysters and sole, along with a white wine, and Julia tasted her first real baguette.

As darkness fell, Julia and Paul arrived in Paris to find the Eiffel Tower outlined in red lights. Driving in Paris was somewhat dangerous, as the streetlights were dimmed and people drove with only their parking lights on, but they made it to their hotel, unloaded their luggage, and Paul went to look for a garage to park the car in.

Paul's job in Paris was to build good will between the United States and France and inform the French people about American life. Through graphic means, he was to reinforce that the Marshall Plan was helping France, and that Russia shouldn't be trusted. When he arrived for his first day, he found the exhibits office in shambles. He had eight staff members who were overworked and underpaid and the office was lacking in basic supplies. The office was also getting large orders from the government, creating even more stress.



Julia explored the city and on the weekend, Paul joined her. They wandered the streets of Paris, and Paul took photographs of the places they saw. They ate in cafes and restaurants, trying both fancy and small, inexpensive places. Julia and Paul decided that they liked the places that were rated with two forks in their guidebook the best. They were the medium quality and expense places where they could eat for about five dollars, including wine.

Julia felt that the longer she was in Paris the worse her French got, at least in the beginning. This became apparent to her during their first Thanksgiving where they went to a party and Julia had trouble talking to any of the French guests who had been invited. She signed up for a language class and Paul helped her work on the language as well.

As Julia worked on the language, she also began looking for a place for the couple to rent. She discovered a place at 81 Rue de l'Universite, which was two floors of an old hotel. Paul's office was close and they could hear the bells of the Church of Sainte-Clothilde. On December 4, Julia and Paul moved their luggage to their new apartment. Their landlady lived on the first floor and Paul and Julia lived on the second and third floors.

The apartment was hopelessly outdated, with ugly tapestries, fake electric sconces, and many wall hangings. Julia and Paul removed most of the wall hangings and some of the furniture, storing everything in a room upstairs. The kitchen was on the third floor with a dumbwaiter that brought needed items to the dining room. The apartment was also cold and damp since it didn't have central heating. The couple soon began calling their new apartment "Roo de Loo", or "81". The apartment came with a maid, Frieda. She lived on the fourth floor. As Julia was not used to having a maid, it took some adjustments for everyone to become comfortable.

Julia and Paul adopted a cat they called Minette, who was mud and cream colored. Mini was Julia's first cat, although Paul had had cats before. The cat liked to sit on Paul's lap and look under the radiators. Julia began to equate Paris with cats.

Although Julia and Paul wanted to meet French people, she thought this was harder than they had expected. Paris had many Americans living there and the couple knew many of them. Julia became bored with the Americans, and the couple began to drift away from the Americans that they met. Once they got a phone, Julia began calling the French friends of friends that they had been told to contact. They met a group of art historians and other French couples.

With the apartment, Julia began to cook more. She'd wander around the shops, talk to the merchants, and bring home different items to try. She found that she wanted to learn more and more, not only about France but about cooking as well. Her language guide, Helene, loaned her a cookbook and took her to restaurants all over the city. Slowly, Julia's French began getting better and she found herself getting more bold in her food choices as well.



In February of 1949, Paul, Julia, and Helene took a trip outside of Paris. They started with lunch in Pouilly, where a well-known chef prepared them a fine meal that took them over three hours to eat. By the Mediterranean, the group enjoyed the scenery. Julia loved the Cote d'Azur area as it reminded her of Southern California. On their way back to Paris, they crossed the mountains and passed through valley towns.

In April, Julia's sister Dort arrived in Paris to stay with the couple. Dort was five years younger than Julia and wasn't intimidated by her lack of French speaking ability. Although Dort and Julia hadn't been close before, they grew so during Dort's time in Paris.

August in Paris was "the dead season", since so many inhabitants left the city for the coast or the mountains. Many of the restaurants and shops closed. On August 15, Julia turned thirty-seven. Julia loved Paris and loved French food. She'd been cooking as much as she could, but still wanted more. She dropped by the L'Ecole du Cordon Blue, the famous cooking school, and learned that the next class began in October. She signed up for a six week course.



Part 1: Chapter 2, Le Cordon Bleu

Part 1: Chapter 2, Le Cordon Bleu Summary and Analysis

Julia arrived at Ecole du Cordon Blue on October 4, 1949 to discover that she had signed up for the year long Annee Scolaire course instead of the six week course she thought she had. Although the year long course cost more, both Julia and Paul thought that it was worth it. Her first class was in a sunny room with two women who hadn't done any cooking before. The course was geared toward beginners, and after two days, Julia knew that it wasn't going to work for her.

Julia sat down with Madame Elizabeth Brassart, the school's owner, and was finally allowed to enter the year-long class for professional restaurateurs, taught by Chef Max Bugnard. The class consisted of eleven former GIs, who had cooked during the war and now were using the GI bill to gain more experience. The class met in the basement of the school, which was hot and crowded with everyone in there. The bright spot of the class was Chef Bugnard, who was in his late seventies at the time. He had worked at many good restaurants in Paris and had owned his own in Brussels before the war. He began by teaching the class the fundamentals of French cooking. Julia liked his enthusiasm, and Chef Bugnard sometimes took her aside to show her more difficult dishes or techniques.

Julia's days took on a rigid schedule. She got up around 6:30 in the morning and would leave before Paul got up. She'd drive to a café for fresh croissants to eat while she read the American papers. At 7:20, she'd walk to the school. Chef Bugnard would arrive at 7:30 and the class would cook until 9:30. After cleaning up, Julia rushed to shop and get home. She'd cook simple dishes that she and Paul would eat when he came home for lunch. In the afternoon, Julia would go back to the school for the demonstration classes, where anyone who wanted to could watch a visiting chef prepare different dishes.

Although Julia felt energized by the experience she was getting, not everything was the way she would have liked. There were too many people in the class for her to get the individual attention that she wanted. Yet, Julia fell in love with French food, including the tastes, the processes of cooking, the people, and the creativity. By the end of November, Julia had been at Cordon Blue for seven weeks. This surprised her because the time had flown by. The more she learned, the more she felt she had to learn. Julia learned how to do things simply, which she felt was one of the best lessons. She earned a great deal of satisfaction from being able to reliably replicate a dish without having to think about it too much.

Once a week, most areas in Paris lost their electricity for a few hours. Roo de Loo did not happen to have this problem, but Cordon Bleu's quarter lost electricity every Wednesday. Chef Bugnard had to be creative during these classes and he often took the class to the market. Shopping for food in Paris was an experience that Julia loved.



She felt that she learned the most important lessons about human relations in the Paris markets. One Wednesday, Chef Bugnard took the class to Dehillerin, the greatest kitchen equipment store, according to Julia. He introduced Julia to the owner and they became friends.

Although Julia was learning a lot, it did not protect her from embarrassing mistakes. One day, she invited a friend for lunch and completely messed up the eggs Florentine. Julia had become overconfident and guessed at the proportions. The result was horrible. However, Julia doesn't believe in making explanations over food. She thinks that admissions only draw attention to one's shortcomings. In addition, usually what one cooks is better than one thinks anyway. She and her guest managed to make it through the meal, although Julia never forgot the moment and the lesson from it.

For Christmas, Julia and Paul went to England. Julia felt at home, thinking that the English reminded her of her relatives from Massachusetts. Julia's mother, Caro, had been raised in Massachusetts and the family could trace its roots to Plymouth Colony. Caro had gone to Smith and John, Julia's father, had gone to Princeton. They met in 1903 and married in 1911. Julia was born on August 15, 1912. Her brother John was born in 1914 and Dort in 1917. Julia went to Smith like her mother. She wanted to become a famous novelist and moved to New York. She returned to Pasadena in 1937 to care for Caro, who was sick. Caro died two months later at the age of sixty. Julia spent some time with her father, but when the war broke out, she wanted to do something. She was too tall for the WAC and Waves, so she joined the OSS, eventually being posted to Ceylon.

Paul, his twin brother Charlie, and their sister Meeda grew up in Massachusetts outside of Boston. Their father died of typhoid fever when the boys were just six months old. Their mother had a beautiful voice, and she and the children made do by performing in private homes for events. Although Paul did not have a college education, Julia considered him an intellectual.

Julia and Paul met in Ceylon in 1944. Paul was heading up the OSS's Visual Presentation group. They were both based at a tea plantation, and Julia's office window looked into Paul's office. He was ten years older than Julia and he had courted other women before her. They slowly began to spend time together. By the time they were assigned to Kunming, they were a couple and spent time together exploring the area. Once they returned to the States, they took a few months to get to know each other again. They visited Julia's father and his new wife, Phila, and Paul's brother in Maine. They married in 1946 when Paul was forty-four and Julia thirty-four.

Once Julia and Paul returned from England in 1950, Julia started back up at Cordon Bleu. She was learning how to correctly cook French food with the proper techniques. When she wasn't in school, Julia was busy experimenting on her own, doing hours of research on topics like mayonnaise.

Julia's father and Phila came to visit. She and Dort wanted to show them a good time and to make them see how wonderful France was. Julia remembers thinking that her



father now looked like an old man. The four of them drove to Naples, although Julia and Dort grew restless with the days of driving and staying at first class hotels. Julia preferred to travel at a slow pace, looking for out of the way places.

Back in Paris, Julia picked up where she left off before the trip. She was growing more irritated by the disorganized way that Cordon Bleu was run and they were beginning to repeat dishes during instruction. Bugnard often took her aside to show Julia things that he didn't show the others. Julia decided to stop attending classes at Cordon Bleu, although she continued to attend the afternoon demonstrations. Chef Bugnard occasionally joined Julia at 81 as well. She also continued to prepare for her final exam at Cordon Bleu, which she could take any time she felt ready.

Dort met Ivan at the American Club Theatre in Paris. Ivan worked at the Economic Cooperation Administration. They began to date and Dort eventually decided to get her own place in Paris. They would later announce their engagement.

Julia finally felt ready to take her final exam at Cordon Bleu, but Madame Brassart kept ignoring her requests. Finally, after months of trying to get a response, Julia spoke to Chef Bugnard about the situation. Suddenly, Julia was told the exam was ready for her in April of 1951. When she arrived, she was dismayed to find that she couldn't remember how to make the dishes on the list, as they were all very simple ones and she had been practicing harder dishes. She knew the parts of the written exam, but thought that she probably failed the practical part.



Part 1: Chapter 3, Three Hearty Eaters

Part 1: Chapter 3, Three Hearty Eaters Summary and Analysis

Julia continued to cook and learn more about French culture over the next few months. In April of 1951, she invited eight women from Le Cercle des Gourmettes for lunch. This was an all-female eating club that started in 1929, and most of the current members were in their seventies. Julia joined the group and met many different people. She asked Chef Bugnard to help her prepare the food, as he was retiring from Cordon Bleu and was looking for catering and private lessons. The meal was a success.

Dort and Ivan became engaged and planned a wedding in New York for June of 1951. Julia felt the couple were good for each other. She made a farewell dinner for the couple before they left. When Julia and Paul got ready to leave, they had been in France for two and a half years. They attended Dort's wedding and then went to California to visit more with Julia's family. After two weeks, they headed back to New York where they picked up a Chevrolet Styleline Deluxe Sedan to replace the Blue Flash, which they had decided to sell. They called the new car La Tulipe Noire. Their final stop in the States was in Maine at Charlie and Freddie's cabin. The couple arrived back in France on July 27, 1951.

When Julia and Paul returned, she found that she had finally received her diploma from Cordon Bleu. Julia had requested a second chance on the final exam and Madame Brassart had finally agreed. This time, she memorized the easier dishes in the school's little booklet. She took the exam in Roo de Loo and passed. So Julia could finally say that she was a full-fledged graduate of the famous school.

Julia continued to experiment with cooking in the months following and she thought about doing some cooking lessons. In November, Julia invited Simone Beck Fishchbacher to lunch. Simone, or Simca as she was also called, was a Gourmette and loved cooking, particularly desserts and pastry. A few days after the lunch, Simca introduced Julia to Louise Bertholle. Simca and Louise were working on a cookbook about French food that they hoped to publish in the United States.

The three women soon began to discuss the idea of opening a cooking school of their own. Julia wanted to teach women like herself who wanted to learn the basic themes and dishes of French cooking. They decided to charge just a small fee to any student, just enough to cover expenses. They decided to call their school L'Ecole des Gourmettes. Julia was going to advertise in the Embassy paper for students.

The plans for the school took a sharp turn toward reality when an American called and wanted cooking lessons. Two more women also contacted them within the next few days. The first class was held on January 23, 1952 at the kitchen in Roo de Loo. They focused on French food and classic techniques. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, class



would begin at 10 a.m. and end at 1 p.m. with lunch. Classes were informal and fun, with everyone contributing. Some of the local merchants offered them discounts on student purchases and many of them gave special demonstrations to the students of the women's school.

In September 1952, Paul's contract with the USIS would end. The couple was unsure of what would happen. They couldn't get any information out of the government. It was possible that they could be offered another post, be recalled to the States, or pushed out of the government. The couple decided that if they left the government, they would stay in Paris for at least one more year.

Simca, Louise, and Julia renamed their school L'Ecole des Trois Gourmandes, which roughly translated to "The School of the Three Hearty Eaters". They continued to experiment with different dishes and discovered that some of the French recipes didn't translate well to American supplies. One day, the three of them met with the famous gastronome Curnonsky. He had written a twenty-eight volume encyclopedia of French foods and was the editor for a French cooking magazine. Julia immediately liked the older man.

Paul's future remained up in the air. One governmental official offered to try to pull some strings so Paul could take over the public affairs office in Marseille. They felt sad at the idea of leaving Paris, but they liked Marseille and felt the possibility was worth considering. They both felt reassured that if the move happened, they'd be remaining in France.

In August of 1952, Simca and Louise received news that their American editor had quit, with the work on their book undone. The two were upset as they had been working on the book since 1948. The two women asked Julia if she would consider helping them finish the book. Julia agreed enthusiastically. The book was almost six hundred pages long and was a big jumble of recipes. Because the women's first language wasn't English, some of the directions were overly complicated and the book wasn't well suited for an American kitchen. Yet, the project inspired Julia and she wanted to completely rewrite the book, typing the recipes and book up herself. Julia tested every recipe, wanting to get every recipe and dish perfect. She found cookbook writing fulfilling and wanted to continue at it after this book was complete.

Paul's time in Paris was extended, at least for a time, just as the three women debated about what to do with the book. Sumner Putnam seemed to still want to publish the book, but Julia felt that the publishing house wasn't well-respected in America, particularly for cookbooks. They finally agreed to stay with Ives Washburn for the time being. Julia wrote to Putnam and explained the new version of the book, but he didn't respond.

Julia began to correspond with a woman, Avis DeVoto from Cambridge, Massachusetts, after reading an article that Avis's husband wrote. Avis was a devoted cook, and the two wrote back and forth about food and cooking, becoming good friends. Julia sent Avis a copy of the sauce chapter. Avis asked to show it to Houghton Mifflin,



her husband's publishers. In France, the three collaborators finally agreed that they should give Avis the go ahead.

In January of 1953, Paul was told that he would be sent to Marseille after all. Julia was both glad to be staying in France and worried about what would happen to the book and the cooking classes. The couple packed up their home in Paris and prepared to leave. On the eve of their departure, the women learned that Houghton Mifflin liked the book and wanted to offer them a publishing contract. They sent a dismissal letter to Ives Washburn.



Part 1: Chapter 4, Bouillabaisse a la Marseillaise

Part 1: Chapter 4, Bouillabaisse a la Marseillaise Summary and Analysis

Paul and Julia arrived in Marseille with open hearts and minds. On March 2, 1953, they arrived at their hotel and unpacked their luggage. Marseille was different from Paris in many ways. Julia found the city vigorous and uninhibited. Paul quickly became busy in his new position and Julia forced herself to keep regular hours on the book rather than exploring the city all day.

Marseille offered Julia the chance to continue her research for the book. She learned that many of the French names for things weren't the same that Americans would use. "Dogfish" were "Catfish" in America, for example. Many foods weren't available in the States as well. However, Julia was disappointed that their new editor, Dorothy de Santillana, had shown a recipe from the book to a friend of hers without asking for permission. Julia was afraid that someone might steal their ideas and use them in another cookbook or publication. When she sent recipes to Dorothy or other close friends to try, she marked them confidential and top secret.

Paul and Julia moved to a rental apartment in Marseille. It was in an Art Deco building and was small but charming. Paul continued to work long hours. The couple also learned that Senator McCarthy's investigations in the United States were including government officials overseas. Turnover in the USIS was high, with Paul's colleagues quitting or being fired. The couple had to once again consider what would happen if Paul were to lose his job.

Amid the uncertainty, Julia located a larger apartment and the couple moved to 113 Boulevard de la Corderie. However, just a short time later, Paul was informed that they would be reassigned. Soon, they learned that Paul was being sent to Germany. Although the position that Paul would hold was a step up, the couple was unhappy about leaving France. They also worried about having to learn a new language and city. They tossed around the idea of Paul quitting so they could stay in France, but ultimately, they decided to stay with it.



Part 2: Chapter 5, French Recipes for American Cooks

Part 2: Chapter 5, French Recipes for American Cooks Summary and Analysis

In early October 1954, Paul and Julia moved to Germany. Julia was dismayed to find that their new home and town seemed so much like an American town. She wanted to live among Germans and explore the culture. Paul was the top visual program person in Germany, informing the German people about the United States. Gradually, though, Julia found more of what she was looking for in Germany, particularly as she tried German dishes and figured out how to make French dishes in Germany.

Julia continued to work on the book, now called *French Cooking for the American Kitchen*. Simca and Julia finished several chapters and tested dishes for other chapters. Julia came to see the distance between them as a blessing in disguise, as it allowed both women to work on things independently. Work on the book went slowly, even though both women worked forty hours of work each week on it. As Simca and Julia were doing most of the work, they all agreed that they would be labeled "Co-Authors" and Louissette would be called a "Consultant".

In April of 1955, Paul was ordered to return to Washington DC. He wasn't given a reason, so Paul flew there to find out what was going on. Julia had planned a trip to Paris so she continued on. Finally, it became apparent that Paul was being investigated. When Julia was able to get a hold of him, he told her that the investigators had accused him of being a homosexual and questioned him about his liberal friends and his association with communists. Later, the USIA would give Paul a written exoneration, but the event left a bad taste for both Julia and Paul. The event would weigh heavily on both of them and would contribute to Paul's decision to retire early several years later.

Work continued on the book and Paul and Julia were able to travel several times in Europe to see friends. In the fall of 1956, the government decided that Paul was needed at the main USIA exhibits department in Washington DC. The couple once again packed everything up and prepared for the move. Julia and Paul arrived back in the United States in November and moved back into the house that they owned there. They worked on remodeling the home and updating different parts of the house. Julia bought a dishwasher, a waste-disposal system, and new stove.

The move gave Julia the advantage of being able to work on the recipes for the book in the environment that they were targeted for. She shopped in the grocery stores and made sure that the ingredients were available. Julia also began to teach a cooking class to a group of women in Washington on Monday mornings and to a group in Philadelphia once a month. However, most of her time was spent on the book.



In early 1958, Simca came to the United States and stayed for three months. Although the manuscript wasn't finished, the two women agreed to show Houghton Mifflin what they had. The editor had been concerned about the scope of the book, so Julia was anxious about the meeting. They met with Dorothy de Santillana who seemed enthusiastic, but her male colleagues were not as happy with it. A few weeks later, they received a letter from Dorothy that the book that Julia and Simca had written was not the one that the publishers had contracted for. Dorothy suggested that they rethink the project.

Simca and Julia decided to prune their book to make it shorter, but they still wanted to produce a book about the fundamentals of French cooking. They decided to try to compile a book with short recipes and promised to have the manuscript done in six months. The publishers agreed to the plan.

Paul decided to retire from the government when he reached sixty, several years away, so that he could focus on painting and photography. The couple didn't want to remain in Washington DC once that happened, but they didn't know where they wanted to go. Paul had grown up around Boston, so they looked at houses around the area there. In 1959, they found a house in Cambridge that they liked. They bought it just before leaving for Denmark, which was Paul's next post.

By September 1959, French Recipes for American Cooks was finished. Julia felt empty and lost after sending it off to the publishers. However, in November, Julia learned that Houghton Mifflin didn't want to publish the book, feeling it would be too expensive to produce as it was. They suggested that the women show it to other publishers. Avis sent the manuscript to a friend at Alfred A Knopf publishing house.



Part 2: Chapter 6, Mastering the Art

Part 2: Chapter 6, Mastering the Art Summary and Analysis

An editor at Knopf, Judith Jones, immediately recognized what Julia and Simca were trying to do. She pushed Knopf to publish the book and she wrote Julia of the decision to publish. Knopf offered Julia and Simca a fifteen hundred dollar advance against seventeen percent royalties. They wanted to price the book at about ten dollars and would publish it in the fall of 1961. Judith had never edited a cookbook, but she enjoyed the writing style.

Judith made several suggestions. First, she felt that Julia and Simca had underestimated how many Americans the dishes would feed. She also wanted them to add more beef dishes, so Julia and Simca added a recipe for cassoulet. The recipe proved to be a point of contention between Julia and Simca, who didn't agree on the ingredients to include. The title of the book was also a problem for Judith. The three women went over a number of different possibilities before settling on Mastering the Art of French Cooking. Simca decided at the last minute that she didn't like the title, but Julia held firm.

In September of 1960, Paul decided to retire from the government. Paul was tired of working for little recognition and dealing with the bureaucrats in Washington. The couple decided to move back to the United States and put down roots. Julia spent much of her time up to their departure doing proofreading of the manuscript. She worked slowly and was horrified at some of the mistakes they had made. Simca tended to be very disorganized and the two women had a number of arguments as the deadline for the proofreading loomed. Simca had second thoughts about some of the recipes. The disagreements weighed heavily on Julia, who wanted the book to be perfect but was annoyed at Simca's last minute changes of heart when she'd already given her approval for recipes.

In September of 1961, Julia held a completed copy of Mastering the Art of French Cooking. The official publication date was October 16 and Simca was coming to the United States for the celebration. Most of the promotion for the book fell on the two women. They decided to do a quick book tour while Simca was there. They decided to stay with friends and family across the United States to cut down on costs and do demonstrations where they could.

In the first few weeks, the book sold well and Knopf authorized a second printing. Good reviews appeared in a number of publications and the two women did some interviews on the radio. They also appeared on the Today show on NBC and did an short cooking demonstration on the show. More articles appeared mentioning the book, and the two women flew to various points in the States, giving demonstrations and talking to people.



By January of 1962, the book was on its third printing and the women received their first royalty check. Julia appeared on a Boston television show called "I've Been Reading". Julia gave a short demonstration on the show, and the station received positive feedback about her. Paul and Julia worked on home renovations, particularly in the kitchen, and Paul fixed up a place in the cellar for wine. The book continued to sell well and WGBH asked Julia to work with a director on a pilot for a cooking television show. Just before her father died in May 1962, Julia returned to California. After attending the funeral, she helped spread her father's ashes at sea.

Julia didn't know anything about television, but she taped the pilots in June 1962. Cooking shows in the past hadn't worked and had been quickly canceled. They couldn't do a live show but they decided to shoot it as if it were, in one long uninterrupted stream. Julia completed the three pilots and sat down on July 26 to watch them. Julia found many things that she didn't like, but the experience had been fun and the response from the audience was enthusiastic. The station suggested a full twenty-six program series that would begin taping in January. The French Chef was born.

In 1963, Julia shot four episodes of The French Chef a week as well as wrote a weekly food column for the Boston Globe. That fall, she and Paul took a break and went to visit Simca and Jean in France. Jean and Simca had a farmhouse and property, known as Bramafam, in the country. Although Simca wasn't fond of the house, Jean loved it and they had been working to restore the house. Paul and Julia tossed around the idea of buying a place nearby and looked at a few properties. However, Jean suggested that they build a small house on the corner of his property. Julia and Paul became excited about the idea and decided to lease the land to construct the house on. Once they were done using the house, it would go back to Jean's family. They built a small, modest home that they called La Pitchoune, or "little thing".

Julia and Paul continued to work on the television program. Julia felt that her presentation skills improved the more she did. They decided to spend Christmas of 1965 in France and arrived to discover that their little home was complete. Simca and Jean had made sure that it was all ready for them. Paul and Julia stayed for three months, enjoying Provence. While they were there, Simca and Julia decided to write a second volume to Mastering the Art of French Cooking.



Part 2: Chapter 7, Son of Mastering

Part 2: Chapter 7, Son of Mastering Summary and Analysis

If *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was an introduction to French dishes, the second volume was to extend the range of dishes. Simca and Julia didn't want to repeat any of the recipes from the first book, but they did want to refer readers back to it. They had many recipes that hadn't made the cut the first time so they thought the second book should take them less time. They hoped to reach a broader audience and wanted to include advances in technology that were affecting cooking.

With the first book, Julia had learned the importance of publicity. Now she was willing to expose herself to different things to get the publicity they needed. Yet, she was upset when articles downplayed Simca's contributions. Julia found that she was most productive in Provence near Simca. They had a path that ran from Julia's kitchen to Simca's and they'd traverse it several times a day to talk about recipes. They divided up the work in similar ways to the first book, with Simca experimenting and Julia testing.

Once again, tensions between the two women occurred. Simca kept sending recipes even though only a few of them could be used in the new book. Simca was also frustrated when Julia made changes to the recipes to accommodate American ingredients. Julia decided that this would be the last book that she'd work on with Simca.

Judith Jones suggested that the women include a recipe for French bread in the book. Julia was faced with the challenge of finding a recipe for bread that would work in the American home kitchen. The first problem was that the flours were different in the two countries and the second was that American kitchens generally didn't have traditional bread ovens. Paul did some of the early bread experiments and later the two worked together on finding a reliable recipe. It took them two years to find one that would work. Simca had no interest in bread and didn't work on this recipe. Julia didn't care as the subject became fascinating for her. She consulted with a French baker in Paris, who showed her what they had been doing wrong and the correct way to go about it. Julia took many notes, although they still had some issues. They finally found an American flour that would work, and they also discovered how to recreate the bread oven by using a tile and pot of cool water.

In December 1968, Julia and Paul headed back to France. A writer from *Vogue* came to interview them for an article, although Simca's feelings would be hurt that the journalist had focused more on Julia. Jim Beard, who owned a cooking school in the States, also came for a visit. They spent the visit cooking and visiting Julia's favorite restaurants. Julia grew increasingly frustrated with Simca, who wouldn't listen and disappeared at key moments.

In July of 1969, Judith told Julia that Knopf was setting a hard deadline for volume two of March 15, 1970 so that they could publish it that fall. Julia got down to work and pushed herself to finish. She managed to get it down by the deadline.



Part 2: Chapter 8, The French Chef in France

Part 2: Chapter 8, The French Chef in France Summary and Analysis

The French Chef had an ambitious undertaking in 1970, which included shooting thirty-nine episodes in color. Julia was also going to shoot a series of mini-documentaries in France that they could later add to her shows. A crew of ten gathered in Provence in May. Although television production often looks like fun, Julia found it tedious at times. Each shot could take hours of preparation and many minutes to shoot. She'd have to rehearse each scene and everything had to be set up and arranged. Finally, they'd have to take everything back down again when they were done.

The crew filmed Julia in various locations, including markets and restaurants. They adjusted the scenes when problems arose. They did some filming with the bread maker that had first shown Julia how to make French bread. They even went back to the restaurant where Julia had her first meal in France. There, the proprietor agreed to keep his staff late and film after the restaurant closed. They filmed the dinner after midnight and included an interview with the proprietor. Although they had more to film, their cameraman became ill and was unable to continue. Paul and Julia headed for La Pitchoune. There, they found a crew from McCall's who were determined to get photos of Julia and Simca. Julia finally gave in under pressure from Simca.

Volume II of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was published on October 22, 1970. Julia and Simca did a quick publicity tour and *The French Chef* began airing the color versions within several weeks. However, they soon learned of a potential problem. For the bread recipe, Julia had used an asbestos cement tile. A medical research team was researching the potential link between asbestos and cancer. Julia and Paul hurried to find a replacement before they filmed the bread segment for the show and worried that the tile was already recommended in the book. Finally, they talked to one of the research team who told them that he didn't think the tile would be a problem. Julia didn't mention the asbestos link on her show. She simply suggested people use red floor tiles and they quietly changed the recipe in re-printings of the book.



Part 2: Chapter 9, From Julia Child's Kitchen

Part 2: Chapter 9, From Julia Child's Kitchen Summary and Analysis

Simca and Julia grew farther apart after the publication of the second volume. Although Julia was grateful for La Pitchoune, she felt that Simca didn't listen to her. A few months after the publication of the volume, Simca sent a letter criticizing a recipe and insulting Americans. Julia decided that she wouldn't collaborate with Simca again. Although the two remained friends, they each turned to other, individual projects. Simca worked on her own book of recipes that was published in 1972.

Jim Beard visited Julia and Paul at La Pitchoune often. Julia enjoyed his company both in France and in the United States. Jim started to suffer from health problems. Julia and Paul made appointments with their doctors as well, heeding the advice they saw from Jim's illness. In August 1974, Paul awoke with a nosebleed that happened several times that same day. They finally got it to stop. Later, they would discover that Paul had an infarction, or heart condition. He admitted that he had slight chest pains since 1967. In the fall of 1974, Paul would have a bypass surgery on his heart and the surgery seemed to leave him confused at times.

Julia worked on *From Julia Child's Kitchen*, the book that was her favorite of all she wrote. She used the lessons from French cuisine, but branched out into other cultures and dishes. She wanted her readers to feel that they were getting their own private cooking school on the pages of the book.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Over the next few years, a number of changes happened. Jean and Simca moved to the farm full time, where Simca gave cooking classes and wrote two cookbooks. In 1985, Jim Beard died. Jean died the following year. Charlie and Freddie both died of heart attacks. Simca continued to live on the farm until she died in June of 1991.

Paul never really recovered from his heart troubles, and in 1989 he suffered a series of strokes. As Paul was no longer able to travel, Julia made the decision to close up La Pitchoune. Although she loved France and her little home, Julia didn't feel sentimental about the decision.

Dort's daughter, husband, and son traveled with Julia in June of 1992 to close the house. They spent some time enjoying the area, and Julia called Paul in his nursing home each day. Julia slowly packed up the personal items in the house, including Paul's photographs. On their last day there, Julia cooked a meal for them and friends.

Julia tried to hold on to the memories of France. It was a part of her. Yet, she was also excited about the other the other adventures she could have and the things she wanted to do. She learned important lessons in France about cooking and about life.



Characters

Julia Child

Julia Child was a famous cook, author, and television personality. She was born in Pasadena on August 15, 1912. She had a younger brother and sister. Julia attended Smith College. When World War II broke out, she wanted to help in the war effort. She joined the OSS and was stationed in Ceylon and China. It was during her time in the OSS that Julia met her husband, Paul. They married on their return to the States and lived in Washington DC for several years. Julia was a tall woman with brown hair who was outspoken and vivacious. She had a passion for learning new things and enjoyed traveling with Paul to new places. She loved her friends and her family and enjoyed visiting with old and new friends.

When Paul was transferred to Paris, Julia moved to France with him. She immediately fell in love with the French people, food, and culture. She enrolled at the famous French cooking school, Cordon Bleu, and eventually earned her certificate from the school. Julia fell in love with cooking and food, often spending long hours experimenting with how to make different dishes in order to make them reliable and the best tasting. While she was in France, Julia met Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, who she would write *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* with. Julia and Simone spent several years working on the book, testing the recipes and writing them for an American audience. Julia threw herself into working on the book, feeling that she had found her calling.

Her knowledge of French cooking and the success of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* led to *The French Chef*, a cooking television series that launched in 1963. The series, along with Julia's cooking books, launched her into celebrity status and made her a familiar name in American households. She would win the Peabody Award in 1965 and an Emmy in 1966. She continued working on many cookbooks and television shows until her death in 2004.

Paul Child

Paul Child was Julia's husband. Paul and his twin brother, Charlie, were raised in Brookline, Massachusetts. They had one older sister. When the twins were just a few months old, their father died from typhoid fever. When the children were old enough, they joined their mother in providing private music performances in the Boston area. Paul did not attend college, but Julia considered him an intellectual. He worked in different places around the world, including France. During World War II, Paul joined the OSS, heading up the Visual Presentation group in India. He and Julia met in Ceylon and they married after the war when they returned to the States.

After spending several years in Washington DC, Paul was offered the job of running the exhibits office in Paris for the United States Information Service. He and Julia decided to



move to Paris. They enjoyed exploring the city, and Paul supported Julia's efforts to learn more about French cooking and her schooling at the Cordon Bleu. The two often entertained friends and family members. Paul joined the American Club of Paris, with whom he enjoyed trying different wines and food in Paris. Paul was transferred several more times including to Marseilles, Germany, Norway, and Washington DC. He was also investigated during the McCarthy era.

Paul retired from the government in 1960, after eighteen years. He wanted to focus on his painting and photography and get away from the increasingly difficult politics within the agency. He continued to support Julia's efforts, including her television program, and took photographs that were used as illustrations in her cookbooks. His health was on ongoing concern at times, including during the couple's stay in Paris. In addition to his heart problems, he suffered a series of strokes in 1989.

Chef Max Bugnard

Chef Bugnard played a large role in Julia Child's development as a cook and in her knowledge of French cooking. Julia considered him a mentor and friend. Bugnard was of average height and plump. He had a thick mustache and thick round-framed glasses. When Julia met Bugnard, he was in his seventies. His family had owned a restaurant where he learned to cook, and he had also worked at many restaurants in Paris, as well as with Escoffier in London. He owned a restaurant in Brussels before World War II and came to Cordon Bleu after the war.

Bugnard was Julia's professor during her course at the famous school. He often showed her more advanced things than the other students and took a special interest in her career. When she had trouble getting permission to take the final exam, Bugnard stepped in and made sure that Julia was able to take the exam. After Julia began teaching cooking classes, Bugnard would come to the course and show the students new things. He also helped Julia several times with dinner parties and advice on the recipes for the cookbook.

Simone Beck Fischbacher

Simone Beck Fischbacher, also known as Simca, was Julia's co-author for *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Simca was a Gourmette member. She was in her early forties when Julia met her, and she had blond hair and milky skin. She had been born into an aristocratic family in Normandy, taken care of by English nannies, and she loved food. Like Julia, she studied at Cordon Bleu and enjoyed experimenting with recipes. Simca was working with Louise Bertholle on a French cookbook for Americans, which they eventually asked Julia to be a part of. The three also formed a cooking school in Paris.

Simca and Julia became co-authors on *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. They spent a great deal of time working on the recipes, testing them, experimenting with different ingredients, and deciding which recipes to include. Although the two were close



friends, they would occasionally butt heads over what to include. Simca also had a tendency to want to change things at the last minute, which annoyed Julia. Simca was stubborn and opinionated, like Julia. They would also collaborate on the second volume of their famous cookbook. Simca would write her own cookbooks after that.

Simca and her husband, Jean, owned property in France. They invited Julia and Paul to build a house on the property to use as a vacation home. The two couples remained close, and they beat a path from Simca's kitchen to Julia's. Simca and Jean gave up their apartment in Paris in 1976, moving to the farmhouse full time. In 1991, at the age of 87, Simca fell and eventually caught pneumonia. She lived another six months before dying in December 1991.

Madame Louise Bertholle

Louise Bertholle was a consultant on *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Julia met Louise through Simca, who was working on the early versions of the cookbook with her. The three formed their own cooking school in Paris and enjoyed working together. When Julia began to work on the cookbook with them, Louise gradually faded into the background, largely because of her family responsibilities and husband. She remained a consultant on the project, although Julia and Simca did most of the work.

Louise was a small, neat woman. She and her first husband had two daughters. After remarrying, she would go on to publish several cookbooks on her own.

Jim Beard

Beard was a friend of Julia's who ran a cooking school in New York. He introduced Julia and Simca to many of the important people in the American cooking world, including food editors and chefs. He had originally trained as an actor and opera singer and had done a few cooking shows before Julia's success with *The French Chef*. Julia enjoyed cooking with Jim and when he visited France, taking him to many of her favorite restaurants. Jim died in 1985 at the age of 81.

Charlie and Freddie Child

Charlie was Paul's twin brother and Freddie was Charlie's wife. The couple was very close to Julia and Paul. Paul wrote many letters throughout his life to his brother, some of which were used in the book. The two couples also traveled to see each other in Paris and Maine on several different occasions. Both Charlie and Freddie died of heart attacks.



Dort McWilliams Cousins

Dort was Julia's younger sister. During Julia and Paul's time in Paris, Dort came to live with them for a time. She was tall, like Julia, and full of life. She met Ivan Cousins while she lived in Paris. The two moved back to the United States, got married, and started a family.

Judith Jones

Judith Jones was Julia's editor at Knopf publishing house. She had lived in France for a time as a young adult, working as an assistant to Evan Jones, a writer and editor. The two eventually married and Judith began working as an editorial assistant to a Doubleday editor. She found the European book, *Ann Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, and convinced Doubleday to buy the book and translate it to English. She played a large role in getting *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* published and continued to work as an editor for Julia's other works.

John McWilliams

John was Julia's father. He was first married to Julia's mother, Caro, and after Caro died, to Phila. His family was of Scottish origin. John was politically conservative and he and Julia argued over many political issues. He was not fond of France, even after visiting the country to see Julia. In 1962, he was hospitalized and was finally diagnosed with lymphatic leukemia. He died on May 20, 1962.

Elizabeth Brassart

Brassart was the head of Cordon Bleu when Julia took her course there. The school seemed to decline during Brassart's leadership. Julia and Brassart did not get along well from the start. When Julia applied to take her final exam and her retest, Brassart ignored her for quite some time. Bugnard had to intervene in the situation in order to get Brassart to schedule Julia's exams.



Objects/Places

The Blue Flash

This was Julia and Paul's sky-blue Buick station wagon that they took to France with them.

Roo de Loo

Also known as "81", this was Julia and Paul's apartment in Paris at 81 Rue de l'Universite. Julia, Simca, and Louisette used the kitchen for their cooking classes.

Minette

Minette, or Mini, was the cat that Julia and Paul adopted in Paris.

L'Ecole du Cordon Bleu

Julia took a course at this famous Parisian cooking school.

Dehillerin

Dehillerin was a kitchen equipment store that Julia found through Chef Bugnard. She enjoyed buying gadgets and equipment from the store.

Office of Strategic Services

Julia and Paul met while they were both working for the OSS.

La Tulipe Noire

This was the name that Julia and Paul gave to their Chevrolet Styleline Deluxe Sedan that they bought to replace the Blue Flash.

L'Ecole des Gourmettes

This was the cooking school that Julia, Simca, and Louisette started in Paris.



Marseille

Julia and Paul moved to this French town after Paris.

113 Boulevard de la Corderie

In Marseilles, Julia and Paul lived here. It was on the seventh floor and had views of the old city and the sea.

US Information Agency

This was the governmental agency that Paul worked for. It was known as both the USIS and USIA.

Plittersdorf, Germany

Paul and Julia moved here after Paul was transferred.

2706 Olive Avenue

Julia and Paul owned his 150 year old home in Washington DC. They rented it out while they lived in Europe and lived there for a time when they moved back to the United States.

103 Irving Street

Julia and Paul bought this house in Cambridge, Massachusetts after Paul retired from the government.

Alfred A. Knopf Publishing House

This publisher agreed to publish Mastering the Art of French Cooking. They also published Julia's other cookbooks.

Mastering the Art of French Cooking

Julia wrote this book with Simca and Louisette. It included French recipes and tips for an American audience. They wrote two volumes together.



The French Chef

This was the name of Julia's television cooking program.

Le Mas Vieux

This was Simca and Jean's farmhouse on the family property in France.

Bramafam

Bramafam was the Fischbacher family property in France. Julia and Paul built a small home here.



Themes

France

Julia Child is very open in the book about her love of France. Almost from the moment she stepped foot in France, Julia fell in love with the people, food, smells, and scenes of the country. She states at one point in the book that she feels she is French in her soul. This connection was a powerful one for her and France continued to draw Julia in each time she visited.

France represents a rebirth for Julia. She arrived in her mid-thirties still in the process of finding herself. She struggled to learn the language and communicate with the people around her. Yet, in the food of France, Julia found her calling. The book shows Julia as a budding flower, opening to find her true passion and calling for the first time in France. The country was a muse for Julia and the place that she returned to over and over to inspire her. Through France, she learned more about herself, the culture, and the food.

France becomes like another character within *My Life in France*. Julia had a strong relationship to the country and it influenced her in numerous ways. Julia loved France, admired it, and tried to give back to it in her own way. Her relationship with France is like a friendship that she nurtured and cared about.

Food

The name Julia Child is synonymous with food and cooking. Her presence in American culture comes through her cookbooks and her television show. During the time that she lived she was a celebrity and household name. Yet, even Julia admits that she wasn't always so enamored by food. She grew up not really knowing how to cook at all. It wasn't until she met Paul and they were married that she began to learn how to cook.

France opened up new avenues for Julia. She fell in love with the food and cooking of France. From her first day in France, the reader can see how Julia savored, appreciated, and enjoyed the flavors of French cooking. As she explored the markets and began to take cooking lessons, she found her calling. She experimented with different ingredients and techniques as she tested each recipe she included in her cookbooks multiple times until she thought that she had it right.

Julia's approach to food is different than how most people see it. While she viewed food as something nourishing and good to eat, she appreciated and savored the food she made. She loved the colors, smells, and textures of the food. She loved to spend hours in the kitchen making dishes for her family and friends to enjoy. Each experiment brought new knowledge about food and each trip to the market brought her into contact with others who relied on food. She surrounded herself with others who appreciated food, including chefs and people who loved to cook as well.



Learning

One of the themes that runs throughout *My Life in France* is Julia's commitment to learning. She constantly tried new things, experimented with different food, and sought out experts who could teach her what she wanted to know. Both Julia and Paul enjoyed meeting new people, seeing new places, and improving the skills that they already had.

In Julia's life, one place where her drive to learn comes through is in her enrollment in Cordon Bleu. Julia had been learning about the markets in Paris and she had borrowed a cooking book from a friend. For many people, it would have been enough to learn some of the basics so that she could make a few things reasonably well. Julia, however, wanted to know more. She enrolled in Cordon Bleu and pushed on the director to get into a more advanced class. Still, Julia wasn't satisfied and she experimented on her own with different dishes.

Even after Julia left Paris, she continued to strive to learn new things. In each place that she and Paul lived, she learned about the culture and the food of the region. She also tested the recipes that she came across until she found just the right ingredients and cooking methods for the dish. She and Paul made hundreds of loaves of bread as they tried to find a way for Americans to make French bread.

Julia also continued to try new things. She agreed to do the television show even though she didn't know much at all about how to produce a show. She visited various places with Paul and worked on her own cookbooks, branching out into other cultures' foods and recipes.



Style

Perspective

Julia Child is a world famous cook, author, and television personality. She co-authored the famous cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* as well as several other cooking books. She was also the face of the television program *The French Chef*. Child became one of the most well-known cooks of her generation, inspiring people to learn about food and cooking. She wrote this book with Alex Prud'homme, who was Paul Child's great-nephew.

The reasons that Julia wrote this book with Prud'homme were to share her personal memories of France and her life. Her other books focus on food and cooking, with less personal detail. This book focuses on her life, experiences, family members, and what she learned over the course of her life. It does not include recipes or cooking instructions.

The intended audience for the book is, first and foremost, fans of Julia's work and books. For those who watched her television program or use her cookbooks, the book gives a back stage look at what Julia's life was like and how she developed her talents and interests. In this, the authors succeed. The book shows Julia's life and the experiences that shaped her career. The reader gets to see personal information about Julia and about how she thought about her family, France, cooking, the people she worked with, and her career.

Tone

My Life in France by Julia Child relates some of Julia's life experiences, particularly her time in France and her passion with French cooking. The mood of the book is, for the most part, lighthearted, and illustrates Julia's passion, interest, and talents in French cooking. The reader is taken from Julia's first taste of French food through her lessons at the Cordon Bleu to her book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and her television show, *The French Chef*. The reader sees Julia's first steps into learning to cook and her experiments as she sought to learn as much as she can.

The tone of the book is subjective. Julia writes in the first person, making the stories feel intimate and personal. This allows the reader to see what Julia is thinking about various events and people as well as how she feels about what she sees around her. Julia shares with the reader her frustrations as well as her successes. She comes across as honest and sincere about what she writes and shares.

The tone works well for the book. Most readers will choose this book to learn more about Julia's life, and the first person approach allows them a more intimate, personal view of Julia than a third person one would. Julia's voice adds a charming, likable



narrative to her experiences. She brings an intelligent, honest, and sometimes funny voice to the work.

Structure

My Life in France is split up into nine chapters. It also includes an introduction and an epilogue. The chapters flow in a chronological order, although Julia makes it clear that the book is not meant to be a comprehensive biography or memoir of her life. Along with the chronological order, each of the chapters also has an overriding theme, generally taken from what Julia was working on at the time or where she was in her life.

Rather than a comprehensive account of Julia's life, the chapters include short vignettes of her life and the people she meets. As she says in the beginning of the book, "memory is selective". Julia recounts the events, places, and people that she found interesting and that she learned from. The pieces loosely fit together, but there are many details of Julia's life that are missing from the narrative.

Yet, the structure of the book works very well. The result is a charming book that has Julia's strong voice and character throughout. The pieces of Julia's life included in the book are those that have meaning for her. In a sense, the reader gets a better sense of Julia Child by what she included in the book than, perhaps, if the book had been a complete biography. The reader gets to see France, French cooking, and Julia's life through her eyes.



Quotes

"I was lucky to marry Paul. He was a great inspiration, his enthusiasm about wine and food helped to shape my tastes, and his encouragement saw me through discouraging moments. I would never have my career without Paul Child." Introduction, p. 4

"I had come to the conclusion that I must really be French, only no one had ever informed me of this fact. I loved the people, the food, the lay of the land, the civilized atmosphere, and the generous pace of life." Chap. 1, p. 54

"But at the Cordon Bleu, and in the markets and restaurants of Paris, I suddenly discovered that cooking was a rich and layered and endlessly fascinating subject. The best way to describe it is to say that I fell in love with French food—the tastes, the processes, the history, the endless variations, the rigorous discipline, the creativity, the wonderful people, the equipment, the rituals." Chap. 2, p. 63

"Simca and Louissette and I discussed this idea, and discussed it some more, and before long we had agreed to start up a little cooking school of our own, right here in Paris!" Chap. 3, p. 117

"The realization that we were really and truly leaving France was painful. Paul had lived here for a total of eleven years. I had been here over five years. I was fluent in the language. I could shop like a Frenchman, and cook like one, too. I could even drive like one, if I had to. We felt nostalgic just sitting there in Marseille." Chap. 4, p. 187

"Simca and I agreed that, though we would be willing to prune our manuscript a reasonable amount, our objective remained firm: to present the fundamentals of classical French cooking in sufficient detail that any loving amateur could produce a perfect French meal." Chap. 5, p. 210

"One afternoon in late September 1961, I sat with a printed and bound copy of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* by Beck, Bertholle, and Child in my lap. It was 732 pages long, weighed a ton, and was wonderfully illustrated by Sidonie Coryn. I could hardly believe the old monster was really in print. Was it a mirage? Well, that weight on my knees must mean something! The book was perfectly beautiful in every respect." Chap. 6, p. 229

"On the evening of July 26, we ate a big steak dinner at home and, at eight-thirty, pulled our ugly little television out of hiding and switched on Channel 2. There I was, in black and white, a large woman sloshing eggs too quickly here, too slowly there, gasping, looking at the wrong camera while talking too loudly, and so on." Chap. 6, p. 242

"On the spur of the moment, I had decided to end each show with the hearty salutation 'Bon appetit!' that waiters in France always use when serving your meal. It just seemed the natural thing to say, and our audience liked it. Indeed, I found that I rather enjoyed performing and was slowly getting the hang of it." Chap. 7, p. 246



"I had long ago decided not to go into the restaurant trade myself, because it required total commitment; furthermore, in a restaurant one is restricted to cooking what's on the menu, and I preferred to experiment with different dishes." Chap. 9, p. 294

In a way, *From Julia Child's Kitchen* represented a great liberation for me. It included the lessons I'd learned from classical French cuisine, while putting my cooking know-how to work in new directions. With Judith Jones's strong encouragement, I branched into Indian curries, New England chowders, Belgian cookies, and tinkered with new gadgets like the microwave oven." Chap. 9, p. 297

"France was my spiritual homeland: it had become part of me, and I a part of it, and so it has remained ever since." Epilogue, p. 302

"In all the years since that succulent meal, I have yet to lose the feelings of wonder and excitement that it inspired in me. I can still almost taste it. And thinking back on it now reminds me that the pleasures of the table, and of life, are infinite—*toujours bon appetit!*"



Topics for Discussion

Describe how Julia became interested in cooking. What events or foods sparked her interest?

Discuss Julia and Simca's relationship. What lessons did Julia learn from it? What problems did they encounter?

How did Julia feel about France? Describe her relationship to this country.

Describe Julia's experience at Cordon Bleu. What were some of the problems that she encountered there? What did she learn at the school?

Why do you think Julia experienced success with her cookbooks and her television show? Provide examples and evidence for your argument from the book.

Julia states that Paul was an inspiration to her. What do you think she meant by this in terms of her career? What did Julia learn from Paul?

Describe the process that Simca, Julia, and Louisette went through to get *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* published. What did they want the purpose of the book to be? What problems did they encounter?

Julia learned about cooking from many different people. Who are some of the individuals who influenced Julia and helped her learn to cook? What role did they play in her overall success?