

The New York Times



May 28, 2006

'MY LIFE IN FRANCE,' BY JULIA CHILD WITH ALEX PRUD'HOMME

## Becoming Julia Child

Review by ALAN RIDING

READ no further if you dislike France, consider the French irritating, find French cooking pretentious and the French art de vivre overrated — because Julia Child liked everything about France. And her memoir, "My Life in France," is an affectionate *merci for all that France gave her*.

*True, Child also did a lot for France — and the American palate — by introducing French cuisine to American homes. But this book, written with her husband's great-nephew, Alex Prud'homme, before Child's death at 91 in August 2004, is really a love story: she loved Paul Child, 10 years her senior; she loved France; she loved French cooking; and she loved life. Listen to her: "The sweetness and generosity and politeness and gentleness and humanity of the French had shown me how lovely life can be if one takes time to be friendly." And a few pages later: "Oh, how I adored sweet and natural France, with its human warmth, wonderful smells, graciousness, coziness and freedom of spirit." Yes, mes amis, that's love!*

*In a foreword, Prud'homme explains that the book had been gestating since 1969, when Julia and Paul organized the records of their life in France between 1948 and 1954: hundreds of letters home, piles of black-and-white photographs (79 are in this book, many taken by Paul) and Julia's notes as she prepared her influential cookbook, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," published in 1961. But while she often talked about writing "the France book," Prud'homme recalls, it was only in December 2003, nine years after Paul's death, that she turned to him and said: "All right, dearie, maybe we should work on it together."*

*The result is a delight. On one level, it's the story of how a "6-foot-2-inch, 36-year-old, rather loud and unserious Californian" — her words — discovered the fullness of life in France. On another, it recounts the making of "Julia Child," America's grande dame of French cooking. Inevitably, the stories overlap.*

*Julia and Paul met in wartime Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where they were working for the Office of Strategic Services. They married in 1946 and moved to Washington. In the winter of 1948, Paul, an amateur painter and photographer, was assigned to run the exhibits office of the United States Information Service at the American Embassy in Paris, and Julia naturally accompanied him. Unlike Paul, she had never been to Europe, spoke no French and had no experience of French cuisine. But on their first day in France, in November 1948, as they drove their imported sky-blue Buick station wagon from Le Havre to Paris, they lunched at a restaurant in Rouen and there Julia's life changed. She recalls the "epiphany" in mouth-watering detail — oysters, sole meunière, salad, cheese and coffee — and concludes: "It was the most exciting meal of my life."*

*Of course, with Paul as her experienced guide, Paris meant many more exciting meals. Soon, inspired by visits to grocers, butchers and markets and aided by a couple of weighty cookbooks, Julia began probing the mysteries of French cooking in her unheated Left Bank apartment. Then, in October 1949, she signed up to learn the real thing at the École du Cordon Bleu.*

*The making of "Julia Child" began here, but the road would still be long. For a start, in the school's "short, thin, rather disagreeable owner," Julia at last met someone in France she didn't like. Then, 18 months later, she failed her final examination. But she had a mentor in the chef Max Bugnard, a jolly soul in his late 70's, who never ceased to teach and encourage her. Julia retook the exam and graduated.*

*Soon afterward, she met two elegant French women, Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, both experienced cooks, who joined her in forming L'École des Gourmettes, which offered cooking classes from their homes. Beck and Bertholle were also working on a cookbook; in September 1952, they invited Julia to help prepare it for the American market. "And so," Julia recalls, "our collaboration began."*

*In the decade that followed, the Childs moved from Paris to Marseille, then to Bonn, back to Washington, then finally to Oslo, before Paul retired and they settled in Cambridge, Mass. Julia describes their peripatetic lives in a bubbly style, offering asides on everything from the horrors of McCarthyism back home to the exhilaration of her first mistral in Marseille. But her main energy went into the cookbook, organizing the existing recipes and gathering new ones for, say, bouillabaisse and aïgo bouïdo, or garlic soup, then testing them with American ingredients in American kitchens. The book, meanwhile, had grown to 700 pages, and in 1958 Houghton Mifflin rejected it as too long. After it was rewritten, it was again turned down, this time as too expensive to produce.*

*Then, in 1960, Judith Jones at Knopf offered to publish it, requesting only that its working title, "French Recipes for American Cooks," be replaced. The following year, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" came out and fame beckoned for Julia. The book's success led to her popular television cooking classes and, eventually, to Vol. II of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" and many more cookbooks.*

*Meanwhile, the Childs built a stone house next to Beck's in Provence and prolonged their love affair with France. But by 1992, with Paul in a nursing home, Beck dead and Provence no longer a "quiet refuge," Julia finally said goodbye to the home she called La Pitchoune, or "The Little Thing."*

*"I tried to hold on to my impressions," she writes, "but it was hopeless, as if I were trying to hold on to a dream. No matter. France was my spiritual homeland: it had become part of me, and I a part of it, and so it has remained ever since." But one memory stayed firm, that of her first meal in France. "And thinking back on it now," she concludes, "reminds me that the pleasures of the table, and of life, are infinite — toujours bon appétit!"*

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**bio.**  
TRUE STORY.



## Julia Child biography

### SYNOPSIS

Popular TV chef and author Julia Child was born on August 15, 1912, in Pasadena, California. In 1948, she moved to France where she developed a penchant for French cuisine. With a goal of adapting sophisticated French cuisine for mainstream Americans, she collaborated on a two-volume cookbook, which was considered groundbreaking, and has since become a standard guide for the culinary community.

### EARLY LIFE

Popular TV chef and author Julia Child was born Julia McWilliams, on August 15, 1912, in Pasadena, California. The eldest of three children, Julia was known by several pet names as a little girl, including "Juke", "Juju" and "Jukies." Her father John McWilliams, Jr., was a Princeton graduate and early investor in California real estate. His wife, Julia Carolyn Weston, was a paper-company heiress whose father served as lieutenant governor of Massachusetts.

### QUICK FACTS

**NAME:** Julia Child

**OCCUPATION:** Chef, Television Personality, Journalist

**BIRTH DATE:** August 15, 1912

**DEATH DATE:** August 13, 2004

**EDUCATION:** Katherine Branson School for Girls, Smith College, Cordon Bleu

**PLACE OF BIRTH:** Pasadena, California

**PLACE OF DEATH:** Montecito, California

### BEST KNOWN FOR

TV chef and author Julia Child adapted complex French cooking for everyday Americans, with her groundbreaking cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

The family accumulated significant wealth and, as a result, Child lived a privileged childhood. She was educated at San Francisco's elite Katherine Branson School for Girls, where—at a towering height of 6 feet, 2 inches—she was the tallest student in her class. She was a lively prankster who, as one friend recalled, could be "really, really wild." She was also adventurous and athletic, with particular talent in golf, tennis and small-game hunting.

In 1930, she enrolled at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, with the intention of becoming a writer. "There were some famous women novelists in those days," she said, "and I intended to be one." Although she enjoyed writing short plays and regularly submitted unsolicited manuscripts to the *New Yorker*, none of her writing was published. Upon graduation she moved to New York, where she worked in the advertising department of the prestigious home furnishings company W&J Sloane. After transferring to the store's Los Angeles branch, however, Child was fired for "gross insubordination."

### WORLD WAR II

In 1941, at the onset of World War II, Julia moved to Washington, D.C., where she volunteered as a research assistant for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a newly formed government intelligence agency. In her position, Julia played a key role in the communication of top-secret documents between U.S. government officials and their intelligence officers. She and her colleagues were sent on assignments around the world, holding posts in Washington, D.C., Kuming, China; and Colombo, Sri Lanka. In 1945, while in Sri Lanka, Child began a relationship with fellow OSS employee Paul Child. In September of 1946, following the end of World War II, Julia and Paul returned to America and were married.

In 1948, when Paul was reassigned to the U.S. Information Service at the American Embassy in Paris, the Childs moved to France. While there, Julia developed a penchant for French cuisine and attended the world-famous Cordon Bleu cooking school. Following her six-month training—which included private lessons with master chef Max Bugnard—Julia banded with fellow Cordon Bleu students Simone Beck and Louise Bertholle to form the cooking school L'École de Trois Gourmandes (The School of the Three Gourmands).

### MASTERING THE ART OF FRENCH COOKING

With a goal of adapting sophisticated French cuisine for mainstream Americans, the trio collaborated on a two-volume cookbook. The women earned a \$750 advance for the work, which they received in three payments. The original publisher rejected the manuscript, however, due to its 734-page length. Another publisher eventually accepted the 3-lb. cookbook, releasing it in September 1961 under the title *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. The book was considered groundbreaking, and remained the bestselling cookbook for five straight years after its publication. It has since become a standard guide for the culinary community.

Julia promoted her book on the Boston public television station near her Cambridge, Massachusetts, home. Displaying her trademark forthright manner and hearty humor, she prepared an omelet on air. The public's response was enthusiastic, generating 27 letters and countless phone calls—"a remarkable response," a station executive remembered. "given that station management occasionally wondered if 27 viewers were tuned in." She was then invited back to tape her own series on cooking for the network, initially earning \$50 a show (it was later raised to \$200, plus expenses).

Premiering on WGBH in 1962, *The French Chef* TV series, like *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, succeeded in changing the way Americans related to food, while also establishing Julia as a local celebrity. Shortly thereafter, *The French Chef* was syndicated to 96 stations throughout America. For her efforts, Julia received the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award in 1964 followed by an Emmy Award in 1966. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Julia made regular appearances on the ABC morning show *Good Morning, America*.

Child's other endeavors included the television programs *Julia Child and Company* (1978), *Julia Child and More Company* (1980), and *Dinner at Julia's* (1983), as well as a slew of bestselling cookbooks that covered every aspect of culinary knowledge. Her most recent cookbooks included *In Julia's Kitchen with Master Chefs* (1995), *Baking with Julia* (1996), *Julia's Delicious Little Dinners* (1998), and *Julia's Casual Dinners* (1999), which were all accompanied by highly rated television specials.

Not everyone was a fan, however. She was frequently criticized by letter-writing viewers for her failure to wash her hands, as well as what they believed was her poor kitchen demeanor. "You are quite a revolting chef, the way you snap bones and play with raw meats," one letter read. "I can't stand those over-sanitary people." Child said in response. Others were concerned about the high levels of fat in French cooking. Julia's advice was to eat in moderation. "I would rather eat one tablespoon of chocolate russe cake than three bowls of Jell-O," she said.

## LEGACY

Despite her critics, Julia remained a go-to reference for cooking advice. In 1993, she was rewarded for her work when she became the first woman inducted into the Culinary Institute Hall of Fame. In November 2000, following a 40-year career that has made her name synonymous with fine food, Julia received France's highest honor: the Legion d'Honneur. And in August 2002, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History unveiled an exhibit featuring the kitchen where she filmed three of her popular cooking shows.

Child died in August 2004 of kidney failure at her assisted-living home in Montecito, two days before her 92nd birthday. Child had no intentions of slowing down, even in her final days. "In this line of work...you keep right on till you're through," she said. "Retired people are boring." After her death Child's last book, the autobiography *My Life in France*, was published with the help of Child's great nephew, Alex Prud'homme. The book, which centered on how Child discovered her true calling, became a best seller.

Julia's memory continues to live on, through her various cookbooks and her syndicated cooking show. In 2009, a film directed by Nora Ephron entitled *Julie & Julia* hit theaters. The movie, starring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams, chronicled several aspects of Child's life, as well as her influence on aspiring cook Julie Powell. For her performance, Streep won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress, and received an Academy Award nomination.

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'Julia Child'. *Biography.com*,(2011) <http://www.biography.com/people/julia-child-9246767> [accessed Nov 03, 2011]

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## *My Life in France*

Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme, 2006

Publisher

368 pp.

ISBN-13: 0307474852

### **Summary**

Julia Child single handedly awakened America to the pleasures of good cooking with her cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and her television show *The French Chef*, but as she reveals in this bestselling memoir, she didn't know the first thing about cooking when she landed in France.

Indeed, when she first arrived in 1948 with her husband, Paul, she spoke no French and knew nothing about the country itself. But as she dove into French culture, buying food at local markets and taking classes at the Cordon Bleu, her life changed forever. Julia's unforgettable story unfolds with the spirit so key to her success as a cook and teacher and writer, brilliantly capturing one of the most endearing American personalities of the last fifty years. (*From the publisher.*)

The film version of this memoir has been combined with *Julie and Julia* by writer/director Nora Ephron.

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### **Author Bio**

- Birth—August 5, 1912
- Where—Pasadena, California, USA
- Death—August 12, 2004
- Where—Santa Barbara, California
- Education—B.A., Smith College; Le Cordon Bleu
- Awards—Emmy Awards, 1965, 1996 and 1997; George Foster Peabody Award, 1965; Ordre de Mérite Agricole, 1967; Ordre de Mérite National, 1976; Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur, 2000

If leeks, shallots, and sea salt are available at your local supermarket, you probably have Julia Child to thank for it. At a time when many home cooks had nothing more ambitious in their repertoires than Jell-O salad, Child revolutionized the American kitchen, demonstrating that with good ingredients and a few French techniques, even the novice chef could turn out bistro-worthy dinners of boeuf bourguignon and tarte Tatin.

Child's interest in teaching techniques, rather than simply listing fancy recipes, was evident from her first cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which took years of collaboration (with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle) and experimentation to write. Craig Claiborne, reviewing the book for the *New York Times* in 1961, wrote: "Probably the most comprehensive,

laudable, and monumental work on [French cuisine] was published this week, and it will probably remain the definitive work for nonprofessionals." He was right—it's been a top seller ever since.

To promote the book, the Cordon Bleu-trained Child made an appearance on WGBH in Boston. Not content merely to talk about cooking, she brought along eggs, a hot plate, and a whisk, and demonstrated the proper way to make an omelette. The station producers recognized a potential star, and Child's first television show, *The French Chef*, was born. Soon thousands of viewers were tuning in to watch Julia flip crepes, blanch beans, and sear steaks. Each show ended with her signature sign-off: "Bon appétit!"

Since then, Child has hosted hundreds of television episodes, and her cookbooks have continued to be both inspiring and practical. Volume two of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was followed by titles like *The Way to Cook*, *Cooking with Master Chefs* and *Julia's Kitchen Wisdom*. Child also co-founded the American Institute of Wine and Food, an educational organization devoted to gastronomy. Many top-flight professional and celebrity chefs—including Alice Waters, Emeril Lagasse, and Thomas Keller—have cited Julia Child as an inspiration. "My own copy of volume one [of *French Cooking*] is so worn that the duct tape holding it together looks natural," chef Jasper White once noted.

Still, Child remains best known for bringing good food into the home, where she championed "food as an art form, as a delightful part of civilized life." And though she's expanded her range to include American, Mediterranean, and Asian cuisines, she hasn't been influenced by fad diets or fat phobias. She still cooks with butter and cream. As she told *Nightline*, "Small helpings, no seconds, a little bit of everything, no snacking and have a good time. I think if you follow that, you're going to be healthy, wealthy and wise."

### **Extras**

- During World War II, Julia McWilliams served in the Office of Strategic Services—the forerunner of the CIA—in Ceylon and China, where she met Paul Child. After the war, the two married and moved to Paris, where Julia Child fell in love with French food. Years later, she could still recount her first meal in Paris, which included oysters, scallops in cream sauce, and duck.
  - After Child moved from her Cambridge, Massachusetts, house to a retirement community in California, she donated her famous kitchen—where three of her television series were taped—to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.
  - Child stood tall at a statuesque 6' 2". (*From Barnes & Noble.*)
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1. Julia Child was an exuberant personality. How does that exuberance reveal itself when she first moves to France with husband Paul, a country many Americans have found unwelcoming? Why was Julia's experience so different?
2. Talk about Julia's ability to overcome self-doubt and rejection as she pursues her career...both as chef and later as writer.
3. What role does Paul play in Julia's development? How would you describe the quality of their marriage?
4. Trace the process of how Julia comes to fall in love with French food—the fact that it was not just to be eaten but to be experienced. Talk about that first meal in France where she had her epiphany? Anything similar in your own life?
5. Discuss some of the interesting side stories: Julia's relationship with her father, McCarthyism and Paul's subsequent disillusionment with the U.S. government.
6. Consider, too, some of the ironic or humorous moments: language missteps or Julia's initial thoughts about TV.
7. How important was Julia Child's role in introducing America to French food and classical cooking? Has her influence lasted, given the culture's affection for (or addiction to) fast food and convenience cooking, as well as our emphasis on low-fat diets?
8. If you have visited France (or live there), how do Julia's reminiscences compare to life in France today? What has changed...and what has remained the same?
9. If you have cooked with any of Julia Child's cookbooks, especially her most famous, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, what were your experiences with her recipes? Difficult? Easy? Delicious? Too rich? Which are your favorite recipes of hers? Do you, in fact, enjoy French cuisine?

*(Questions by LitLovers. Please feel free to use them, online or off, with attribution.)*



## **Book Reviews**

The result is a delight. On one level, it's the story of how a "6-foot-2-inch, 36-year-old, rather loud and unserious Californian"—her words—discovered the fullness of life in France. On another, it recounts the making of "Julia Child," America's grande dame of French cooking. Inevitably, the stories overlap.

*Alan Riding - New York Times*

Famed chef Child, who died in 2004, recounts her life in France, beginning with her early days at the Cordon Bleu after WWII. Greenberg, an actress for radio and commercials, does a fine job capturing Child's joie de vivre and unmatched skill as a culinary animateur. We hear Child's delight and excitement when she discovers her calling as a writer and hands-on teacher of haute cuisine; her exasperation as yet another publishing house rejects her ever-growing monster of a manuscript; and her joy at its publication and acclaimed reception after more than a decade of work. Child's opinionated exuberance translates remarkably well to audio, from her initial Brahmin-like dismissal of the new medium of television (why would Americans want to waste a perfectly good evening staring into a box, she wondered?) and frustration at her diplomat husband being investigated in the McCarthy-driven 1950s to her ecstasy about roast chicken and mulish insistence on the one correct method to make French bread at home. The seamless abridgment has no jarring gaps or abrupt transitions to mar the listener's enjoyment. Potential listeners should beware, however: this is not a book to hear on an empty stomach.

*Publishers Weekly*

Lovingly cumulated from letters written by Child and her diplomat husband, Paul, as well as interviews with the author in her later years, *My Life in France* recounts the formative years of her development into a world-renowned chef. The book captures her unique voice in its elaborate descriptions of the sights and sounds of postwar France and its sumptuous and memorable meals. The title is deceptive, however; this recollection is much more than the story of Child's years in France and her time at Le Cordon Bleu culinary school. Much of this memoir is dedicated to the years that followed, her experiences as she moved about Europe and finally settled in Cambridge, MA. One significant episode is Child's work with Simon Beck and Louisette Bertholle and their numerous failures and ultimate success at writing a French cookbook for an American audience, the critically acclaimed and classic *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Recommended for general audiobook collections. —*Dawn Eckenrode, Daniel A. Reed Lib., SUNY at Fredonia*

*Library Journal*

In seamlessly flowing prose, the text follows Child's growth as a cook into one of the best and most influential teachers of the twentieth century. Like Child herself, this memoir is earnest but never pedantic. Her eye for the ironic, her sense of humor, and her sharp sensitivity to the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and colors that surround her make lucid, lively reading.

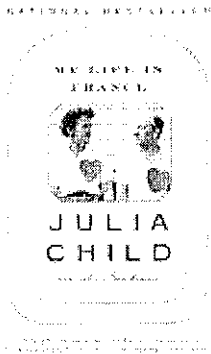
*Booklist*

"Ooh, those lovely roasted, buttery French chickens, they were so good and chickeny!" Anyone who remembers the iconic, deceased Julia Child (1912-2004)—or perhaps Dan Aykroyd's affectionate imitation of her—will recognize the singular voice. It's employed in this memoir to full advantage, and to the reader's great pleasure. As relative and writer Prud'homme recalls, at the end of her long life, Child was busily recording her years as a budding chef. In 1948, newly wed, she moved to Paris with her diplomat husband Paul, whom she had met while on wartime duty for the OSS (now there would be a story) in Asia. The first meal she cooked for him, she recalls, was "a disaster," and she arrived in France "a six-foot-two-inch, thirty-six-year-old, rather loud and unserious Californian," but in every aspect of her life, she was determined to do better. With self-effacing humor, Child recalls her efforts at learning French, finding an apartment and coping with life in a different culture. No matter how embarrassing or baffling the course of her learning curve, Child's francophilia and zest for life shine through, and nowhere more than in the pages devoted to her sentimental education at the Cordon Bleu, the world-renowned culinary institute, in whose cramped basement she "learned how to glaze carrots and onions at the same time as roasting a pigeon, and how to use the concentrated vegetable juices to fortify the pigeon flavor, and vice versa," among other talents. Matching her growing skills with a formidable armada of kitchen gadgets that will make cookery-loving readers swoon, she then recounts the difficult conception and extremely difficult birth of her book *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which brought her fame. Charming, idiosyncratic and much fun—just like its author, who is very much alive in these pages. A blessing for lovers of France, food and fine writing.

***Kirkus Reviews***

## book club: “my life in france” by julia child

Posted on July 26, 2009 by noëlle | 11 Comments



Until fairly recently, I have to confess that my familiarity with Julia Child was pretty minimal. I vaguely recall seeing snippets of the French Chef on PBS (you can watch some of the episodes [here](#)), and when Dan Aykroyd [lamooned](#) Julia on Saturday Night Live, I sort of got it, but that was about the extent of my exposure. A few months ago, I read [Julie and Julia](#), and in that book there are interludes where the author imagines scenes from Julia Child's life. This prompted me to want to learn more, so I picked up [My Life in France](#). The bulk of the book takes place from 1948-1954, during which time Julia lived in Paris and Marseilles and began the decade-long journey that would culminate in her book [Mastering the Art of French Cooking](#).

Julia had lived overseas before, working for the government in such places as Ceylon (where she met Paul Child) and Kunming, but when she and her husband moved to France just after WWII, Julia experienced a feeling she'd never had before- the feeling of finding one's spiritual home. She grew up in Pasadena, CA, but never felt she fit into the bland, conservative culture there. In France, Julia was able to truly blossom and find what would turn out to be her calling.

What struck me the most while reading this book was Julia's endless reserves of energy and enthusiasm. Most people would have been content to just take a few cooking classes, enough to prepare them for cooking everyday meals at home and the occasional dinner party. Julia became a woman obsessed, determined to not only learn all aspects of classical French cuisine, but to share her knowledge with all of America. The sheer amount of man-hours that went into all of the recipe testing and writing for MtAoFC boggles the mind. Even with a co-author, the book took well over 10 years to complete, and certainly not for any lack of motivation or work ethic. But despite her dedication, she seemed to balance it all with a sense of humor and adventure. Her infectious *joie de vivre* permeates the book, making the reader feel as if they are a backseat passenger on Julia's crazy joyride of a life.

Regardless of whether you even like to cook, Julia's memoir is inspiring for all those who would dream of making a career out of your passion. It's true that the 1950s was a different time, and having the luxury of unlimited free time and resources would be an uncommon situation in today's world. However, not everyone in her position went on to write a bestselling cookbook and have their own TV show, so clearly Julia's intrepid spirit and boundless ambition are to thank for her eventual success.

## **Discussion Questions**

*(Note: The discussion questions are intended to be a springboard for conversation and comments. However, if there are other aspects of the book that you would like to touch on, by all means do so!)*

- 1. Julia's first meal in France (Sole Meunière) was transformative. She recalls it in the book with great detail, calling it "the most exciting meal of my life". Do you have any one meal that stands out in your memory like this? Was it simply because the food was exquisite, or is it tied to another experience that made it particularly special?*
- 2. Nowadays, with the popularity of celebrity chefs such as Rachel Ray touting "30-minute meals", is Julia Child obsolete? Do you think people care anymore about the art of cooking and making something truly outstanding, or are most people looking for the "quick fix"? Where do you fall on the spectrum, and why?*
- 3. For several years, Julia spent enormous amounts of time and energy writing the cookbook that would become *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, despite having no assurances that the book would ever be published. Can you imagine undertaking such an enormous endeavor, not knowing if your efforts would ever bear fruit? Do you feel that this type of dedication is a vanishing quality in our society, or have you or someone you know ever undertaken a similar project not knowing whether there would be a payoff?*
- 4. Julia describes her father and stepmother as being somewhat small-minded and not at all interested in "experiencing" France in the way she did. Her father's conservative attitude was a constant source of chagrin for her, and she never felt close to him because of it. Do you feel she should have made more of an effort, or was she right to give up on him and keep her distance? Why do you think her father was threatened by Julia's choice of husband and lifestyle?*
- 5. The memoir covers several periods in Julia's life, from the time she arrives in France to her later years at La Pitchoune. What was your favorite part of the book or of Julia's story, and why?*