



Happy Birthday Julia! &
Filet de Sole Meunière
Summer 2012/Volume 309

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It's Julia Child's birthday this week. If she was still with us, flipping omelets and wrestling chickens, she would be 100. All across the country, restaurants are celebrating by putting many of Julia's much loved dishes on their menus. Foodies are gathering friends and family together and serving their favorite Julia recipes. Without a doubt, her trademark Boeuf Bourguignon and Lobster Thermidor will appear on many a table. I'm sure a few comedic foodies will give a nod to Dan Aykroyd and roast a chicken or two.



With this great occasion much is being written of Julia's influence on cooking in America. She is credited with introducing us to French food. While she was not the first person to cook on television, she certainly was and is the most charming. She was ever so approachable in her shirtwaist dresses with the Peter Pan collars, like one of the ladies in the neighborhood. Her star power had nothing to do with glitz or glamour and everything to do with her enthusiasm for good food and joie de vivre.

Since Julia was a teacher, it is a good time to reflect on what we have learned or can learn from her. Here goes!

Find your passion: Before she discovered food, Julia was not much more than an endearing giantess. And by food, I don't mean the bland and boring meals she found on the dining room table in her childhood home in Pasadena. Julia fell in love when she moved to France. With the country, the people and, most important, she fell in love with the food.

Julia took that passion and turned it into both a career and a calling. At a time when the *I Hate to Cook Cookbook* was a run-away best seller, Julia made it her life's work to help Americans cook well. True, it's not world peace or a cure for the common cold. However, as far as I'm concerned, anything that brings families and friends together to talk, laugh and enjoy each other's company is a good thing.

Stick to it and don't do anything half way: When Julia met Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle in 1949 they were struggling with a French cookbook for American women. They cajoled Julia into joining them and together they spent almost a decade testing recipes, writing, editing and testing some more.

Through the Childs' transfers to the south of France, Germany, Washington and Oslo, the threesome persevered. Their book was turned down by their first publisher who complained it was too encyclopedic and the recipes too challenging. They refused to do a puff piece and persevered some more. Finally, their three pound manifesto, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was born in 1961.

Be fearless and embrace life with exuberance: Before she discovered French food, Julia was an admittedly horrendous cook. Attacking the problem head on, she dared to study at the world famous Le Cordon Bleu and worked tirelessly to hone her craft. Later, she dared to bring her cooking into our living rooms. She made history as one of the first television chefs and charmed us all.

Watch an old black and white clip of Julia; her enthusiasm is contagious. Whether she is whacking a rib roast or tossing a potato pancake, you can't help but smile, maybe giggle, and want to cook something amazing. Julia wholeheartedly believed that we should have fun in the kitchen. More than a great chef, her energy and excitement didn't stop at the kitchen door. From start to finish, Julia lived life with enthusiasm.

Happy Birthday Julia and bon appétit to all!



Filet de Sole Meunière

According to Julia's autobiography, her first meal in France started with oysters and continued with Filet de Sole Meunière, a green salad and cheese for dessert. She described it as, "... absolute perfection. It was the most exciting meal of my life."

Serves 6

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1 teaspoon paprika
2 pounds fresh sole fillets
Olive oil
6 tablespoons butter, cut into small pieces
1/4 cup white wine
Juice of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
Lemon wedges

Mix the flour, salt, pepper and paprika together. Lightly dredge the sole in the flour, shake off any excess.

Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat; add a little olive oil to the pan. In batches, carefully place the fish in the pan and cook a few minutes per side. Remove the fish from the pan and place on an oven-proof platter. Keep the fish warm in a very low oven while you cook the remaining filets.

Make the Meunière Sauce: Reduce the heat to medium and melt the butter in the skillet. As soon as the butter starts to bubble, whisk in the white wine and lemon juice. Cook for about 1 minute, swirling the pan once or twice.

Remove the fish from the oven. Pour the sauce over the sole, sprinkle with parsley and serve immediately with lemon wedges.



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