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PROFILES

Good Cooking

by Calvin Tomkins

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Julia Child, whose cookbooks and television shows made her one of the most recognizable American personalities of her time, died on Thursday, at the age of ninety-one. This Profile of Child was written in 1976 by Calvin Tomkins.

THE headwaiter at Kan's could not decide immediately where to seat the Child party. One table was too small, another too far from the windows. Chinese waiters flew about in response to his urgent commands. Mrs. Kan, the proprietor, hastening to the scene, exchanged ceremonious greetings with Paul and Julia Child and was introduced to Rosemary Manell and Elizabeth Bishop, who would be assisting Julia throughout the next week in a series of cooking demonstrations for the benefit of the Presbyterian Hospital in San Francisco. Mrs. Kan was deeply honored by the presence in her restaurant of Julia Child, whose television show, "The French Chef," is well known in San Francisco, but also deeply distressed, for she had not expected the visit. At length, the Child party was seated at a large table near the center of a big, elegant second-floor room that overlooks the city's Chinese quarter.

"Julia would like it if you ordered for all of us," Mrs. Manell said to Mrs. Kan. Julia nodded, beaming. She had lost her voice two days before, in Seattle, where she had given a series of four cooking demonstrations for the benefit of St. Mark's Cathedral. At a cocktail party following one of the demonstrations, she had swallowed an hors d'oeuvre that contained a very hot pepper, and a doctor she consulted seemed to think this might have been the cause of it. She was not supposed to use her voice, and she was communicating with facial expressions, gestures, and notes written with a felt-tip pen on a white pad. Whenever she scribbled a note to Mrs. Kan, Mrs. Kan took the pad and pen and wrote out her reply. Mrs. Bishop explained that this wasn't really necessary, since Julia could hear perfectly well, but Mrs. Kan seemed to think it impolite to reply orally to a written message.

Mrs. Kan's selections began with barbecued spareribs, served as an hors d'oeuvre, and progressed to fried squid. "Fresh frying fat makes all the difference," Julia wrote when she had tasted it. Mrs. Kan wrote back, "An expert such as you knows!" The squid was followed by diced-winter-melon soup, pale green and delicately flavored ("Does it look like cat vomit?" Julia inquired in a note not shown to Mrs. Kan), and then by lemon chicken, Kan's special noodles flavored with chicken and coriander, asparagus with beef, and bean cake with barbecued pork. Two other diners sent complimentary greetings to the Childs' table, and their waiter told them that everyone wanted to know what Julia was having (nobody in America calls her anything but Julia). As the meal continued, Julia scribbled faster and faster, and asked the others to read her notes aloud, so there could be the appearance of conversation. "Isn't this far better than that hot Szechwan stuff?" she wrote. "Paul and I lived 11/2 years in China and never had it. I wonder if it really exists there." The Childs lived in China during the Second World War—Kunming, in fact, was the scene of their courtship, while they were both working for the Office of Strategic Services—and they have retained ever since a keen interest in Chinese cooking. Julia Child does not do any Chinese cooking herself, because she feels that one lifetime is hardly sufficient to encompass the cuisines of France, her specialty, but she loves to go to Chinese restaurants. "I would be perfectly happy w. only Chi nese food," she wrote. "Either French or Chinese. Could live w. only Chinese."

Mrs. Kan wanted the Childs to see the kitchen. She also wanted to take their picture, and she refused to let them pay for the meal. Paul Child made certain that the photo would not be used as an endorsement for Kan's—"We never do that"—and he said that they always paid for meals in restaurants. "We must be very careful, no payola," Julia wrote on her pad. "Remember Watergate!" Mrs. Kan smiled firmly. Everyone got up and went into the kitchen, where Julia inspected mysterious vessels and vats, and put her arm around the chef. The chef, who stood a good eighteen inches short of Julia's six feet one and a half, seemed absolutely delighted.

Going back to the hotel in a taxi, Paul was upset that he had not been permitted to pay for the meal. "She was so determined,"

he said. “I didn’t want to do *battle* over it.”

“We’ll send her a book,” Julia wrote. And a little later, in a note to Mrs. Bishop, “We must all help to cheer up Paul. He gets depressed when anything wrong w. wife.”

THE Childs and their associates were at about the midpoint of a demonstration tour that had begun in Seattle and would conclude in Honolulu. There were to be eight cooking demonstrations in San Francisco, at the Kabuki Theatre, in the new Japan Center on Geary Street. They had flown in from Seattle on a Thursday, four days in advance of the first demonstration, and they needed all of the time they had to get ready. In their comfortable suite at the Clift Hotel, the Childs, Mrs. Manell, and Mrs. Bishop spent hours going over lists, schedules, and recipes in thick loose-leaf notebooks. Other lists had preceded them—lists of cooking equipment and food staples and hardware and supplies of all kinds, which the Women’s Board of Presbyterian Hospital of Pacific Medical Center, co-sponsor of the event along with Liberty House, the San Francisco branch of the Honolulu department store, had agreed to provide. The Women’s Board had done its job with great zeal—had provided, in fact, more than fifteen hundred separate items, from a stove and a refrigerator down to rolls of paper towels and packages of scouring pads. (Many of the utensils were going to be raffled off to ticket buyers after the demonstrations.) There were always a number of things, like fresh vegetables, that could only be bought at the last minute, however, and Mrs. Manell and Mrs. Bishop were responsible for getting those. The dishes to be cooked onstage at the Kabuki were all fairly spectacular. Having more or less invented what could be called the theatre of television, Julia was not going to let her audiences down, and the stage, she knew, required larger effects than the home screen. She would give San Francisco her *Caneton en Aspic à la Parisienne* and *Charlotte Malakoff*, *Beef Wellington* and *Quiche aux Asperges*, *Le Loup en Croûte* and *Crêpes à la Pagode en Flammes*.

By Saturday, two days before the first demonstration, Julia’s voice had returned. Her younger sister Dorothy (Mrs. Ivan Cousins), who lives in Sausalito, had sent her to a throat specialist well known for treating opera singers and other performers, and he had painted and sprayed Julia’s aggrieved larynx so skillfully that she was able to go through with a scheduled press conference at the Kabuki Theatre that morning. Julia and Paul sat for an hour at a small table in the theatre lobby, which Liberty House had turned into a festive-looking culinary boutique for the demonstrations, and replied in their quite different conversational styles—cheery, gracious, down-to earth in Julia’s case, precise and urbane in Paul’s—to the not invariably stimulating questions of a dozen or so food and feature editors. Julia recommended that newcomers to cooking approach it “with courage and daring.”

Paul said they should not be afraid of hard work. Julia said cooking wasn’t really hard once you mastered the essential techniques. Paul said that mastering the techniques required much hard work. Julia came out against the term “gourmet,” which she said had lost all meaning through overuse (“We just say ‘good cooking’ ”), and she also had harsh words for the frozen stringbean. A bearded reporter who said that he was from the Gay Liberation Press announced that he and his friends were coming to all the demonstrations. (“I think it’s very good they’re coming out of the closet,” Julia said later.) Since nobody asked her about cholesterol, Julia brought up the subject herself. It was a very bad idea, she said, to think that you could cut out all foods that were high in cholesterol, as those were often the healthiest foods. Everyone needed a balanced diet. “We’ve done research on this,” she said, “and we’ve found that some doctors believe a completely cholesterol-free diet can lead to premature aging and sexual frailty.”

Although the press conference was a great success, the publicity for the cooking demonstrations had been, up to this point, somewhat disappointing. Only one major story had appeared in a San Francisco paper (the *Chronicle*), and that one had printed the wrong telephone number to call for tickets and reservations. Tickets for each demonstration were priced at fifteen dollars, and advance sales had been slow—partly, it was thought, because San Franciscans were nervous about the so-called zebra murders, and were afraid to go out in the evening. With Julia’s arrival, though, the trickle of publicity became a flood, and ticket sales picked up.

“This is such an American custom, the way these affairs are run by volunteer women,” Paul Child said that afternoon. “It’s practically unheard of in Europe.” Barbara Grant, the president of the Women’s Board, and Hannah Foster, the vice-president, and their colleagues had started eight months before to prepare for the 1974 benefit. It had been Mrs. Foster’s idea to invite Julia Child—in previous years the Women’s Board’s fund-raising had centered on an annual *débutante* ball. Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Grant, and several others on the benefit committee put in long hours throughout the Childs’ stay in San Francisco, running errands for the cooking team, washing dishes and pots from the stage kitchen, briefing volunteer ushers, selling tickets, and not infrequently pressing their husbands into service as well. Only one or two of the people connected with the Women’s Board seemed to be what Julia refers to as “lady types”—the type that comes into a kitchen, sees several stacks of unwashed utensils, and asks, “Is there anything I can do?”

After inspecting the rather elaborate cooking setup that had been provided for them on the Kabuki stage—a made-to-order

kitchen flanked by large hanging screens to pick up television images of what Julia would be doing from three video cameras mounted directly above the work spaces—the Childs were a little worried that the benefit committee might have spent too lavishly. “In Seattle,” Paul said, “we performed in the auditorium of the cathedral, on a set put together mostly from found objects. Somebody had contributed a stove, another person a refrigerator, and there were chests of drawers for work spaces and a couple of child-sized tables under the counters for shelves. It was really very clever and workable, and it didn’t cost much.” The financing of these demonstrations does not directly concern the Childs, who derive no money from them personally. They donate all their fees to WGBH-TV, in Boston, the public-television station where “The French Chef” originated, in 1962. The tour expenses are paid by the sponsor group (WGBH picks up any extra, and the Childs look upon the rather considerable effort and time involved mainly as a means of generating favorable publicity for Julia’s books—the monumental “Mastering the Art of French Cooking,” Volumes I and II, and a book of recipes from their television shows, called “The French Chef Cookbook.” Nevertheless, both the Childs wanted the hospital to make money from the San Francisco demonstrations, and they were somewhat alarmed to hear that the benefit committee had already spent something like thirty thousand dollars on expenses. Liberty House had donated most of the cooking equipment, and Safeway Stores had provided quantities of free staples, but there had been heavy outlays for the construction of the model kitchen on the stage of the Kabuki Theatre. An eight-hundred-and-fifty-seat house fitted out with tables for the audience to dine at while watching a performance, the theatre had been designed for the presentation of traditional Kabuki drama, but evidently there had not been enough Kabuki-lovers in town to support it, so management was planning to use the space for stage shows of various kinds. At one point, the management had added to the benefit committee’s difficulties by trying, unsuccessfully, to cancel its one-week lease on the theatre.

The Childs refused almost all invitations to dinner or to cocktails in the days before the first demonstration. “We want to put on a good show,” Julia explained, “and we just can’t spare the time.” Lunches for the Childs and their two assistants were cooked by Rosemary Manell in the demonstration kitchen, and they ate them at a table in the wings. (Later, when they were giving demonstrations each afternoon and evening, they had dinner there as well.) They spent the weekend at the theatre, stocking an setting up for the first show and doing the necessary pre-cooking. A great deal of pre-cooking is done for Julia’s television series; a dish may have to be shown in three or four different stages of preparation, and since the twenty-eight minutes of allotted air time does not allow for the completion of these stages, versions of the dish at each stage must be ready to show. In a three-hour live demonstration, much of the actual cooking does take place onstage, but puff pastry and yeast doughs must be made ahead so they can rise, backups are needed in case of onstage disasters, and cold ducks (for Caneton en Aspic) must be cooked in advance. Rosemary Manell and Elizabeth Bishop, who had both been on previous demonstration tours, knew the names that Julia and Paul assign to every item of equipment and every work space (to save time in explaining or describing), and they were even allowed access to the Sacred Bag, a phenomenally heavy black canvas satchel containing certain cooking items that Julia cannot do without (her favorite bone flour scoop, her large pastry-cutting wheel, her special knives, and so on), plus emergency items such as extension cords, of which there are never enough on hand. The Sacred Bag has been around since the beginning of the television series.

The Childs had known Rosemary Manell since 1949, when they were all together in France. Paul Child and Abram Manell, Rosemary’s husband, were both with the Foreign Service then, and the two couples, who shared an interest in good food which in Julia’s case was becoming something more than an interest, used to dine together regularly in the Childs’ apartment, on the Rue de l’Université, or the Manells’, on the Île St.-Louis. Rosie, as the Childs and their friends (but no one else) call her, now lives in Belvedere, just across the bay from San Francisco. She is a talented painter and potter, an expert tailor, a first-class cook; she wears Scandinavian-blond hair in a thick braid down her back, and is nearly as tall as Julia.

Elizabeth Bishop, a Bostonian with close-cropped dark hair and a sense of humor that has often relieved tension at difficult moments was one of the volunteers who came to work for “The French Chef” at WGBH. When the show started, Paul did all the behind-scenes washing up—and a good deal of the chopping, grating, mincing, and pre-cooking as well. He had only recently resigned from the Foreign Service, after nearly twenty years, but because he has always adapted easily to changed circumstances, and suffers from no apparent insecurities of the male ego, he took, from the outset, an active and supportive part in Julia’s new career. “I’m here,” Paul used to say. “I’ll do anything.” But as the program developed, it soon became evident that more backstage help was needed, and, with no difficulty whatsoever, a crew of half a dozen volunteers was formed. Several of the women were married and had small children at home; they hired babysitters or housekeepers to come and do the dishes there while they went to the WGBH studio in Cambridge and spent the day doing the dishes for Julia. Actually, they did much of the pre-cooking and testing for the show. Julia sometimes introduces them on the air. “Meet my associate cooks,” she says. “Mary O’Brien, Liz Bishop, Bess Hopkins, Edith Seltzer, Rita Rains, Bess Coughlin, and Gladys Christopherson. It’s always more fun cooking with friends, don’t you think?” Mrs. Bishop lives in Cohasset, Massachusetts, with her husband and their three children, and when “The French Chef” was in production she often did not get home until one or two o’clock in the morning. Now that the Childs are taking a year off from television and the show is being seen only in reruns, she is delighted to be able to travel with them on their demonstration tours. “Cooking is the least of it,” she told a friend in San Francisco. “You know, in a funny way I feel closer to Julia than I do to anyone. Of course I’m *closer* to Jack and the children, but there are

things I could say to her that I couldn't say to anyone else."

JULIA CHILD was born Julia Carolyn McWilliams in Pasadena, California, in 1912. The oldest of three children in a moderately well-to-do family—her father, John McWilliams, managed some family farming land in Arkansas and southern California—she was entered in Smith College the day she was born. "My mother was in the Class of 1900 there," she said recently, "and there was just never any doubt that I would go. In those days, people were very enthusiastic about their college." As a member of Smith's Class of 1934, Julia was planning to be Great Woman Novelist. "They laughed when I sat down at the typewriter," she told an interviewer in San Francisco. "And they were right, too, because nothing much ever came of the plan. I wrote for the Smith College *Tatler*, and after I graduated I went home for a while, and then I went to New York and tried to get a job with *The New Yorker*, but they turned me down. The woman-novelist idea was very vague and unformed. I just thought it would develop at some time or other." After three years in New York, working in the advertising department of W. & J. Sloane and living with two Smith classmates in an apartment under the Queensboro Bridge, she went back home and spent another two years in Pasadena. "I had a very good time doing virtually nothing," she said. "There was always lots of fun and laughter." Then the war came, and on the advice of her friend Janie McBaine (who subsequently married Marquis Childs) she went to Washington and got what she describes as "a dreadful typing job" with a government information agency whose nickname was Mellett's Madhouse. After six months, she left and joined the Office of Strategic Services. At one point, there was a call for volunteers for overseas duty, and Julia McWilliams, reasoning that she would probably be going to Europe after the war in any case, put in for Far Eastern duty. With an oddly assorted group that included the anthropologists Gregory Bateson and Cora Du Bois and a congeries of explosives experts, forgers who had done time in federal prisons, and some missionaries who had been born in the Far East, she travelled by troop train across the United States and then by boat to Australia and on to Bombay, arriving the same day that two ammunition ships caught fire and blew up a large part of the Bombay docks. From Bombay, some of them went by train across the Indian subcontinent to Madras, and from there to Ceylon. It was at the O.S.S. headquarters in- Ceylon that she met Paul Child.

Child, who got to Ceylon a few months after Julia, was in charge of Visual Presentation for the O.S.S. there. That meant, for the most part, setting up and maintaining a war room for the general staff, with maps and charts to show the areas, topographies, troop concentrations, and other factors on which military planning depended. (He had recently come from New Delhi, where he had set up a war room for Lord Louis Mountbatten and General Wedemeyer.) Julia was placed in charge of the Registry, a document center for messages to and from O.S.S. agents in the field. She noticed the Visual Presentation officer because he seemed, on the whole, to be more civilized than anyone else there. Paul was ten years older than Julia, and he had seen a lot of the world. He had been a lumberman in Maine and a waiter in Hollywood, and he was a self-taught artist. During the twenties, he had knocked about Europe, spending several years in Paris, where he got to know Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and other expatriates; that supposedly golden decade had been a rather penurious one for Child, who had made a marginal living by selling his own woodcuts and making copies of the antique furniture in the Cluny Museum. After that, he had become a schoolteacher, first in France and later at the Shady Hill School, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at the Avon Old Farms School, near Hartford, Connecticut, where he taught art and French. He was, in addition, an accomplished engraver and photographer, a black belt in judo, a master of several languages, and a man who could converse interestingly and amusingly on almost any subject. Although a more or less confirmed bachelor by this time, Child also noticed Julia McWilliams. "She seemed like a pretty great woman to me," he recalled recently. "She was completely competent, unflappable—just the way she is now—and running a very complicated operation with great skill."

At this stage of the war, late in 1943, the Americans and the British were planning an operation to cut off the Japanese garrison in Singapore by making a surprise landing behind enemy lines on the Malay Peninsula. This plan was abandoned when it became evident that the required naval support was not available—everything was going into the approaching invasion of Normandy. Child was sent to help set up other war rooms on the Chinese mainland, at Chungking, and then at Kunming. Julia McWilliams was also assigned to Kunming, and the friendship begun in Ceylon developed into something more serious. Kunming, which had never been in Japanese hands, was full of refugees from all parts of China. There was enough food available; and Paul and Julia were able to sample and become enthusiastic about many different Chinese cuisines. They were in Kunming when the Japanese surrendered. Soon afterward, Paul made his way home by way of Peking. Julia's detachment was scheduled to go to Shanghai, but, with the war over, the unit's morale was not what it had been. "I felt we'd lost the purity of our purpose," Julia said recently. "You can see I'm a Victorian woman at heart. Anyway, I decided to go home. They flew me over the hump to Calcutta and loaded me onto a troopship, from which I disembarked, weeks later, smelling, as somebody said, like a cattle boat."

A reunion took place several months later in Washington. "We had decided that we should look each other over in civilian clothes, and that we should meet each other's families," Julia recalls. That done, they were married in the fall of 1946. Julia was

thirty-four, Paul forty-four. For the first year and a half, they lived in Washington. The Office of Strategic Services had been discontinued, but O.S.S. people who had been in Visual Presentation were automatically absorbed into the State Department, and Paul was now doing graphic work for the government. Early in 1948, by a happy official stroke, he was assigned to the United States Information Service office in Paris.

France was not at all the way Julia had imagined it. “I’d never met any French people before,” she said not long ago, “and I thought they’d be, you know, snippy, the way they always seemed in *Harper’s Bazaar* or *Vogue*. I was just amazed to get off the boat at Le Havre and see all those great big beefy people. We drove to Rouen and had lunch there at the Couronne, and I was euphoric. I was practically in hysterics from the time we landed. Of course, I didn’t realize how difficult it was going to be for me to learn the language. It was two years, really, before I could get along in it, and four years before I was fluent. But from the beginning I just fell in love with everything I saw. It took me a long time to get over my infatuation—now they can’t fool me so easily.”

The Childs found a comfortable third-floor apartment on the Rue de l’Université, behind the Chambre des Députés. Paul could walk across the Pont de la Concorde to his office, on the Faubourg du St.-Honoré. At first, Julia spent most of her time at Berlitz, struggling with the language. Both the Childs readily concede that at this point her cooking left a good deal to be desired. Paul knew and appreciated good food, but Julia, like many American women of her background, had never really learned to cook at home, and until she married Paul she had never been interested in learning. In the fall of 1949, though, she was sufficiently interested to enroll in a special early-morning course at the Cordon Bleu cooking school, where she found herself the only woman student—the twelve others were ex-G.I.s, learning cooking on the G.I. Bill of Rights. “I would leave home at seven in the morning, cook all morning with the G.I.s, and then rush home to make lunch for Paul,” Julia remembers. “I’d give him the béarnaise or the hollandaise sauce I’d just learned, or something equally rich. In about a week we both got terribly bilious.”

The Cordon Bleu, founded in the nineteenth century, once served as a cooking school for orphans, to help them make their way in life. By the nineteen-thirties, it had become a place where well-to-do housewives (many of them Americans) sent their servants to learn the techniques of the classic cuisine. In modern times, it has not been a professional school—to become a professional chef in France one has to serve as an apprentice for years in a restaurant or hotel kitchen, and that training is often supplemented by attendance at a government-sponsored technical institution. But the Cordon Bleu hired professional chefs as teachers, and when Julia enrolled, in 1949, the teaching was excellent. Two of the three chefs whom Julia had as teachers were in their seventies: Max Bugnard, who had owned his own restaurant in Brussels before the war, and Claude Thillmont, for many years the pastry chef at the Café de Paris. The third was a younger man—Pierre Mangelatte, who was the chef at an excellent small restaurant in Montmartre, the Restaurant des Artistes.

“Bugnard was a marvellous meat cook, a marvellous sauce-maker, wonderful with stocks and vegetables, although not so much with desserts,” Julia recalls. “As a young man, he had known Escoffier. Chef Thillmont had worked in the twenties with Mme. Saint-Ange on her great cookbook, ‘Le Livre de Cuisine de Mme. Saint-Ange,’ now unfortunately out of print. Those two men knew just about everything there was to know. And in the afternoons we would have demonstration classes by Mangelatte, who was a brilliant technician.” Julia had just enough French by this time to keep up with the instruction. Her interest in the subject, she found, was limitless. “Until I got into cooking,” she once said, “I was never *really* interested in anything.”

Marie-Antoine Carême (1784-1833), celebrated gastronome, personal chef (successively) to Talleyrand, Czar Alexander I, George IV, and Baron Rothschild, author of five classic books on food, is generally considered the founder of *la grande cuisine*. On the Sunday evening before the cooking demonstrations began at the Kabuki Theatre, the Chefs Association of the Pacific Coast presented its Carême Medal to Julia Child, at a dinner given in her honor in a private dining room at the Jack Tar Hotel. The dinner began, surprisingly, with matzo-ball soup, continued with a seafood coquille, paused for sherbet, forged onward with Beef Wellington, a potato basket, and cucumber salad, and concluded with a chocolate bombe and petite fours. In draping the Carême Medal around Julia’s neck, the president of the association spoke of her as “the person who brought classic cooking into American homes” and “the one chef in the country who has the recognition that we are all striving for.” A few of the chefs at the long table seemed to harbor reservation about the award’s going, for the first time, to a woman—Joe Rivas, the principal chef for the Pam Pam chain of restaurants in San Francisco, said firmly that women would never make it as chefs in major restaurants, because they were not strong enough physically—but virtually every one of them, including Rivas, wanted to meet Julia and shake her hand.

There was a good deal of talk at the dinner about the shortage of qualified chefs in this country and the absence of professional cooking schools. The Pacific Coast chefs, most of whom seemed to be European-born and in their late fifties or sixties, bemoaned the fact that so few younger men were coming up to take their places. Julia said that unfortunately the same thing was

now true in France. Fewer and fewer people wanted to put in the long hours that a first-class restaurant, or even a humble village bakery, demanded. Convenience foods were taking over in restaurants as well as in private households. There were some great young chefs at work, to be sure—Julia mentioned in particular Roger Vergé, whose *Hostellerie Moulin de Mougins*, near Cannes, had just received its third star in the *Guide Michelin*. But, as Paul Child pointed out, men like Vergé and Paul Bocuse and the Troisgros brothers did not write down what they had learned or invented, and their discoveries would probably die with them. “Nowadays, everybody likes to run down Escoffier,” Julia said, “but nobody’s doing what he did to preserve the great traditions.”

“*She’s* doing it,” Paul said, pointing at his wife.

“Oh, but I’m doing it for the home. Somebody should be doing it for the profession, the way Escoffier did.”

“Nobody has that kind of dedication,” Paul said.

What Paul had in mind was the dedication that went into “*Mastering the Art of French Cooking*,” on which Julia and two collaborators worked without interruption for ten years. The book’s phenomenal success—the first volume alone has sold more than a million and a quarter copies in America to date—suggests that perhaps the traditional *haute cuisine* of France may be moving not only from the restaurant to the private home (where it began) but from the Old World to the New. Only a few long-established, all-purpose cookbooks, such as Irma Rombauer’s “*Joy of Cooking*,” have sold more copies in hardcover. There are many young couples in America who start out conjugal life with what they refer to simply as “*Julia Child*” and continue to use it more or less exclusively ever after. A woman who lives on the Alaskan tundra has written to say that she is cooking her way through “*Julia Child*.” The wife of a forest ranger in New Mexico, who lives sixty miles from the nearest town, is doing the same. Much of the book’s success, of course, is directly related to the even more phenomenal success of Julia Child as a television personality, but it seems reasonable to assume that anyone who puts down twelve-fifty for the book is not just going to leave it out on the cocktail table. A lot of dedicated French cooking does seem to be going on.

Julia had no intention at first of getting involved in the book, which she heard about soon after a friend in Paris had introduced her to Simone (Simca) Beck. Mme. Beck had started to work, with an other friend of hers, named Louise Bertholle, on a book about French cooking for Americans. “Simca was very much like me,” Julia has said. “A middle-class person who was extremely interested in cooking. She had gone to the Cordon Bleu in the old, prewar days, when Henri Pellaprat was teaching there. I knew nobody then who was really *deeply* interested in cooking. I had nobody to talk to about it, and so when I met Simca we just fell into each other’s arms. She and Louise introduced me into the Cercle des Gourmets, which is a French ladies’ gastronomical society—founded, I think, in 1927. The Cercle met every two weeks, and there was a chef to give instruction. By the time I joined it, most of the members were in their seventies, and they would never arrive until about noon, in time for the apéritif and lunch. Simca and Louise and I would arrive at nine-thirty, so we got what amounted to private lessons from the chef. It was my introduction to really sophisticated French food and living—foie gras in season, and lobster dishes, and very elaborate ways of doing things. Anyway, I knew that Simca and Louise were working on a big book, and that they needed an American collaborator—they’d had one, a man, who didn’t work out for some reason—but I had no interest in it then. The book was their affair.

“What happened next was that some friends of ours from California came to Paris and, knowing about my interest in cooking, said, ‘Why don’t you teach us?’ Simca, who is always enthusiastic, said, ‘Why not?’ And so the very next day we started our school, which we called the *École des Trois Gourmandes*. Our apartment was the perfect place for it, because we had a big, airy kitchen on the upper floor (it was a two-floor apartment) with a dumbwaiter that brought things down to the dining room. We engaged two of my Cordon Bleu chefs, Bugnard and Thillmont, to come in once or twice a week. There were never more than six in the class—mostly Americans, but one or two French. We would cook all morning, then sit down and eat it, with Paul at the head of the table to pour the wine. If you brought a guest, you had to pay five hundred francs. We three found that we were absolutely fascinated with teaching.”

Sometime in 1951, Julia was persuaded to become the American collaborator on the cookbook. She had her own ideas about the project, however, one of them being that it should be a “real teaching book” rather than a mere collection of recipes. With the shining exception of Mme. Saint-Ange’s classic, most of the available books for serious students of French cooking were little more than a chef’s shorthand notes for the various dishes; unless the reader knew beforehand how to make a white Sauce or poach a trout, or how to add egg yolks to a hot sauce without making it curdle, the book was not much help. Julia thought that every step and every technique should be thoroughly explained, and that the reasoning behind the various techniques should also be made clear. The essence of French cooking, she has often said, is knowing the properties of each ingredient and cooking it in such a way that its best points are fully brought out. If the purpose of their book was to overcome the American fear of “elaborate” French cuisine, one of the methods would be to leave nothing out—to describe, for example, what a dish should look like and feel like at each stage in its preparation, and also to discuss some of the things that could go wrong during the process, along with corrective measures. This meant long recipes—pages and pages long in many cases. (The longest is the

twenty-two-page recipe for French bread in Volume II of “Mastering the Art of French Cooking,” an adaptation of the professional baker’s art to the home kitchen that Julia and Paul, who collaborated on the research, regard as probably their most important contribution so far.) It also meant a prodigious amount of research (two years on French bread alone), testing, and often impassioned argument among the three authors.

From 1952 on, much of the argument was by mail. After four years in Paris, Paul Child was transferred to Marseilles, and then, two years later, to the Embassy in Bonn, where he was exhibits officer, and where the Childs acquired a reputation for oddness because they did not spend much time in the Embassy’s housing compound or swim in the swimming pool there (they preferred a pool on the other side of the Rhine), and because Paul did not spend weekends polishing his car. Paul concedes that he never really became reconciled to the bureaucratic aspects of government service. He and Julia had been unable to have children and their primary interests were aesthetic and culinary. Julia was always well liked by the other Embassy wives—she was too delightful not to be—and her social talents were a notable asset to Paul in his career. “I can’t tell you how important it is for a Foreign Service officer to have a partner like Julia,” Paul said one day in San Francisco. At the same time, she was putting a great deal of time and energy into research on the book—experimenting and testing, amassing a private library and clipping file on the subject, exchanging information and ideas with her collaborators. One epic argument with Simone Beck, over the proper ingredients of the *vrai cassoulet*, consumed sixty single spaced typewritten pages before it was finally resolved.

In the spring of 1951, Julia wrote a sample chapter and an outline of the book, had several copies made, and sent them to various friends in the United States. One of the recipients was Avis DeVoto, Bernard DeVoto’s wife. Some time before, in his monthly column in *Harper’s*, DeVoto had written a diatribe against the stainless-steel paring knife, which, he complained, would not take an edge or perform any useful kitchen function. Julia saw the column in Paris, wrote him a letter expressing vigorous agreement, and enclosed a French paring knife with a good, sharpenable carbon-steel blade. Avis DeVoto had written a friendly reply, and a correspondence had sprung up. “We both liked to write letters,” Mrs. DeVoto said recently, “and there was a lot to write about. The McCarthy thing was heating up in Washington. Julia and Paul were bewildered and rather frightened by it. Sometimes we’d write each other three or four times a week.” According to Mrs. DeVoto, Julia was a pretty bad writer at that point. The sample chapter of the cookbook struck her as “muddy, verbose, and awkward,” and the spelling was atrocious. “But I knew the minute I saw it that this book on French cooking was really going to work,” she said. “I’m not a bad cook, and I could see this was a whole new approach.” She took it around to Houghton Mifflin, the publisher of several of her husband’s books. Although the response there was somewhat mixed, Houghton Mifflin gave the authors a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar advance and told them to have the book finished in a year’s time.

Six years later, having decided that their research demanded a multi-volume cookbook, the authors delivered an eight-hundred-page typescript that dealt, solely and exhaustively, with recipes for poultry and sauces. “That was my fault,” Julia said last spring. “I’ve always done the writing, and the whole thing was much too detailed and academic. It was my conception that everyone would be interested in knowing, for example, that if you didn’t happen to have a suffocated duck on hand you could get the same effect by using pig’s blood.” Not surprisingly, Houghton Mifflin turned it down. The Childs were in Washington at the time; Paul had been recalled from Bonn in 1956. Simone Beck had come over to visit them, and the Childs met her at the bus station with the bad news. “The despair in the waiting room could have been cut with a knife,” according to Julia. “But then Simca, with her unflinching optimism, said we would just have to do it over again.” The Childs left soon afterward for Paul’s new post, in Oslo, and Julia spent the next year rewriting the book.

Although the second version covered more culinary ground and seemed to Avis DeVoto greatly improved in content and prose style (“I never thought anyone could really learn to write,” she said, “but Julia did—she taught herself, with help from Paul and one or two other people”), Houghton Mifflin again found it unpublishable. Mrs. DeVoto submitted it next to William Koshland, at Alfred Knopf. She knew that Koshland liked to cook, and she urged him and Judith Jones, another Knopf editor interested in good food, to take it home and try out some of the recipes. Judith Jones was immediately convinced. “I was sure it was revolutionary,” she said recently. “It was like having a teacher right there beside you in the kitchen, and everything really worked.” Koshland liked it, too, and kept trying recipes out of it at home, but other editors at Knopf were uncertain. Time passed. From Oslo came increasingly anguished letters from Julia, inquiring whether ten years’ work was down the drain. Eventually, the *fins becs* at Knopf prevailed over the doubters. The first volume of “Mastering the Art of French Cooking” came out in the fall of 1961, to virtually unanimous praise. Craig Claiborne called it “probably the most comprehensive, laudable, and monumental work on the subject,” written “without compromise or condescension.” The late Michael Field said that it “surpasses every other American book on French cooking in print today.” The New York food establishment, which is not known for its generosity of spirit, took the book and the authors to its collective bosom, and Dione Lucas even gave a dinner for the Childs at The Egg Basket, her restaurant on East Fifty-seventh Street. Houghton Mifflin has been regretting its decision ever since.

t ten o'clock on Monday morning, Julia stood at the counter of the onstage kitchen at the Kabuki Theatre, pounding out chilled pastry dough with giant blows of a rolling pin and occasionally popping a small piece of it into her mouth. ("I love uncooked dough, don't you?") Rosie Manell was cutting green beans and red pimientos into tiny strips, with which Julia would decorate the duck aspic according to a pattern drawn in colored inks by Paul. Liz Bishop was glazing a duck, and Paul was rewriting the scripts for a group of fundraising appeals that Julia had agreed to tape later in the week for KQED, the local public-television station. In contrast with the anxious manner of some of the ladies on the benefit committee, who appeared from time to time to discuss the length of intermissions or the proper way to handle questions from the audience, the cooking team seemed calm and relaxed. On a television talk show two hours earlier, an interviewer had asked Julia whether it was necessary for her to be "quite so sloppy" in the kitchen. It was a familiar question, often asked by television viewers who do not cook or who belong to what James Beard calls "the sanitation school of cookery." As Paul Child occasionally explains, when you are trying to cook a rather complicated dish in twenty-eight minutes on camera, you do not take time to wash the pots and scour the work spaces. Onstage at the Kabuki, at any rate, a great deal of work was getting done with a minimum of fuss.

People who work with Julia Child are nearly always impressed by her sense of organization. "She may look sort of slapdash on the screen, but she's the most organized person I've ever met," according to Bess Hopkins, who now works in the office at WGBH. In the cluttered room that Julia uses as an office at home in Cambridge, her library of books on food and cooking and her extensive files of material on the subject are arranged and cross-referenced with the care and thoroughness of a major research institute, which, indeed, is what they amount to. A great deal of scholarship underlies that breezy self-assurance on camera; she can afford to appear casual, because she knows precisely what she is doing.

Some of her most ardent fans like to remember the slips and disasters of the early "French Chef" shows: the potato pancake dropped on the counter and scooped back into the skillet with the serene advice that "nobody's looking"; the spilled liquids and solids; the famous Roast Suckling Pig that defied all Julia's efforts, with several knives, to carve it up. What her co-workers remember is Julia's incredible skill at averting disasters or turning them somehow to her advantage. "The French Chef" programs have all been videotaped in continuous half-hour shooting sessions—a decision made at the beginning, because it avoided expensive editing and only half a dozen times in more than two hundred programs taped so far has it been necessary to stop and reshoot. When a dessert began to lose its shape after unmolding on camera, Julia simply nudged it together with two spoons and urged her flock not to lose heart in similar situations. ("Never apologize—nobody knows what you're aiming at, so just bring it to the table.") When Ruth Lockwood, Julia's present producer and the person primarily responsible (with the Childs) for "The French Chef's" style and format, forgot once to take the butter out of the refrigerator to soften before a taping, Julia improvised without a tremor: "Where's the butter? Oh, I forgot to take it out of the fridge! Well, here's what you do when that happens." And that evening she called Ruth at home, because she knew how Ruth, who never forgot anything, would be feeling. Mrs. Lockwood says that in the twelve years she has worked with Julia they have never had a real dispute about anything. One of the few times anyone has seen Julia lose her temper, in fact, was one day when there was a fire on the set. A towel flared up, a pot holder caught fire, and the cameraman stopped shooting. Julia was furious. She wanted to show the viewers just what to do at home when this happened.

Paul and Julia enjoy reminiscing about the early days of the show. They had come back from Norway in 1960—it had been Paul's decision to retire from the Foreign Service before he reached the compulsory retirement age of sixty-five—and established themselves in a comfortable old house they had bought several years before in Cambridge (the house where Josiah Royce, the philosopher, once lived). Paul planned to spend his time painting and photographing, and Julia was going to give private cooking lessons and work on Volume II of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking." In the spring of 1962, a few months after the first volume had been published, Julia was invited to appear on a literary-interview program on WGBE to talk about it. Thinking it might liven things up, she brought along a copper bowl and a wire whip, and showed the viewers how to beat up egg whites. WGBH received twenty-seven letters about the interview, all expressing delight. As Russell Morash, "The French Chef's" first producer-director, put it recently, twenty-seven letters might not mean very much to a major network, but to a small, noncommercial station like WGBH it was impressive. Would Mrs. Child be willing to consider doing a pilot program for a possible series of cooking shows?

They made three pilot shows in June, 1962, using a basement display room of the Boston Gas Company in downtown Boston, because the WGBH studio had recently been destroyed by a fire. WGBH's director of programming, Robert Larsen, liked the pilots so much that he was willing to put the station's own funds into financing a series of twenty-six shows. They went into production on January, 1963, in a makeshift set on the third floor of the Cambridge Electric Company, which had better parking facilities than Boston Gas. The early shows were all "remotes," videotaped with two cameras connected by cables to a power source in WGBH's mobile unit parked outside the building. They did four shows a week. Julia and Paul and Ruth Lockwood would spend all day Monday in the Childs' big kitchen at home, drinking oceans of tea and blocking out the rough outlines, time sequences, and opening and closing lines for the week's programs. Tuesdays and Thursdays were rehearsal days, prior to tapings on Wednesdays and Fridays. Today, neither the Childs nor Mrs. Lockwood can imagine how they kept it up. Julia and

Paul, who did all the shopping for the shows, would get to the Cambridge Electric Company an hour or so ahead of the others, carrying the Sacred Bag and a huge load of groceries. Whenever it snowed, Paul had to shovel the fire escape so the crew could bring in the cables and equipment. The crew numbered twenty-four, counting volunteers, and they usually ended up eating the show. Grips and cameramen would take home dishes in one state or another for their wives to finish cooking. The last show of the first series called for Lobster à l'Americaine. Julia and Paul bought enough for everyone, and plenty of dry Riesling, and after the show they had a banquet on the set. Not a farewell banquet, because the second series was already in the works, with several "subscribers" (public television does not refer to "sponsors"), such as Safeway Stores, Hills Bros., and eventually the Polaroid Corporation, to help pay for it. They did sixty-eight shows at the Cambridge Electric Company before moving to the new WGBH studios, in Cambridge, in November, 1963.

Old friends of Julia's often say that those early black-and-white shows were the best—that in spite of the mishaps, or perhaps because of them, Julia was more herself than she has appeared in the technically superior programs that followed. Julia, who is highly self-critical, does not agree at all. "I was inclined at the beginning, having been involved in writing and teaching, to be too expository, to talk too much," she has said. "Ruthie Lockwood kept reminding me that television was a visual medium and that the points had to be made visually. Also, I had no time sense to speak of, so it was very difficult for me at first. We've always worked with a system of 'idiot cards,' which they hold up to tell me when it's time to move on to the next step, but at the beginning I'd sometimes forget to look for them. And then I'd look at the wrong camera sometimes. The boys finally started putting a little hat on the camera that was shooting, and a big sign under the lens reading 'ME FRIEND.'" The videotapes of the first thirteen shows, which were made before the program started to be picked up by other noncommercial stations around the country, no longer exist—they literally wore out from overuse. Julia was rather pleased, because it gave her an opportunity to redo those programs (all basic mainstays such as Boeuf Bourguignonne, Coq au Vin, and omelettes) in a more professional manner.

The unique blend of Julia's earthy humor and European sophistication, her tendency to slap and sniff and taste everything without losing a shred of her dignity were there from the beginning. "Julia is a natural ham and a natural comic," Paul once said, "and Ruth Lockwood, with her own slightly corny sense of humor, has always encouraged that in her." Using a giant sabre to carve her Poulet Sauté Marengo, appearing in a pith helmet and firing off a popgun to bring down a squab for "Small Roast Birds," and other elements of horseplay have undoubtedly helped to build her audience, which seems, from the mail that comes in, to include a surprising number of children and husbands. Julia, moreover, is not above a little gentle baiting of her detractors, who tend to be mainly sanitationists (or "home-economics types," as Julia calls them), and those who are disturbed by her use of wine and other, more demonic spirits in cooking. "Now we'll add a quarter of a teaspoon of white wine," she will say, pouring copiously from the bottle. "The children will love it." An amazing number of people seem to think that Julia's high good humor and her occasional mishaps on the home screen can mean only that she is drunk. Cartoons have depicted her swigging from a bottle as she cooks, and some viewers insist that they have actually seen her do this on camera—a misapprehension that may stem, Julia thinks, from the time she carefully peeled, seeded, and squeezed a tomato and then drank off the juice in a cup. When the BBC was contemplating a "French Chef" series in Britain, the program that they put on the air to test audience reaction opened with Julia picking up the lids from two steaming saucepans and clashing them together like cymbals. This caused the steam lingering in both lids to fly right into her face, a painful surprise that she accepted with one of her more robust peals of laughter. The station received so many calls from distressed Britons wondering what on earth a drunken or demented American woman was doing on the Third Programme that the BBC decided not to run the series after all. Actually, as Paul sometimes points out, it is peculiar to assume that anything as complex as what Julia does on television—does with split-second timing and with explanations that make sense—could be done at all by someone under the influence of liquor. "She wouldn't be dropping spoons up there, she'd be falling down," Paul says. It may be that real spontaneity has become so rare that it requires an explanation. "We never really know what she's going to say on the program," Ruth Lockwood said recently. "She memorizes the opening and closing lines, and there is a sort of rough script, consisting mostly of key words and phrases, but aside from that there's just no telling what's going to happen. We always say it's the only real suspense show on television."

The last show in "The French Chef" series was taped in December, 1972. There are more than two hundred of them on tape, and reruns keep the program going in most parts of the country, but after twelve years the Childs are not sure they want to continue with it. "If I ever do any more, I want them to be more professional," Julia said recently. "I want to be sure that the closeups are correct, and things like that. One time, we had a program on roasting a turkey, and at the end you couldn't see the turkey being carved, couldn't see a damn thing." She would like to be able to edit the show after each taping, though editing would add considerably to the expense. Julia thinks of herself primarily as a teacher—"The French Chef," she says, "is really a continuation of L'École des Trois Gourmandes"—and she feels that her students should not have to put up with anything less than the highest standards.

It has been said that Julia Child really "made" public television. She was certainly the first major star to emerge from noncommercial programming—the first to become a nationally known figure. Wherever she goes now, people recognize her and

speak to her; in restaurants, waiters ask her to sign the menu (which pleases her enormously), and other diners send over friendly notes and try to find out what she has ordered. A recent television commercial featured Julia Chicken, a fowl who spoke in the French Chef's unmistakably rich and breathy accents, until the Childs' lawyer put a stop to it, and "The Electric Company," a children's program, has had a character named Julia Grownup. Although Julia Child has little time to savor the fruits of her fame, she clearly enjoys it—"loves every minute of it," according to Avis DeVoto—and, just as clearly, will not miss it when it recedes. She has consistently turned down all offers from commercial TV, just as she has turned down all requests to endorse products or to lend her name to promotions other than those in support of public television. Last year, she was approached by NBC, which offered her a spot at nine-thirty in the morning five days a week; she turned it down, largely because the audience at that hour would be almost entirely women, "and our audience is bigger than that." She has given back to WGBH, through fees for demonstrations, fund-raising appeals, and royalties from "The French Chef Cookbook," far more than she has ever received from it. The Childs feel that her television exposure has been responsible in large part for the success of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," and that alone has made them, if not rich, at least comfortable beyond anything they had ever expected. Everyone involved, it appears, is grateful to everyone else, and the television audience seems happy enough for the time being with reruns. There has been talk about presenting "The French Chef" in a new format, based on public cooking demonstrations like the ones in San Francisco. But at present, Julia's only plans for television involve a few special shows with James Beard.

Meanwhile, Julia has completed the manuscript of another cookbook, using recipes done on the show since the first one appeared, in 1968, and she and Simone Beck may do a revised edition of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking." Louise Bertholle, who dropped out of the collaboration after Volume I, now lives near Bourges and is teaching and writing on her own. But the Childs and Mme. Beck and her husband, Jean Fischbacher, a perfumer, remain in close contact professionally and personally—particularly during the spring and summer, when the Childs stay in a little house they have built on some property of the Fischbachers' in the South of France. One purpose of a revision would be to bring readers up to date on some of the culinary equipment that has come along in recent years (such as nonstick pans and highly versatile electrical processors). In Volume I, the authors took a somewhat Olympian tone about utensils, in line with the traditional *hauteur du chef*, but Julia has come to feel that it is a good thing to speed matters up where possible in the kitchen, and that if the same effect that used to be produced by laborious handwork can be duplicated by a machine, then *vive la machine*.

An hour before the first San Francisco cooking demonstration was to start, at two on Monday afternoon, the Childs and their two assistants were finishing a leisurely lunch in a curtained-off area at the left side of the stage. These "working" lunches were relatively simple but far from casual occasions. During the preceding days Rosie Manell had dished up many regional specialties, such as cracked crab, tiny bay shrimps, rex sole, and abalone (sautéed twenty seconds to a side, no more), each of which had been complemented by a chilled Muscadet or some other wine from the Liberty House boutique in the theatre lobby. Each meal began with a ritual *carillon de l'amitié*, the four wineglasses held carefully by the stems so the sound would ring out clearly. "One of the good things about getting to be sixty," Julia said that Monday, "is that you make up your mind not to drink any more rotgut wine." There was a great deal of laughter and much talk of food. "When a vegetable is as beautiful as this asparagus," Rosie Manell said at one point, "you've just got to take it seriously"—a comment that Julia liked so much she repeated it to her audience a little later. Immediately following lunch, while the others made a final check of the dozens of items that would be used during the afternoon's demonstration, Julia was left alone in the dining alcove for her "quiet time," which she used to go over her notes. She showed not the slightest hint of nervousness or stage fright.

The demonstration was twenty minutes late getting started. Heavy rains had slowed traffic, but when Julia came out from the wings the downstairs area of the Kabuki was filled nearly to capacity, the audience consisting mostly of well-dressed women, who greeted her enthusiastically. Julia introduced her "team": Rosie Manell and Liz Bishop, who would be onstage throughout the performance, and Paul, "our general manager, timekeeper, and resident ogre," sitting at a table in the front row, where he could give time signals and make suggestions to the performers. The program called for soufflé on a platter, with poached eggs; Caneton en Aspic à la Parisienne; and Charlotte Malakoff. "Nobody in their right mind would want to serve all three at the same meal," Julia explained, "but each could be the centerpiece of a memorable meal. Now, then, where are my glasses?"

The difference between Julia on television and Julia live onstage is mainly a difference in timing. Without the minute-to-minute pressure and the time cards held up to tell her to move on, she can be a little more expansive, and better able to savor the amusement and delight of whatever she happens to be doing. Volunteer hostesses in stylish aprons, instructed by the benefit committee to bring portable microphones to anyone who wanted to ask a question, never did so, because nobody needed them; when someone had a question, she would ask it, and Julia would glance up from her work, grin, and answer while continuing to work. She was in her kitchen and about eight hundred people were there with her. "I know what it is about her," an attractive San Franciscan said during the intermission. "She's just like a child playing. Anybody who has that much fun just has to be

irresistible.”

Julia’s explanations of what she was doing and why were interspersed with items of general information. French ducks, she observed, tended to be less fatty than American ducks, which made them better for *Caneton en Aspic*. Raffle tickets would be sold during intermission for all the food cooked onstage, including the duck bones, which could be used for stock. (“Just think, somebody’s going to win all these lovely duck bones.”) If you wanted to, you could use “the other spread” in the soufflé, but it wouldn’t taste as good as it did with butter. “But then who am I to tell you what to use?” she went on. “It’s the method that counts, really. You can substitute any ingredients you want.” That morning, Rosie and Liz had cleaned out the local Safeway’s entire stock of sweet butter—thirty pounds, which they would use up before the week was out. Nobody catches Julia Child using the other spread.

“All this looks a little terrible until you get it done,” she noted in passing.

“Let’s just taste and see if it’s any good,” she said a little later, dipping a spoon into the just blended duck mousse. She tasted, paused, cast her eyes upward. “It’s pretty good,” she said, adding a touch more cognac. Another taste, and a nod of the head. “I think,” she said, patting the cognac bottle, “that that’s what makes the difference between an American meat loaf and a French pâté, don’t you?”

Rosie and Liz moved in and out of the work space, helping where needed. Julia chatted with them and with the audience. From his seat out front, Paul occasionally offered a suggestion, telling Julia, for example, to move to the right or the left so the overhead television cameras could pick up what she was doing and relay it to the screens on either side. “They can’t see what you’re doing, J.C.,” Paul would say. “Hold up the pan.”

James Beard spoke recently of the “all-embracing quality” that draws people to Julia Child. “She has the kind of bigness that all great artists have,” he said. “Singers especially. She just sweeps everyone up and carries them away. I think she could run for political office and do very well.” The choreographer Merce Cunningham, a great fan of Julia’s program, has observed that she moves like a dancer. “Everything is direct and clear— no superfluous gestures,” Cunningham said. “That must be how she gets through all that complicated business within the time limit, and it’s one reason she’s so fascinating to watch.” She is also very good at building to a dramatic climax.

The Charlotte Malakoff provided the climax of the first day’s demonstrations. Instead of serving the velvety almond-cream dessert (flavored with chocolate and rum) molded in homemade ladyfingers, as the printed program had said she would, Julia decided to serve it in a cage of spun caramel. Donning a thick red rubber glove from the Sacred Bag to keep from burning her hand, she took a small cake pan, held it upside down, carefully buttered the exterior surface, then set to work covering it with molten caramel dripped from a spoon. The skeins of caramel glittered in the stage lights. It took several minutes for her to cover the pan. She let it cool, then carefully began to work the caramel loose, chatting the while about the need for patience in cooking. After a tense interval, the caramel slid free, and she held up a gossamer cage. Applause from the audience. “Don’t clap yet,” Julia warned. She thought the cage needed fixing in a couple of spots, so she slipped it back over the bottom of the cake pan and added more hot caramel. “Anything you spill you can turn into taffy,” she said. Again the cage was delicately pried loose from the pan. Julia started to hold it up for all to see, and in doing so dropped it. Gasps and groans from the audience; the cage was in smithereens. Julia put her head back and laughed. “We’ll just have to do it all over again,” she said, and did it all over again, successfully, to thunderous applause.

The same thing happened at the second performance, that evening, except that she broke the cage when she went to put it in the freezer. “Never give up!” she cried. “This is a fine illustration of not getting discouraged.” The, audience, which this time included a(substantial number of men, was limp with delight. Fifty or more people stayed on after the show to stand in line and have their copies of “Mastering the Art of French Cooking” autographed by Julia and Paul, and nearly all of them wanted to talk with the Childs, to say something about what Julia had meant in their lives and how grateful they were. Julia asked questions about each person’s home or family or kitchen. They were signing autographs until after midnight.

Later, back at the hotel, the team gathered in the Childs’ suite for a nightcap. They had ridden up in the elevator with Rudolf Nureyev, who was in town with the Nabonal Ballet of Canada and was staying at the same hotel; the two “superstars,” as Herb Caen referred to them in his column in the *Chronicle*, rode up together silently, without a sign of recognition, but afterward Julia commented with interest on Nureyev’s costume, which consisted of knee-length snakeskin boots and a snakeskin shirt. It looked, Liz Bishop said, as though the snake were eating him. The conversation in the suite flowed without effort. Julia and Paul talked about Norway, which they had both adored. They liked the Norwegians and their way of life, they liked the countryside, and they even liked, in moderation, the food. “You have to learn how to order there,” Julia said. “Their poached sea trout is delicious. The fried food is awful. And their idea of vegetables is four kinds of potato and some parsley.” Julia learned more Norwegian than Paul did, because Paul was too busy at the Embassy to give full attention to lessons. Julia has been known to sing the Norwegian national anthem at parties, her great, plummy voice swooping up and down the scale with

utter confidence, though in no discernible key.

Before going to bed, they talked a little about the various groups, mainly in California, that were now dedicating themselves to mysticism, psychic experimentation, and the transformation of consciousness. Julia didn't seem to know much about the new consciousness, but she thought it sounded interesting. "I just hope," she said at one point, "that good food is a part of it."✦