



Misty's View of Culinary Inspirations

Even though everyone expected me to be the first in line to see it, I avoided the culinary-hype film *Julie and Julia* when it was in the theatres. Somebody had told me that Meryl Streep's knife skills in her role as Julia Child were unprofessional. That cinematic oversight bothered me. I wondered why they hadn't hired a female stunt chef to do the close-up shots of her hands. I would gladly have volunteered to do it!

Fortunately, the film eventually came out in DVD format so I got to see it after all. My husband put it in my stocking on Christmas Day and as we watched the movie together, I was relieved to see that the Cordon Bleu instructor did, in fact, teach the proper techniques, so I could in good conscience relax and enjoy the story.

In life, Julia Child possessed the skills of an industry chef, but knew that many household wives, "those servant-less American cooks," needed her to adapt French recipes in order to teach America new methods. So she created her famous "fool-proof" recipes that allowed the stuck-at-home cook an opportunity to experience the world of France.

As much as *Julie and Julia* is supposed to be about food and cooking, I think this film is more about finding a source of inspiration in one's life. For the kitchen-phobic, it might turn out to be discovering the joy of cooking, for others it might be something like becoming completely "green" and finding ways to reduce your family's environmental footprint. Others still might have a memoir or novel aching in their soul to be expressed. Discovering a new passion in life is like turning the clock back in

time: we return to our youth when discovery was a daily event.

Passion for Cooking

Since cooking, teaching and eating are my passions in life, I have a few suggestions to consider should you decide to enter the kitchen and make it your passion place too. And since you are most likely a servant-less Canadian cook, I offer you new avenues to explore on your mission to put food on your table for your family, your guests, and for your own satisfaction.

Watch food network reality shows. I mean really watch what the chefs do and how they layer their tasks; there is a sequence and a pattern to cooking that you will notice.

Also watch how they cook without printed steps. They know the steps in their heads and you can too, with a little more exposure and experience.

Simple steps are the foundation to all dishes. Sometimes all it takes to create a wonderful new dish is to look in your fridge and apply what you have learned by watching those simple steps. Be observant and courageous.

Read cookbooks and look for recurring ingredients or methods. Browse through food magazines to deepen your understanding of the fundamental elements you have begun to see showing up in each recipe. The LCBO magazine offers vetted recipes! I know, since I was asked to test them for LCBO kitchens. Use these sorts of reliable guides to get you started and allow you to experience success!

But don't leave your triumph behind as merely a memory of kudos. File it in your mind. What did you do to create this winner? Seek to deepen your understanding of the process that transformed your lowly, raw ingredients into the loving, tasty gift you offered your guests.

Then recreate the dish within the next week or two. It actually only takes the act of

repeating a culinary success a few times to be able to add your own interpretation to it. Make sure you are being mindful of what you are doing and you will begin to own your new repertoire!

And remember always that the food itself will tell you if you have done it right or not. Be responsive to what is happening in your pans, pots and bowls. Analyse for taste, texture, and doneness. The recipe in your book cannot do that for you. You are the creator of the food you cook! A recipe is just a list of steps and ingredients that may or may not guide you to ultimate success.

In the 1960s Julia Child translated her formal French cooking knowledge into recipes that all Americans could follow. These recipes were founded on the basics. Today, however, chefs are creating beyond these foundational methods. You can be like these new chefs. Just discover the core of cooking, practise it with your family and friends, then let the fresh market and your taste preferences turn you into an über-fusion chef! Make sure to thank Julia too!

Misty Ingraham and Bill Sharpe of Ancaster own the catering business The Portable Feast at Home.