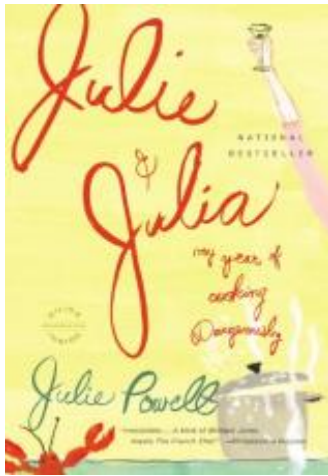

Julie & Julia: My Years of Cooking Dangerously

by Julie Powell



About the Book

On a visit to her childhood home in Texas, Julie Powell pulls her mother's battered copy of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* off the bookshelf. And the book calls out to her. Pushing thirty, living in a run-down apartment in Queens, and working at a dead-end secretarial job, Julie Powell is stuck. Is she in danger of becoming just another version of the housewife-in-a-rut? Her only hope lies in a dramatic self-rescue mission. And so she invents a deranged assignment: in the space of one year, she will cook every recipe in the Julia Child classic, all 524 of them. No skips, no substitutions. She will track down every obscure ingredient, learn every arcane cooking technique, and cook her way through sixty pounds of butter. And if it doesn't help her make sense of her life, at least she'll eat really, really well. How hard could it be?

But as Julie moves from the smooth sailing of *Potage Parmentier* into the culinary backwaters of aspics and calves' brains, she realizes there's more to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* than meets the eye. For every triumphant *Bifteck Sauté au Beurre* there is a disastrously soupy *Crème Brûlée*. On a visit to her childhood home in Texas, Julie Powell pulls her mother's battered copy of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* off the bookshelf. And the book calls out to her. Pushing thirty, living in a run-down apartment in Queens, and working at a dead-end secretarial job, Julie Powell is stuck. Is she in danger of becoming just another version of the housewife-in-a-rut? Her only hope lies in a dramatic self-rescue mission. And so she invents a deranged assignment: in the space of one year, she will cook every recipe in the Julia Child classic, all 524 of them. No skips, no substitutions. She will track down every obscure ingredient, learn every arcane cooking technique, and cook her way through sixty pounds of butter. And if it doesn't help her make sense of her life, at least she'll eat really, really well. How hard could it be?

With fierceness, irreverence, and unbreakable resolve, Julie Powell learns Julia Child's most important lesson: the art of living with gusto. *Julie and Julia* is "a feast, a voyage, and a marvel," says Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *The Last American Man*, for anyone who has ever cursed at a cookbook or longed for a more delicious life.

Discussion Guide

1. Julie has such a remarkable relationship with Julia Child, despite never having met her. What did you think of the relationship that Julie built in her mind? And why does it not matter, in some sense, when Julie finds out that Julia wasn't an admirer of hers or the Project?
2. Throughout the book, various people become involved with the Project: Julie's husband, her friends, and several of her family members. Discuss the different roles each played in the Project. Which people were most helpful and supportive? Who was occasionally obstructionist?
3. Did you find Julie to be a likeable character? Did you relate to her insecurities, anxieties, and initial discontent? Why do you think it is that she was able to finish the Project despite various setbacks?
4. The Julie/Julia Project is obsessive and chaotic, yet it manages to bring a sort of order to Julie's life. Have you ever gone to obsessive lengths in an attempt to, ironically, make things more manageable? Why do you think Julie does (or doesn't) succeed in this?
5. If someone were to ask you about this book, how would you describe it? Is it a memoir of reinvention? An homage to Julia Child? A rags-to-riches story? A reflection on cooking and the centrality of food in our lives? Or is it all (or none) of these?
6. Did Julie's exploits in her tiny kitchen make you want to cook? Or did they make you thankful that you don't have to debone a duck or sauté a liver? Even if your tastes may not coincide with Julia Child's recipes, did the book give you a greater appreciation of food and cooking?
7. At various points in the book, Julie finds that cooking makes her question her own actions and values. What did you make of her lobster guilt, for example, or her thoughts on extracting bone marrow? Have you ever encountered these issues while cooking, or while going through other everyday motions of life? Have you come to conclusions similar to or different from Julie's?
8. When Julie began the Project, she knew little to nothing about blogging. What do you think blogging about her experiences offered her? Does writing about events in your life help you understand and appreciate them more? Do you think the project would have gone differently if the blog hadn't gained so much attention? Who was the blog mainly for, Julie or her readers?

Author Bio

Julie Powell was on the verge of turning 30, trapped in a series of unfulfilling temp jobs, and living in a dreadful apartment in Queens. That's when she decided to break the monotony by attempting to make all 524 recipes in Julia Child's *MASTERING THE ART OF FRENCH COOKING*. One year later, Powell had achieved her goal, documented her experiences on one of the most popular blogs on the internet, and began the award-winning, bestselling book *JULIE*

& JULIA: My Year of Cooking Dangerously, which inspired the 2009 movie starring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams. Powell passed away on October 26, 2022 at the age of 49.

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