

Julia Child Profile

Overview

Known around the world as the woman who made French cooking accessible to the average American, Julia Child was a charismatic, energetic, and enthusiastic cook who held a deep-rooted passion for teaching the masses. She was born in the early years of the 20th century to a wealthy family in southern California. After working for the Office of Strategic Services during WW2, Julia and Paul Child moved to France for his job at the American Embassy. Enamored with French cuisine, Julia enrolled in cooking classes. She quickly rose to the top of her class and, with some French friends, eventually started hosting her own cooking classes to American housewives living in Paris. Her friends approached her, asking if she would take on a cookbook project with them as she was an American who understood French cooking. Who better to write a French cookbook for Americans? *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was a success and, with her show *The French Chef*, Julia Child became a star.

Bringing the value of the gastronomic world to the average American revitalized people to care about their food, where it came from, and reconnected them to cooking from scratch. After spending decades eating canned and frozen meals, Julia Child's approach was a welcome change for many households. Part of this societal shift has having class and gender implications. Second wave feminism at the time was telling women to reject the spaces that confined them, but Julia, instead, reimagined the kitchen and the home as places to regain control and autonomy by emphasizing the skill and passion required to be a good cook. She placed the power back to women and brought a private space into a public sphere making cooking labor seen and valued. As for class implications, her targeted audience was mainly the urban/suburban middle class who were able to get a glimpse into what was considered more upper-class luxuries. Julia Child has

made a great impact on American food values, paving the way for more natural food system movements soon after her era and, because, because of Julia, the world of gastronomy had arrived in the United States.

Bibliography for Julia Child

1978 Julia Child Interview with John Callaway [Interview by 1263761056 934257263 J.

Callaway]. (1978). WTTW.

Child, J. (1989, November 14). Julia Child On France, Fat And Food On The Floor [Interview].

In *NPR*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fresh Air.

Accessed via NPR, published September 1, 2011.

Deutsch, T. (n.d.). The Julia Child Project: The Cold War, France, and the Politics of Food.

Retrieved March 21, 2021, from https://openvault.wgbh.org/exhibits/julia_child/article

This article frames Julia Child's relationship with France and French cooking within the politics of the 1960s. In the midst of the Cold War and French-American political tensions increasing, Child continues to push the values of the French food system onto American viewers. Deutsch discusses Child's underlining impacts on international politics and gender, labor, and domesticity, as these issues were also very prominent in the political sphere at the time.

I can use this text to offer a more analytical side to my project about how Julia Child has influenced many aspects of politics through food and cooking. Essentially changing how people view food systems, Child initiated a cultural shift towards revaluing ingredients and techniques.

Fenzi, J. & Child, J. (1991) *Interview with Julia Child*. November 7. [Manuscript/Mixed Material] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib000202/>.

Hollows, J. (2017). The Feminist and the Cook: Julia Child, Betty Friedan and Domestic Femininity. In 1263620687 934172153 E. Casey & 1263620688 934172153 L. Martens (Authors), *Gender and consumption: Domestic cultures and the commercialisation of everyday life* (pp. 33-45). London: Routledge.

Part of this chapter is about how Julia Child was a different kind of feminist from the usual feminists at that time. Second wave feminism was about the tension between public and private spheres. Child, instead, blurs the line between them and creates a new narrative around a domestic space, the kitchen. She changed the narrative around cooking, transforming it into a practice that one does for oneself and one's own enjoyment rather than to only please other people.

I can use this text in discussing Child's influence on feminism and women across the country as she brought in accessibility to the gourmet movement. The way women are viewed in our food systems tell us a lot about how we come to consume what we consume. Child had a part in altering that conversation.

Lawson, C. (1990, June 20). Julia Child Boiling, Answers Her Critics. *The New York Times*, p. 8. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/06/20/dining/julia-child-boiling-answers-her-critics.html>

LeBesco, K., & Naccarato, P. (2008). Julia Child, Martha Stewart, and the Rise of Culinary Capital. In 1263611646 934166824 K. LeBesco & 1263611647 934166824 P. Naccarato (Authors), *Edible ideologies: Representing food and meaning* (pp. 223-237). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Both professors at separate institutions, Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato came together to compile a collection of writings about how food has shaped our perception of societal reality.

This chapter is about how figures such as Julia Child and Martha Stewart have influenced the “average American” cook. By cook, they mean mainly women who are the ones working in the kitchen all the time. The authors argue that these women do more to reinforce class boundaries than break them down. Both put on a façade of tackling class barriers and letting average people get a taste of something more expensive, however, this act is temporary and so creates the illusion that class barriers have been broken when, in reality, they are simply placated.

The chapter is part of a larger collection of writings about how ideologies have been perpetuated through how food is represented through various medias. This comes with some limitations as my project is not centered around just ideology, but rather would supplement any ideas about class or how Child represented societal ideas as well as culinary techniques.

Smith, A. (2011). Julia Child: The French Chef. In *Eating history: 30 turning points in the making of American cuisine* (pp. 231-242). New York, New York: Columbia University Press.

The chapter in question is all about Julia Child's popularity and how she rose to the level of fame that she did. There is a brief overview of her past and how she came to be, but the focus is more on her success after *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was published. He claims that her appearance on television is what launched her into every home in America, turning her into a celebrity. As French food was growing in popularity, especially in middle class Americans, Julia Child made the cuisine accessible to almost anyone as long as they had a love of cooking.

I would definitely be able to use this chapter to explain Child's significance in America and how she initiated a culinary movement that created lasting institutions. She was completely dedicated to creating access to French cuisine for a normal American person based on the premise that food has value through the process and food isn't something that should just be eaten but that it should be enjoyed.

Strauss, D. (2011). Julia and Simca. In 1263684683 934210424 D. Strauss (Author), *Setting the table for Julia Child: Gourmet dining in America, 1934-1961* (pp. 221-247). Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

The overall book is about what historical events, large or otherwise, between France and America have influenced the culinary scene in such a way that allowed the massive reception of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. The chapter, specifically, is more detail

about Julia Child and Simca Beck; how they came to write (or rewrite since the original version was heavily modified) and the process that went into the endeavor. There is also mention of the political climate surrounding Europe and America at that time and how post war sentiment shapes the gourmet movement.

Not just a historical account, this chapter, and maybe other parts as well, will help form a more comprehensive understanding of the time that Child was operating within and how it has shaped what her message to American housewives was. I can definitely use it in providing background information about her life and her and Beck's cookbook writing process.

Tomkins, C. (1974, December 23). Cooking with Julia Child. *The New Yorker*, (December 23, 1974). Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/profiles/1974/12/23/good-cooking>

Complementary media sources

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6s6rVAkFrE>
2. <https://lafayette.zoom.us/rec/share/2JRukp3akM-NdWD1TsZwO7D9dxZfqi5lohKYjxGSXXmqZoetu3qmn7LIMgs66Xe9.MyE7-Wl0OayUeMz>

Passcode: N5a&zE0+