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THE FRENCH CHEF AND THE COLD WAR: JULIA CHILD AND THE MASK OF CONTAINED
DOMESTICITY

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English
The University of Mississippi

by

HILLARY ANN HAMBLEN

May 2011

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ABSTRACT

Most scholarly studies and even general personal reflections about Julia Child portray her as a figure that changed the face of cooking, cookbooks, and cooking television for audiences of the late twentieth and twenty first centuries. While this is true, many of these studies and reflections do not acknowledge Child's ability to change mainstream ideas by conforming to some of them. While Child radicalized perceptions toward food and those who cook, she also represented a domestic woman and a wife. While Child's politics were indeed liberal, for the most part, her lifestyle was actually quite moderate. This project is an examination of how Julia Child straddled the lines between subversive and conforming, threatening and safe, and housewife and feminist, and in doing so, was able to create a new cooking methodology for Americans who, historically, have a disconnected relationship toward food in general. Using Child's reactions to Cold War mentalities, I demonstrate how Child was able to perform certain roles, specifically the "housewife," in order to penetrate the nuclear family bubble and implant new ideas about food, cooking, and femininity.

DEDICATION

This project is for the “three sisters”—Mary Ann, Hilda, and Betty—for their consistent cheerleading, and more importantly, for being so actively involved in my own kitchen rearing.

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Without the generous attention and willing participation of my thesis committee members, this project would not have been possible. For their additional and individual guidance, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Deborah Barker and Dr. Kathryn McKee. I would also like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jaime Harker, for the encouragement to pursue this idea and the support to finish it.

I would also like to thank Stanley Moger of SFM Entertainment, the reference librarians at Schlesinger Library, and Dr. Ruth Mirtz at the J.D. Williams Library for generously helping me find archival material, and for not batting an eye when I asked for footage from 1950s cooking shows.

For my friends and colleagues in the graduate English department, I thank you for your sense of community, your academic support, your laughter, and most importantly, your friendship.

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I. INTRODUCTION: JULIA CHILD, CONTAINMENT, AND THE COLD WAR HOUSEWIFE

History becomes more meaningful when we can relate it to life, and food is indeed life.

--Julia Child, in praise of Barbara Haber's *From Hardtack to Home Fries* (2002)

In studying the relationship among (American) history, food, and those who prepare it, Barbara Haber reveres the “intimate power of cookbooks to make connections between people” (220). She overtly chronicles the connections between those who write the books and their infinitely diverse audiences, but the more implicit schema of her book, as Child notes above, is studying the cooks and their books for what they reveal about their histories. Julia Child—whom contemporary cooks claim as their muse, their teacher, or a fondly remembered television show host—is an interesting subject of study because she, too, was a woman with a particular audience in mind: Americans, and particularly those who were daring and committed enough to cook *cuisine française*. Through her cooking instruction, Child was able to make these intimate connections to her audience, which is telling in and of itself, but like Haber’s book, what is implicit in Child’s instruction is what her methods and texts have to say about her histories, or her culinary coming-of-age in a Cold War context. Therefore, this project attempts to tease out the implications of studying Julia Child’s works, as both connections between author and audience and as works (though not necessarily bound by the decades of Cold War America) that define and redefine Cold War culture.

Long before Julia Child, the relationship between women and food has traditionally been a fascinating, troubling, and implicitly omnipresent concept in American culture. Because of this historically complicated but undeniably close-knit relationship, many food historians focus their studies on the literature that these “cookbook women” produce, describing how they either belong within the cultural fashioning of women as heads of their private, domestic spheres, or how they test these limits, redefining the roles that women play as regulators of the family menu and permanent denizens of their kitchens. Haber, as the Curator of Books for Harvard University’s Schlesinger Library, which began creating collections on women’s history only five decades ago, began including cookbooks in these histories as evidence that these texts were more than cooking instruction, but proactive attempts by women to have narrative ownership over and reclaim possession of their own household roles. Until recently, cookbooks were ignored as evidence of “women’s subordination and oppression by the patriarchy,” or as fripperies that provided no substance for women’s history as artifacts of the “d—d mob of scribbling women.” It is clearer, now, that they provide a glimpse into the complex relationship between women and their domestic stations (Haber 4).

Most studies of women in the kitchen look at the act of publishing cookbooks as a subversive move itself, where cookbooks are artifacts of literature—read in the same ways as other productions of nineteenth and twentieth century literature—and not simply manuals for instruction. More common, however, is the examination of how cookbooks were clearly not revolutionary, they were indeed subversive in their attempts to reform both American diets and ways of thinking about feminine roles. In other words, studies of cookbook women show they are neither exclusively cooking out of domestic necessity, nor

are they cooking for solely self-serving agendas. In *Perfection Salad*, for example, Laura Shapiro writes of a host of nineteenth century women who, in one way or another, set out to straddle—but not entirely transgress—the lines drawn by domestic boundaries. At the end of the nineteenth century, women used cooking as a tool for reforming American diet and legitimating their roles as scientists of the domestic realm. *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies*, an anthology edited by Barbara Haber and Arlene Voski Avakian, contributes to the discussion of cooking as a construction of identity, and specifically a female identity, with essays that particularly look at how “the food industry . . . constructs gender relations in its representations of women, albeit necessarily more subtly [sic] than it did before the women’s movement” (28). And in her book, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie*, Mary McFeely writes of twentieth century, white, American women, but agrees with her colleagues that the business of cooking and writing cookbooks is not as completely revolutionary as it is disguised: “Women may have been trapped in the kitchen by cultural demands, but they have also found ways to resist them” (4). Like these authors, more and more recent scholars of women’s history suggest that cooking and cookbooks are complex artifacts that chronicle the plight of kitchen women, who are wedged between domestic drudgery and a redefinition of women’s roles in the household.

Even though most scholars will agree that the advent of studying women’s history through cookbooks has opened doors of wonderfully complex stories, where women both are and are not subjected to oppressive roles, most of the scholarship about Julia Child does not follow in the aforementioned footsteps. Contrarily, most call Child’s work “revolutionary,” as do Haber and Avakian, among others. Indeed, her no-holds-barred lifestyle, her worldliness, and her extravagance on the television seem to suggest that what

she accomplished was completely different and completely subversive. In other words, studies about Child usually depict her as one who is not stuck in the liminal space between kitchen and liberation, but as one who completely crossed this line with much gusto and unapologetic enthusiasm. While this is somewhat true, I would like to suggest that instead of being revolutionary, Child's works were as full of complex ideas as her culinary mothers' were. Like her predecessors, Child straddled the line between the domestic cook and the self-serving, liberated woman.

Furthermore, in tandem with this understated subversion, I credit Child's liminality with her manifestations of Cold War ideology, specifically her reactions to the Cold War's depictions of the housewife. In addition to limiting the role of the domestic woman to dutiful, subservient roles, many popular Cold War representations vilified non-normative (or un-American) behaviors, sexualities, and practices. This mindset bled into American foods as well, where the popular meal was a result of homogenous, factory-processed foods. This project will focus on Child's reactions to these specific concepts. Unlike many, who mark Child's entrance onto the cooking scene as a sharp turn away from the housewife's ideal of bland fare and canned-food-casseroles of the 1940s and 1950s, I will attempt to demonstrate how Child's work is not an abrupt, incompatible break from the Cold War consciousness of political anxiety and containment, but is a blend of both the conservative attitudes that mark Cold War politics and the more progressive ideologies that arrive with the 1960s and 70s. By being both the woman in the kitchen and the bacchanalian pleasure seeker, Child was able to challenge traditional depictions of women and food. Effectively, Child "wore the mask" of the domestic kitchen wife while practicing the rites of a rebellious woman.

Because Child was such a popular cultural icon, I am interested in a cultural studies approach to show how Child's work, although somewhat removed, did reflect the values and mentalities of Cold War America. Using Alan Nadel's concept of Cold War "containment," I argue that Julia Child uses her texts, performances, and behavior to manipulate the normative rhetoric. In *Containment Culture*, Nadel defines containment by pointing at the attempts of small groups of people (Senator McCarthy, director Cecil B. deMille, Hugh Hefner, James Bond, to name a few) to influence many by claiming that in order to maintain a secure nation, we must *contain* any foreign or outside influences to keep them from rupturing the safety of the American home. Nadel writes, "It was a period, as many prominent studies indicated, when 'conformity' became a positive value in and of itself. The virtue of conformity—to some idea of religion, to 'middle-class' values, to distinct gender roles and rigid courtship rituals—became a form of public knowledge through the pervasive performances of and allusions to containment narratives" (4). Thus, these narratives urged Americans to value conformity and reject the influences of anything "foreign" in order to avoid the threat of becoming "un-American," lest anyone should find out about such activities. Because these ideologies often resisted multi-faceted narratives, opposing viewpoints were, by virtue, rejected or dismissed. By performing the role of the housewife, Child was able to teach foreign, difficult, and unscripted cooking methods and practices that were against the Cold War grain.

Adapting Nadel's concept of containment in terms of domesticity, Elaine Tyler May focuses on the Cold War's commitment to familial security. "Domestic containment," in which images of underground fallout shelters and canned goods relayed messages of safety from foreign threats, denoted the decades' commitment to upholding the virtues of "the

nuclear family," including that of the normative persona of the housewife. May writes, "The self-contained home held out the promise of security in an insecure world. It also offered a vision of abundance and fulfillment" (ix). Although domesticity allegedly offered a sanctuary from communism or general threats to security, it also "fostered the very tendencies it was intended to diffuse: materialism, consumerism, and bureaucratic conformity. The inherent tension defined the symbiotic connection between the culture of the cold war and the domestic revival" (xxi). It seems that Child understood the tensions of these contrasting principles. She was not free from their influence, but perhaps because of her earnestness and her inconsistency in conforming, she was successful in merging the two into Mrs. Kitchen Wife, who encouraged domesticity, but who also cultivated sexuality and outside influence as the pleasure-seeking foreigner.

Recalling the quote at the beginning of this introduction, I also am interested in using food studies and food histories as a way to understand the food climate in which Child lived, and subsequently, how she altered this climate. Using the histories of Harvey Levenstein, Laura Shapiro, Warren Belasco, and others, I discuss the historically Puritan relationship Americans had with their foodways and discuss how Child's legacy helped her redefine these foodways. Beginning with domestic science's influence on food in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and tracing its legacies through what Harvey Levenstein calls "The Golden Age of Food Processing" in the Cold War, I show how Child's vigorous, hearty approach to the making and eating of food subverts the bland, distanced relationship that Americans typically had with their meals. In what effectively blends gender studies and food studies, I also talk specifically about the relationship that women had with food, which was at once the role of kitchen guardian and caretaker, but conversely

the role of abstinent, genteel wife, who never reported to be hungry. This, perhaps, is where the claims that Child's influence was "revolutionary" have the most traction. While Child did play the role of the housewife, she was never apologetic or ambivalent about her "wolfish" appetite, which seemed to be the prevalent motivation in all of her cookbooks, articles, letters, and her memoir. Her biographers, Noël Riley Fitch and Laura Shapiro, both make this their central theme—Fitch's title, *Appetite for Life* and the two chapters "Hungry" and "She Likes to Eat" in Shapiro's book testify to this voraciousness. Child's attention to her own hunger is perhaps her most dissenting move in the tradition of women cooking instructors.

Finally, to discuss Child's television show and Americans' subsequent obsession with Child's physical stature, I use television studies as a critical entry into cultural consciousness. Mixed in with praise of *The French Chef* are usually references to Julia's height and size, or even more commonly, her handling of food and her thrashing about in the kitchen studio with knives, animal parts, or kitchen gadgets. Even though Child wore aprons and had permed hair in front of her television audience, she was very different from other women cooking show hosts through her deep, physical involvement with her food. In order to discuss the obsession with this visual culture, I use the criticisms of John Hartley, Kathleen Collins, Karal Ann Marling, and the editors of *Television Studies: the Key Concepts*. Child's association with the television not only places her in the very center of the Cold War American household, but it also places her in a long line of cooking show hosts from which to diverge. Again, though many point out how Child's was a drastic reform, I discuss how, even on television, a medium most suited to her subversive behavior, Child bestrides the line between typical kitchen wife and atypical woman of fleshly pleasures.

In the first chapter of this study, I trace the influential people and ideologies that lead to Child's hearty participation in this complex domesticity, which was effectively the twentieth century renaissance of nineteenth century domestic ideologies. Through adaptations of scientific cookery and domestic ideologies, Cold War Americans revived practices that, simultaneously, affected food and the women who were typically responsible for preparing it. While domestic science was a way to professionalize female cooking instruction, it touted a continuum of homogeneity that found a cozy home in the Cold War's efforts to place importance on womanly normativity and conformity. Charting domestic influences begins with Fannie Merritt Farmer, whose 1896 cookbook influenced housewives throughout the twentieth century so much so that in 1970, James Beard and Marion Cunningham republished her work in *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook* to celebrate Farmer's enduring legacy. Though Farmer was an anomaly in the crowd of cooking instructors because she relished the pleasure of cooking *and* eating, she championed domestic science, which overshadowed pleasure with its rather Puritan messages that appetite was dangerous, food was merely meant to nourish, and it was the mother-cook's mission to learn to feed her family well. For Child, the technological developments that began their evolution in the nineteenth century were trends that she resisted on one hand, but adapted on the other, embracing the relentless pursuit of food know-how initiated by these women.

Additionally, nineteenth century women sensed the anxiety surrounding women's appetite and their resulting unfettered sexuality. With Farmer as the exception, and Irma Rombauer following not far behind in 1931, most women who taught cooking were only involved with food as far as preparing it; these women traditionally distanced themselves

from tasting or eating their food, and in cases such as Betty Crocker's, women in the twentieth century distanced themselves from handling raw ingredients entirely. Conversely, Julia Child expounded on the sensual and utterly physical gratifications of cooking delicious food, talking about the rewards in her books and demonstrating them on television. For her, pleasure is not only what inspired her to begin seriously cooking in the first place, but also what motivated her unyielding quest to inform Americans about how to enjoy French cooking.

While the lineage of cooks provides a continuum of cookbook women from whom Child arises, the ideological influences of Child's "kitchen rearing" are more evidently situated within the decades of the Cold War. Functioning as foundations, Child adopts the era's common (mis)conceptions surrounding national, patriotic agendas, only to use them to her advantage. And even though she sometimes conforms whole-heartedly to these concepts with her apparent housewife persona, she often creates cracks in them as a part of her own "kitchen mission."

Although the term "housewife" might be a misnomer for Child, I hope that my use of it conveys not only the connotations drummed up by such a loaded word, but also indicates Child's ability to parade as something that she ultimately railed against. For baby boomers, a "housewife" represented secure domesticity and contained sexuality, but she was also depicted as a shallow, inept woman who conceptually valued cleanliness and order, and who was realistically trapped by the unfulfilling drudgery of constant housework. Child's kitchen was arguably her favorite room in the house during a time when for many women, it started to represent familial obligation and drudgery. Child did not think of herself as a housewife, and in fact, Child's biographers explain how much she grew to dislike the word

because of its tendency to conjure negative images. According to Laura Shapiro, “Editors, publishers, everyone who talked about recipes in America bowed and scraped to housewives, those ubiquitous females forever depicted as running frantically from laundry to car pool to scout troop, with no time to cook excellent meals and, it was universally assumed, no desire to learn” (*Julia Child* 84). Child did not want to compromise her cookbooks’ standards for this “unappealing creature” who prepared meals, no doubt, but did not do much cooking, thanks to modern kitchen appliances and conveniently packaged edibles (84). And although Child said that she thought these cooking methods were “too ladies’ magaziney” for her, she read and later *wrote for* these very magazines (Shapiro xii). In an essay that examines a similar performance by poet Anne Sexton, Clare Pollard writes that in “[t]he 1950s, an era when the idea of ‘Occupation: Housewife’ was to be uniquely sanctified and celebrated, . . . Sexton appears to assume her role with enthusiasm—but it is, explicitly, just a role” (1). For Sexton *and* for Child, the “role” of the housewife was performed within this decade’s celebration of domestic containment. Instead of eschewing it, Child played the part with gusto; and instead of being contained by domesticity, she controlled it by celebrating it. So while Betty Friedan called the housewife’s domain “a comfortable concentration camp,” Child found ways to make her kitchen the center of her fulfillment (qtd. in Pollard 9).

While many readers found themselves encouraged by Child’s advice, Americans seemed more drawn to Julia Child as a visual phenomenon. This towering, mumbling, warbling woman was also a focal point of televisual entertainment and fascination. In the second chapter of my study, I argue that even though Child’s television show captivated so many viewers for its silliness, the visual presence of Child had a deeper effect on its viewing

audience. Atypical of any other television (or radio) cooking show host, Child borrowed the image and format of a cooking show for the Cold War American housewife and subverted it. Once more, I trace the cooking show legacies back from Betty Crocker's radio show—where she calmed cake-baking anxieties and assured women that by using her products, they could satisfy their husbands—to her television show, where Betty Crocker did no actual *cooking* at all. Until Child, the instruction of cooking shows was limited to assembly. Additionally, because these hosts did not always start from scratch or use raw ingredients, their purposes were far from conveying pleasure in the kitchen—at least not in the visceral, immediately gratifying ways that it did for Child. A few male hosts, such as the famous James Beard, were able to host a show touting their love of food, but women hosts instructed, and did not partake. Even Dione Lucas, a French-trained, England-born cook, who treated food as gloriously as Child would fifteen years later, never tasted her food, always looked very demure, spoke with a dry, pedantic voice, and used much of her show to advertise for Caloric Gas Stoves.

Child's *The French Chef*, which first aired in 1962, marked quite a divergence from these influences. Kathleen Collins, whose book, *Watching What We Eat*, chronicles cooking shows from their inception to present day Food Network shows, writes that until Child, almost all cooking shows were “hosted by stereotypical, earnest home economists” who very much represented the “mental-hygenic properties” of the Cold War housewife, and often made little or no effort to relate to their audience members (30). First bending this rule with her physicality and then with her kitchen ideologies, Child fascinated audiences with her large stature and physique, but also with her unfettered attitude towards food. However, even though this was perhaps her most obvious break from the Cold War

domestic containment, she still played a specific role on television. Although her largeness did impose upon the typical conceptions of the petite housewife, Child was certainly not unattractive, wore acceptable kitchen attire with her pearl necklace and her waist-high apron, and performed tasks that were limited to the kitchen.

Perhaps greater than her size was her love, conceptual and visceral, for food itself. Like other hosts who proclaimed the beauty of their kitchen creations, Child called things “darling” and “magnificent,” but unlike these hosts, she may have been describing a giant fish head or tripe (cow’s stomach). The very physical, hands-on (and in some ways, a little gross) nature of her television show transfixed viewers, but it also taught them to have a similar appreciation for food. When Child tasted her food, something that many cooking hosts never did, and proclaimed, “Good. Nothing like butter,” the time-tested gap between women and visceral pleasure was drastically shortened (“The Potato Show”). In Shapiro’s biography, she writes, “Before our own hungry eyes, the camera zeroed in on the plate while Julia filled it, and we listened to her avid description of what we were going to eat. . . . We could taste every morsel as she lifted it, and we could taste the wine” (xiv). Viewers wrote letters to Child’s broadcasting station, WGBH, responding, “You are such a refreshing change from all the dainty cookery and gracious living that women are bombarded with” (Shapiro 105). Others wrote how glad they were that she tasted her food, or how impressed they were with her personable nature, and so on. Although she taught all of these things with her cookbook and lived with these mindsets before the advent of televisions in every American home, it was TV that changed Child’s cooking concepts into visual, visceral demonstrations.

Evidenced by letters to her friends, her attendance at the Bread Loaf conference in Massachusetts, her reading library, and her ambitions as a young woman to be a great novelist, Child was shaped by literary figures throughout her life. Although she never fulfilled her youthful aspirations to write the next greatest novel, Child was a prolific writer of letters, magazine articles, recipes, and of course, cookbooks. Writer of a monthly column for a few women's magazines and author (or co-author) of over 10 cookbooks, a memoir, television shows, and even computer programs, Child's presence as a literary figure among many mediums is indisputable. In addition to being a literary and culinary influence, Child was also a cultural influence. Although it was not her primary objective, Child influenced the collective consciousness' attitudes towards women in the kitchen. Women were not just wives keeping their families secure and warding off un-Americanness, but they were cultivating pleasure, using complicated techniques, experimenting with food, and reaping the rewards. Child's popularity influenced Boston intellectuals, but her books spoke to any and all cooks who were willing to devote the time and love that Julia required. Indeed, her success as a published author and a cultural icon was prolific, and to capture the complexity and richness of Child's work, one must accredit this success, not to a "revolutionary" agenda, but to one with a more subtle history.

II. JULIA CHILD'S COMING OF AGE IN THE COLD WAR KITCHEN

For novice and seasoned cooks in the early 1960s, Julia McWilliams Child was a headline name in the world of cookbooks and French cooking instruction. Child was a co-author of an ambitious French cooking manual that Craig Claiborne called “the most comprehensive, laudable, and monumental work on the subject [French cooking],” and “a definitive work . . . not . . . for those with a superficial interest in food” (47). The cookbook itself is a statement of Child’s (and her collaborators’, Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle) scholarship, her love of food and cooking, and her expectations for those who wish to learn. The cookbook can feasibly speak for itself, but not without context. Child’s story behind the publishing of this book—the development of her interest in cooking, in fact—warrants examination.

Looking between the generations of domestic scientists in the nineteenth century and the housewife cooks of the twentieth, I engage three general ways of thinking about women in terms of their relationships with food. The first, food as a scientific development and a medium through which technological advances can improve American eating habits, manifests itself in the latter nineteenth century as a way for female cooks to combine their traditionally spiritual roles as housekeeper with their role as domestic *scientist*, infusing the “Christian sentimentality that blanketed American domestic life” with the scientific, putting “housekeeping on an intellectual level that would match its moral loftiness” (Shapiro 13, 25). For many writers at the end of the nineteenth century, portrayals of the

woman's sphere were "aimed at investing domesticity with the spiritual sweetness of heaven itself" (13). Domestic scientists, in turn, paired their heavenly departments with chemical scholarship. In the middle of the twentieth century, the emphasis on technological advancements was not as clearly spiritual, but more about utilizing the ability of food technology to foster convenience for the housewife and introduce her kitchen to modernity. The second, food as a temptation to indulge appetite, appears in the late nineteenth century as something to abstain from, deny, or repress. Food was a desire of flesh and way for the "monster appetite" to plague feminine restraint. For women of the twentieth century, female appetite was not so much a gateway to sinful and unrestrained nature as it was a threat to contained femininity. A woman who served as the self-abnegating head of a domestic household could not be both a bastion of domestic safety *and* a woman who embraced the eroticized pleasure that food could inspire. Moreover, a housewife's sexuality and her Americanness were related. Food as a representation of a specifically national, American symbol, was a way for housewives to uphold an American rhetoric to keep her home from foreign influence, in what Elaine Tyler May calls "contained womanhood."

Julia Child, as a female cooking instructor in the twentieth century, was bound to confront several of the problems that arose from these three relationships. While Child obviously did not deal with the nineteenth century's spiritual or sexual facets of femme and food, the influences that formed her ideologies—in how to confront some of these problems and how to accept others—formed during this century. In fact, several of the domestic ideologies that typified the woman's sphere in the nineteenth century resurfaced during the Cold War decades. And though the decades of the Cold War are not necessarily

when her work made its way into several hundred thousand American kitchens, they were the formative years of Julia Child's culinary career. The first class she attended at *Le Cordon Bleu*, the fish dish that changed her life, meeting the people that fostered her decisions to pursue this career, overcoming political obstacles, and writing and attempting to publish her first cookbook collaboration all occurred during the decades that defined the height of Cold War consciousness in the United States. A defining element of this consciousness, one that directly concerned Julia Child, is the complicated relationship between women and food—a relationship that often fostered national anxieties. Because American capitalism was "under attack," women were looked upon as the safeguard of the home. According to May, in order "[t]o alleviate these fears, Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world, while experts, leaders and politicians promoted codes of conduct and enacted public policies that would bolster the American home" (xviii). However, these leaders also promoted images of these women as subordinate and often inadequate housewives. Julia Child, a somewhat progressive interpreter of these images, embraced culinary pleasures and made the domestic space a sphere of female triumph, but she also conformed to some of these problematic policies in her position as a domestic role model. It was most likely her inconsistency that made her so successful as a proponent of domestic femininity.

Domestic Science and Processed Food: Tracing America's Relationship with Food

Although my focus is on how Julia Child operated within a twentieth century context, the influences of her story begin with the constructions of domestic ideology in the

nineteenth century, and more specifically, the rise in domestic science and its instruction near the turn of the century. And in order to map out the influences of Cold War ideologies, and more specifically Julia Child, it is necessary to turn to turn-of-the-century home economists. Addressing similar issues in an essay about the underestimated power of sentimental fiction, Jane P. Tompkins writes, “In reaction against their [women fiction writers’] world view, and perhaps even more against their success, twentieth-century critics have taught generations of students to equate popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, *domesticity with triviality*, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority” (82, emphasis added). In order to control women’s dominion over the private household, a sphere that was supposedly controlled by women themselves, male writers and critics sought to trivialize these domestic works. Cookbooks, for example, as efforts to professionalize vocations of cookery by women, were not valued as grand accomplishments. Contrarily, cookbooks and domestic accomplishments gave some women an arena in which to own something and flourish, but because this happened within the private sphere, women’s culinary pursuits did not seem to threaten the masculine public world because the walls and “drudgeries” of their kitchens allegedly contained them.

Although women were writing cookbooks before the turn of the century, a significant domestic science movement during the progressive era of the late nineteenth century marks a shift in thinking about women as caretakers and home cooks. Most notably, it was when the Boston Cooking School began giving lessons to cooking pupils in 1879 that women started pursuing learning how to cook and run a kitchen as a science, exploring intellectual fields of study, but doing so within sentimentality and contained

womanhood. Laura Shapiro, in *Perfection Salad*, writes, “With its borders safe and secure, scientific cookery presented a field of moral activism less daunting than many of the other popular crusades of the reform era, yet with tantalizing links to the male worlds of research, technology, business, and higher education” (44). With its emphases on teaching domestic science, instilling a strict methodology, and reforming the American appetite, the Boston Cooking School began a tradition of the kitchen as a place for professionals, a lineage that begat Julia Child, but also gave her a platform from which subvert the School’s traditions for female cooks.

Child was certainly not the first woman to change American attitudes toward food, cooking, and the kitchen. Early teachers of the Boston Cooking School and women who made independent careers for themselves through domestic science, such as Ellen Richards, Helen Campbell, Isabel Bevier, Mary Hinman Abel, Sarah Tyson Rorer, and Fannie Merritt Farmer, did not view themselves as merely improved housewives, but as womanly professionals who could reform the habits of other American housewives. Even though the kitchen was the woman’s sphere, the will of these women and the increasing reliance on technology inside the home *and* out allowed these domestic scientists access to modern wisdom. And through this contained venue, women could “haul the sentimental, ignorant ways of mother’s kitchen into the scientific age” (Shapiro 9). Yet their pursuits were not solely self-uplifting. They also treated their pursuits as a mission of wide scale uplift, which would “lift this great social incubus of bad cooking and its incident evils from the households of the country at large” (61). These women viewed cooking lessons not as ways to combat the confining borders of patriarchy, but as “education in womanhood itself,” where pupils were taught that “think[ing] like men” while engaging in domestic

practices would dispel stereotypes of domestic triviality (62, 10). For obvious reasons, this idea that women had to adopt an ideology that was somehow not inherently their own—that had to be copied from men—was problematic. One of these cooking pioneers, Ellen Richards, “probably the most vehement of all the domestic scientists on this topic . . . harangued her own sex relentlessly” for allegedly refusing to “give up the irrationality that characterized femininity” (165). However, not all cooking instructors adopted this attitude; many women had their sights set on modernizing American cooking methods over reforming the attitudes of those prepared the food.

An important precursor to Julia Child and a name that endured past the domestic era, “the best-known cooking teacher of her era,” was Fannie Merritt Farmer, whom Shapiro calls the “Mother of Level Measurements” (100). Like her colleagues, Farmer considered herself a professional in her field or a businesswoman and not merely a home cook. As one who supposedly broke the mold of kitchen conduct by standardizing level measurements as opposed to “a heaping spoonful,” Farmer, too, acted as a sort of kitchen reformer (103). Although she considered herself a professional cooking teacher, she distinguished herself by making the scientific processes of cooking more accessible to readers. Her authorial cookbook voice or her “streamlined” instructions, containing no conversational or congenial language, adopted a “style that was businesslike and to the point” (107). Whereas one cookbook writer would warn, when cooking with hot grease, that “there is great danger from the fat taking fire and spreading to your clothing, to say nothing of the trouble of cleaning the stove and floor,” Farmer would say that too much in the grease at once “lowers the temperature of the fat [and] it causes it to bubble and go over the sides of the kettle” (qtd. in Shapiro 107-108). Farmer treated her work as

manuals, not as leisure reading, and made her books “accessible by straight simplification, presenting it without apologies rather than sweetening it to make it palatable for women at home,” who had grown used to the conversational (and sentimental) dialect of books by and for women (108).

Even though Farmer pledged her allegiance to scientific cookery, she set herself apart from her colleagues by being one of the only women who held no reservations about taking pleasure in not only cooking but eating as well. While most of domestic science cooking ignores, suppresses even, the physical nature of cooking and eating, Farmer relished the experience, often spruced up bland dishes with rich ingredients, and was described as having “a healthy appetite” (Shapiro 105). Highlighting pleasure in the kitchen did not, however, downplay the importance of the scientific method in the kitchen. In her most famous cookbook, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, Farmer’s instruction was anchored in scientific reasoning and careful research. In the book’s first several pages, she defines cookery, explains how to build a fire, and provides elaborate explanations for “boiling, broiling, stewing, roasting, baking, frying, sautéing, braising, and fricasseeing,” building a vocabulary for her pupils and a foundation for following the rest of her book (19). Contrary to her colleagues, she intersperses explanations of the process of eating and digestion throughout her book; for example, she claims that fish, although it is “less stimulating and nourishing than meat of other animals,” is “usually easier of [sic] digestion” (151). She also spells out the chemical compounds and origins of certain ingredients: “**Cream of Tartar** ($\text{HKC}_4\text{O}_6\text{H}_4$) is obtained from argols found adhering to the bottom and sides of wine casks,” and “**Soda Bicarbonate** (NaHCO_2) is manufactured from sodium chloride (NaCl), a common salt or cryolite” (53, 52).

Recalling the commitment to scholarship and research that Fannie Farmer and company valued in their work, Child also devoted many hours to studying, testing, and tweaking recipes. She was very interested in the scientific processes that cooking performed on raw foods. In fact, this is one area in which Child and her main collaborator, Simone Beck, disagreed—while Beck relied on her memory and her senses, Child insisted they base all of their recipe-writing in scholarship and undisputable fact. In fact, Child often argued with Simone about her lack of scholarship, and attributed it to her French-ness: “That insane one-up-man-ship, which is so often based on nothing factual at all. . . . It makes no difference how much research one does, using native French sources, no difference at all. If the French person you are discussing something with has his own ideas, that’s that” (Reardon). Thus, with her value of research and scholarship, Child encroached upon the “male” sphere of rigorous research and implanted it into the “female” sphere of the kitchen. Like the format of Farmer’s cookbook, Child’s 1961 debut to the cookbook arena, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I*, begins with cooking definitions, creating a culinary vocabulary. Additionally, it has precise temperatures—in Fahrenheit and centigrade—that correspond with French and English terms, a chart converting degrees Fahrenheit to Celsius, and directions on how to convert on one’s own. And although there are no chemical compounds written out in Child’s cookbook, she does provide a link to her scholarship within her recipes. For instance, she writes, “Mayonnaise like hollandaise is a process of forcing egg yolks to absorb a fatty substance, oil in this case, and to hold it in thick and creamy suspension” (*Mastering* 87). Echoing Farmer’s comprehensive explanations (and lengthy cookbook, which was well over 500 pages, while Child’s was well

over 600), Child's reliance on scholarship injects a scientific language into the "woman's sphere."

Though Fannie Farmer's commitment to accessibility and pleasure in the kitchen made her popular, a lineage of cooks followed her instructions of chemistry and modernity in the kitchen, making domestic science the prominent legacy of Fannie Farmer. It is this legacy that, according to Shapiro, "left behind a kitchen she had helped, crucially, to redirect toward social homogeneity and American cheese" (119). While nineteenth century domestic science turned food production into "drudgery divine," creating meals in the image of nutrition and not necessarily taste, twentieth century food science emphasized convenience and uniformity for the sake of conforming to a national narrative. In the decades after the World Wars, during what May calls "the era of the expert," when canned, freeze-dried, dehydrated, and frozen provisions made their ways from soldier rations to supermarket shelves, the value of a good meal was derived from its importance to feeding the nuclear family (21). Food historian Harvey Levenstein writes, "What *Fortune* labeled this 'relentless pursuit of convenience' derived much of its initial steam from returning veterans' relentless pursuit of the American Dream. With the end of the war, millions of them turned to the delayed task of family-building. . . . The 'baby boom' generation was on its way, and almost immediately it began to shape and distort the national agenda" (101). Scientific and industrialized methods of dehydrating, freezing, canning, and packaging foods like coffee, fruit, vegetables, orange juice, and dairy products, arose from "the postwar era's unbounded faith in the American genius for labor-saving technology" (106). May writes, "Armed with scientific techniques and presumably inhabiting a world that was beyond popular passions, the experts had brought us into the atomic age" (21). This

technology, that developed the atomic bomb and “the military-industrial complex,” was the same technology that developed and gave credence to the TV dinner, frozen food, and chemical food enhancers developed in a laboratory, not a kitchen (21).

Efforts not to create new foods, but to mechanize the production and consumption of old foods translated the reform agenda of Ellen Richards and Fannie Farmer into an exultation of convenience and uniformity. While most nineteenth century cooks made scientific cooking a place for women to become professionals and reform American nutrition, they did so by creating meals that drained food of its richness; the same results came about in the Cold War, not with efforts to reform eating habits but with efforts to mechanize uniformity. Well-known journalist and food historian Eric Schlosser claims that the Cold War value of normalcy and homogeneity is mirrored in its foods. When the McDonalds brothers started franchising their restaurant in 1953, and Ray Kroc subsequently became a famous name for McDonald’s burgers, he began mechanizing their food preparation processes, so that every burger would look and taste the same. Quoted in Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation*, Kroc says, “We have found out . . . that we cannot trust some people who are nonconformists. . . . We will make conformists out of them in a hurry” (5). For all food that was mass-produced, “most of the current techniques for processing, preserving, precooking, and packaging had one thing in common: They made foods lose their taste, texture, and normal appearance,” but look and taste the same across the board (Levenstein 109). Even though chemists were able to engineer tastes for these processed foods, food production focused most of its time and energy on economy of production over quality of taste. After all, in 1947, when the amount of spending on food increased considerably not on raw ingredients, but on ready-made products, food producers realized

that consumers seemed willing to compromise the taste, “the most easily traded-off quality,” for food that was shippable, shelve-able, and microwavable (101, 110).

By the time Child was learning her trade, pre-packaged and frozen foods dominated American supermarkets. In developing her cookbooks, she was aware of these obstacles, but she resisted these efforts by urging her audiences to cook from scratch. And because Americans were now, as they were beginning to in the nineteenth century, relying on foods that came more from laboratories and less from the ground, Child sometimes made concessions for a canned stock or two in her recipes. A small voice in the land of mass-produced food, Julia Child emerged out of the “Golden Era of Processed Food,” but encouraged cooks to join her efforts in resisting the consumption of mass-produced foodstuffs. Although the height of this movement occurred in the 1950s, the processed food industries only gained momentum, as evidenced by our contemporary supermarket products, therefore Child still faced these challenges when it came to reaching a 1960s American audience.

During the 50s and 60s, when Child was trying to get *Mastering* published, there were waves of anti-cookbooks and “diet books,” like Poppy Cannon’s *The Can Opener Cookbook* (1951) that, according to her friend and publishing connection, Avis DeVoto, urged people to buy chemically-engineered or pre-packaged foods. In one correspondence, DeVoto complained that fillers were replacing whole foods, and Americans were “stuffing themselves with faked materials in the fond belief that by substituting a chemical for God’s good food they can keep themselves slim while still eating hot breads and desserts and GUNK” (Riley 243-4). Child’s anxieties that an American audience might not be interested

in a book about doing everything from scratch were always present during her own cookbook writing:

American supermarkets were also full of products labeled “gourmet” that were not: instant cake mixes, TV dinners, frozen vegetables, canned mushrooms, fish sticks, Jell-O salads, marshmallows, spray-can whipped cream, and other horrible glop. This gave me pause. Would there be a place in the U.S.A. for a book like ours? Were we hopelessly out of step with the times? (225)

And even though many processed food items proposed to allegedly save money and time by only requiring preparation in a microwave or just adding water, Child declared otherwise. She compels her readers:

Learn how to cook! That’s the way to save money. You don’t save it buying hamburger helpers, and prepared foods; you save it buying fresh foods in season or in large supply, when they are cheapest and usually best, and you prepare them from scratch at home. Why pay for some one [sic] else’s work, when if you know how to do it, you can save all that money for your self [sic]? Knowing how to do it also means doing it fast, and preparing parts of a dish or a meal whenever you have a spare moment in the kitchen. (*From Julia* xii)

Child argues that her methods and processes are indeed *more economical* for the cook at home. In subverting the idea that American packaged foods are more convenient to families, Child proves that cooking well not only saves money, but also provides the cook with techniques and methods that resist the Cold War’s insistence on convenience and uniformity.

In *My Life in France*, Child writes that “our recipes did not appeal to the TV-dinner-and-cake-mix set. We had discovered this fact, with a bit of shock, when we attempted to place our work in a few of the mass-circulation magazines. Not one of them was interested in anything we’d done. The editors seemed to consider the French preoccupation with detail a waste of time, if not a form of insanity” (227). Child knew that their first cookbook catered to a relatively small audience, “readers who were devoted to serious, creative cookery,” but knew that in order to get a book published, they would have to consider writing for “the housewife/chauffeur” audience for a wider readership (230). Eventually, Child would publish a column in *McCall’s* called “From Julia Child’s Kitchen,” which would include recipes like “Beautiful braised lamb and a glorious apple tart” alongside the ads for premade gravies and flavor additives (62). But when Houghton Mifflin decided the 700 page manuscript was too large and not convenient enough for American housewives, publishers at Alfred Knopf picked up the book in hopes that this book would “do for French cooking here in America what Rombauer’s *The Joy of Cooking* once did for standard [American] cooking, and we will sell it that way” (Fitch 263). The editors at Alfred Knopf agreed with Child, that this book would target a smaller audience, but it could very well reach most people with its ploy that cooking and being in the kitchen *could* be sources of enrichment and pleasure, even without the devices of convenience that abounded in American supermarkets. Indeed, the foreword of *Mastering* spells out its intentions: “This is a book for the servantless American cook who can be unconcerned on occasion with budgets, waistlines, time schedules, children’s meals, the parent – chauffeur – den-mother syndrome, or anything else which might interfere with the enjoyment of producing something wonderful to eat” (xxiii). This declaration does not shun all those who would be

invested with children busy schedules as much as it does encourage those who are to reserve some time for personal enjoyment in the kitchen, of all places. Even though Child and her co-authors knew that many Americans (especially housewives) preferred the convenience of frozen or processed supermarket foods over the making of a carefully crafted meal, they ultimately decided that their methods would have a chance among the mass-marketed brands of pre-cooked items.

Child's efforts, however, did not appear subversive because although she was resisting the mainstream practices of relying on the production of food rather than the creation of it, she was not preaching a radical divergence from the norm. One such group of diehard individuals utterly renounced any connection with mainstream food ideologies. In his study of "countercuisine," Warren Belasco examines the movements in the 1960s, shortly after *Mastering* was published, that directly challenged and barraged the food industry's push toward convenience and uniformity. Proponents of the countercuisine argued that white, processed foods were linked to all things unhealthy:

Whiteness meant Wonder Bread, White Tower, Cool Whip, Minute Rice, instant mashed potatoes, peeled apples, White Tornadoes, white coats, white collar, white wash, White House, white racism. Brown mean whole wheat bread, unhulled rice, turbinado sugar, wild flower honey, unsulfured molasses, soy sauce, peasant yams, 'black is beautiful.' Darkness was funky, earthy, authentic, while whiteness, the color of powerful detergents, suggested fear of contamination and disorder. . . . [I]n the sixties, the payoff [of eating the 'brown' foods] seemed more immediately sensual: a rush of

energy that came from sustained chewing of tougher, sturdier, harder food.

(48-49)

Like Child, the counterculture movement promised a more sensual and fulfilling experience in cooking from scratch instead of using prepackaged food items, but unlike Child, they religiously repudiated the “plastic” falseness of mainstream food products and sought to provide a more natural, back-to-the-soil approach to cooking, which often invoked spiritual attitudes that many Americans, including Child, never adopted. Child’s approach lacked the mystical aura of cooking and appropriated mainstream language and attitudes. In fact, Child often cited her friends, the food conglomerates, in her research, and “refused to think of the food industry as an enemy” (Shapiro 159).

Additionally, Child often made concessions in her traditional techniques by permitting canned items as substitutes for fresh, and like her nineteenth century matriarchs, Child willfully “modernizes” her kitchen with new appliances, although classic French chefs would not have used the same technology. Though Child loved cooking with rigorous and time-consuming French techniques, she remarks that one recipe without technological assistance “took about an hour and a half to make. That would be two minutes or less in the food processor” (Fitch 179). Child was also very aware that her audience, American cooks who were mostly women, would want to use these conveniences in place of the more laborious traditional methods, and in fact, many of her recipes called for the use of an electric mixer or blender or food processor, which she would not have had at *L’Ecole du Cordon Bleu* in Paris. Furthermore, one of the potential titles for *Mastering* stressed this modern convenience was *French Cooking for the American Supermarket*,

which advertised the idea that all of the tools and ingredients needed to make good food from scratch were located in commercial American stores.

“Appetite of a Wolf”: Genealogy of Suppressing and Containing Feminine Pleasure

Beginning again with the domestic science movement that gained its greatest momentum near the turn of the twentieth century, women who eventually appointed themselves as home economists felt called to reform the appetites of American families to a more health-and-nutrition-centric diet, thereby protecting and nurturing the homes of American families. However, their interest in “revolutionizing” the American palate was not to enliven or rejuvenate it, but to tame its unwieldy appetite and inscribe its values within the home. According to historian and critic Mary Drake McFeely, these methods therefore “denied or abstracted the immediacy of food and cooking, removed it to a distance from the world of human relationships. They never mentioned the gentle sizzle of sliced leeks cooking in butter in their recipes for vichyssoise or conjured up the elegant associations of that wonderful soup that is so utterly simple in its construction” (50).

Although a large part of cooking for these women was an act of denying pleasure, Shapiro writes that these women did not wish to deny as much as they wished to treat food and cooking as a conduit for more divine purposes; they wished to “transubstantiate food,” disregarding the physical and erotic implications that are often implicit within food handling. This emphasized that “[c]ontaining and controlling food, draining it of taste and texture, packaging it, tucking the raisins deep inside marshmallows, decorating it” were all ways to transcend or rise above the plebian experience of tasting and eating (6). And in

doing so, nineteenth century women also continued the tradition of disassociating women from any semblance of an appetite. In efforts to suppress female sexuality, the consensus of the nineteenth century was that female appetites were dainty, delicate, and required a minimal sustenance. Amy Bentley writes, “For Victorian women and girls, whose delicate digestive systems, it was believed, could process only softer, blander, and sweeter foods, red meat was especially troublesome” (88-89). Shapiro concurs, arguing that “[d]ecorative, seemingly ephemeral salads were perceived as ladies’ food, reflecting the image of frailty attached to the woman who made them” (94). In other words, a woman who expressed voracious hunger or desire for a substantial meal was too involved with fleshly desires, and therefore transgressing the boundaries of her sex and her religious piety in association. Shapiro discusses Catharine Maria Sedgwick, a sentimental fiction author, who, decades earlier, demonstrates this in *Home* (1835), during a scene in which well-behaved children “vie with each other for the pleasure of giving up their favorite food” (17). In this story, fasting was just one in a long list of virtues that defined domestic purity, and one that mothers taught their children as early as possible. The depiction of these fictional characters’ dissociation with eating and femininity did not veer far from the non-fictional records at the Boston Cooking School. In one meeting, committeewomen deliberated over what to do with the food when after they prepared it; surely they would not need to (or want to) eat it, which was “a great deal less feminine than preparing it” (94).

For the women of the Boston Cooking School, it was considered unladylike to have an appetite, delight in tasting food, or cultivate sensuality in the kitchen. In Julia Child’s kitchen, she vociferated on the pleasures of béchamel, but the nineteenth-century cooks regarded this “white sauce” as something that “was not to enhance but to blanket.” It was

this sauce's "efficiency" that most cooks admired: it was quick to prepare, required few and accessible ingredients, was versatile, and was considered a perfect addendum to a "satisfactory luncheon." Furthermore, while classically trained cooks used sauces in conjunction with a main course's flavor, this "view of sauce making went no deeper than the surface of dish," and was not popular because it "would have demanded the kind of gustatory intensity that scientific cooks were determined to leave behind them" (87). In fact, the endgame of scientific cookery seemed to revolve around the idea of homogenous foods—those with the highest concentration of nutrition and the lowest amount of flavor in them as possible. According to domestic scientists, this would drastically improve the health, happiness, and moral constitution of Americans, who would be happy without rich foods because they were presumably no longer fixated on the sins of pleasure, but who could value the logic and sensibility of reasonably bland food that allowed them to fixate their thoughts on more heavenly purposes.

As mentioned earlier, Fannie Farmer believed in her mission as a female caretaker, professional cook, and scientifically methodic teacher, but unlike her colleagues, she let the pleasure of eating and appetite guide her sensibilities a little more so than Ellen Richards's and company. Perhaps Farmer's (and Child's) unabashed penchant for savoring the taste of food attests to her popularity and success as a cooking teacher. Though Farmer was most well known for reforming the kitchen through science, she was also notable for subverting the common assumptions that women should not have appetites or experience the pleasure that food could potentially provide. In the 1979 introduction to the 12th edition of her cookbook (renamed the *Fanny Farmer Cookbook* and revised by Marion Cunningham), James Beard writes, "Here and there in her books one would find delightful little quips

about food that always gave you the feeling that this woman really appreciated what she ate. She must have had a delicate and beautiful palate” (ix). Though Beard refers to Farmer’s palate as “delicate,” he does so to indicate her sophistication and not the “womanly fragility” of her appetite. Unlike her kitchen compatriots, Farmer “added oysters and canned tomatoes to dress up a classic French bouillon; she made fish fillets and timbales and drenched them in rich sauces” (Shapiro 101). Farmer’s “healthy appetite” and “solidly built” physique made her a cooking instructor who taught her pupils, “It is impossible to raise cookery above a mere drudgery if one does not put heart and soul into the work; then, and then only, it becomes the most enjoyable of household duties” (105). Not only was Farmer an advocate of the pleasure of the palate, but also of the pleasure that the practice of cooking itself could provide.

While women in the previous century were obligated to suppress or eradicate their physical needs altogether, women of the twentieth century were supposed to contain them within certain “acceptable” arenas, such as marriage, the kitchen, motherhood, etc. Within this continuum of cookbook women, who subtly subverted the largely masculine narrative that trivialized cooking and/or disallowed pleasure within the kitchen, was another notable cookbook author who highlighted the idea of pleasure in the kitchen. For Irma Rombauer, author of *The Joy of Cooking* (1931), the act of cooking was a pleasure in itself. Quoted by McFeely, Rombauer stated, “Cooking is a daily job, it may be a daily chore, [so] why not make it a daily adventure?” (49). Rombauer forgoes the scientific method to revive Farmer’s appetite and penchant for the pleasure of the kitchen. When Rombauer’s book was published, first in 1931 as a small booklet with a small circulation and later in 1936 as a larger, best-selling edition, her friendly tone and enthusiastic presentation

created a different standard for attitudes toward cooking. But although her language was subversive, her methods catered to the constantly growing demand for canned goods, prepackaged and pre-prepared flavorings, and emphasis on convenience. Though her recipes did not overplay the convenience of these foods as later twentieth century cookbooks (like Poppy Cannon's) did, they were featured as tools facilitating the joy that a housewife could find in her kitchen. Unlike these later cookbooks, canned goods were "just the beginning"—they were stepping-stones to creating something delightful and pleasurable (58).

Child's enthusiasm and love of food are no doubt affected by the influence of Irma Rombauer and Fannie Farmer. Yet while Rombauer and Farmer talk about food enthusiastically, it is only Child's love of pleasure that has more erotic overtones. The story of Child's "culinary awakening" is rife with references to a sexuality that posed a threat to Cold War domesticity's attempts to contain (but not suppress) female sexuality. Fitch writes that "Julia learned the secret of life at an early age: appetite. 'I was always hungry, I had the appetite of a wolf,'" (23). Paul also described her appetite by calling her a "wolf by nature" (114). Both Paul and Julia's descriptions of her wolfish hunger take the 19th century's "monster appetite" that disallowed women pleasure and redefine it as lively exuberance (Shapiro 17).

Even though Child's love of pleasure did not technically go outside of her marriage, she privately challenged this containment with her voracious appetite by transposing her eroticized language on her meal instead of her husband. What made her sexual transgression less provocative, perhaps, was that she acquired her license to indulge *through* men. Even though the realms of the kitchen and cooking instruction were

generally relegated to women, Child's encouragement to master this realm and unlock its pleasures uniquely and predominantly came from men. Her teacher at *Cordon Bleu*, Max Bugnard, is in part responsible for her reclamation of pleasure in cooking. According to Child, Bugnard "always took great pride and pleasure in this performance. [He] insisted that one pay attention, learn the correct technique, and that one enjoy one's cooking—"Yes, Madame Scheeld, *fun!*" he'd say. 'Joy!' (*My Life* 65). Child may have also been taking notes when Bugnard ate her food, for he did so "with gusto" (Fitch 182). Child also describes the atmosphere of Bugnard's L'Ecole in a letter to a friend, praising the "passionate pleasure from both pupils and professors" (190).

Although Bugnard was her actual culinary mentor, it was her husband, Paul, who nurtured within Julia a deep reverence for food's pleasure and sophistication. According to many an interview, biography, and news story, Paul awakened something carnal within Julia, and she "responded [to Paul] as if the power had been switched on inside her. To be hungry for food was a state she knew well. To be hungry all over was a revelation" (*Julia Child* 18). Before she married Paul and was safely contained within the stronghold of marriage, Julia had always had a flare for the pleasurable and the physical. In a letter, Paul— then, just her friend—described Julia as "direct and simple about natural functions such as defecation, urination and belching, and has no measly Mrs. Grundyisms concerning sex. She frankly likes to eat and use her senses and has an unusually keen nose" (Fitch 140). Later, even within the supposed safety of marriage, Paul and Julia pressed the Cold War's boundaries of sexuality by conflating the pleasures of sex with the pleasures of food. In Paul's correspondence to Charlie Child, his twin brother, he writes of watching Julia cook, describing the experience as "watching a kettle drummer at the symphony," with

“warning bells . . . sounding-off” and “a perfectly timed double-beat.” The most explicit part of the letter is a snippet of dialogue from Julia herself: “Now & again a flash of the non-cooking Julie lights up the scene briefly, as it did the day before yesterday when with her bare fingers, she snatched a set of cannelloni out of the pot of boiling water with the cry ‘Wow! These damn things are as hot as a stiff cock’” (Riley 178).

Paul often wrote to Julia with explicitly sensual language that evoked the pleasures of the mouth. In a letter to Julia before they were married, Paul wrote:

I want to see you, touch you, kiss you, talk with you, eat with you . . . eat you, maybe. I have a Julie-need. Come on back and sit in my lap and let me bite off your earrings again. I have never *tasted* such delicious pearls!—let other gourmets eat their oysters. I will take pearls (on your earlobes) and be more tantalizingly and magnificently fed than they. So to bed, pearl hungry. (Fitch 132)

In his only published book of poems, *Bubbles from the Spring*, Paul’s sensual poetry links his wife’s love of cooking and eating to their relationship. Fitch includes lines from some of these poems, which were addressed to and about Julia:

First was his birthday poem of 1961, opening ‘O Julia, Julia, Cook and nifty wench,’ and concluding ‘O luscious dish! O gustatory pleasure! / You satisfy my taste-buds beyond measure.’ The fourth poem was ‘The disgraced orifice’ and referred to Julia’s mouth, ‘made for other lips to press, for love,’ which made such weird noises when confronted with food: ‘squawks . . . twittering coos . . . groaning. (394)

The sensuality and pleasure surrounding the Childs' love for food and the pleasure it brought infiltrates both of their dialogues, making Paul a source of inspiration for Julia's insatiable appetite for gastronomic desires.

Yet while Paul's language refers to Julia, Julia's language largely refers to the food she eats. In addressing Cold War constructions of sexuality, May writes, "It was not just nuclear energy that had to be contained, but the social and sexual fallout of the atomic age itself" (82). In other words, the U.S. was already hypersensitive to images, words, and ideas that invoked sex. And Child's language, when addressing food, uses language that exudes sexual pleasure. Although she withheld some of the overt sensuality from her viewing and reading audiences, her descriptions of food evoke an eroticism that was *not* directed at her husband, but her dinner. In what she would later refer to as "the most exciting meal of [her] life" (19), Child describes the first dish she has in France with physical, visceral adjectives. In the section titled "*Sole Meunière*," Child describes in detail the taste of each course. Of the fish, she says, "I closed my eyes and inhaled the rising perfume. Then I lifted a forkful of fish to my mouth, took a bite, and chewed slowly. The flesh of the sole was delicate, with a light but distinct taste of the ocean that blended marvelously with the browned butter. I chewed slowly and swallowed. It was a morsel of perfection" (*My Life* 18). In pleasurable ecstasy, Child writes that the fish was "a dining experience . . . of a higher order than any I'd ever had before" (19). Child takes great care to describe the taste, smell, and feel of the food in her mouth and of the divine pleasure of eating, and in doing so, attributes her entire culinary career to this quasi-orgasmic experience. Child's voracious appetite conflated food with sexuality, a somewhat taboo practice that was subject to the postwar "fears of female sexuality as a dangerous force on the loose" (May 59). And

according to Alan Nadel, “female sexuality was almost always not reconcilable with domestic security,” which not only made Child’s connection with food and sex a potentially dangerous one, but also a potential threat to the safety (and normativity) of the American household (126). And although it is apparent that Child had a knack for conjuring sensuality, it was not directly genital; it was food-inspired, not phallus-inspired, which allowed her to be so freely erotic in a time that kept a cautious eye on lasciviousness.

The Cold War Woman’s Role in National Security and the Mask of the Housewife

With the return of the World War II soldier and renewed focus on the nuclear family, a revival of domestic ideology—as it specifically pertains to and affects the ideals of the housewife—reappears in the decades during and after the Cold War. Every realm of public life—corporations, colleges, advertisers, etc—urged women to relinquish their posts and retreat to their private homes as safeguards and matriarchs of the American nuclear family. This decade produced the infamous “kitchen debate” between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev (1959), where Nixon proclaimed the U.S.’s superiority by pointing out, “We have . . . many different kinds of washing machines so that the housewives have a choice” (qtd. in May 11). For Nixon, American superiority was rooted in the “American postwar domestic dream: successful breadwinners supporting attractive homemakers in affluent suburban homes” (12). As with ideas of the kitchen and of food, the postwar decades revived the nineteenth century domestic discourse concerning homemakers, which Nancy Cott defines as:

the ideological presumptions, institutional practices, and strongly held habits of mind insisting that the home must be guided by a calm, devoted, and self-abnegating wife and mother: that with her presence, the home would serve . . . as a moral beacon, a restorative haven from the anxieties and adversities of public life and commerce, comforting the hardworking husband and provider for the family, and furnishing a nursery of spiritual and civic values for the children. (xvii)

Like the domestic ideologies of the nineteenth century, this neo-domestic iteration presented the home as a sort of sanctuary, but where women of the 1800s provided moral and spiritual alleviation, postwar housewives, or at least the construction of their roles, seemed more geared towards mollifying national and sexual anxieties—making the home a safe place from communism, or more generally, any foreign threat, and withholding sexual energy for marriage, or even replacing it with motherhood. After all, writes May, “The message in the popular culture was clear: motherhood was the ultimate fulfillment of female sexuality and the primary source of a woman’s identity” (125). Claire Pollard, agreeing with May, writes that it was largely the advertisements of the 1950s that defined the housewife, simultaneously reducing her to a purchaser of domestic goods, “viewing American Woman as the sum of her various activities,” and making the most of her as a customer (3). Therefore, in order to live up to the unrealistic housewife persona in the Cold War, women often subscribed to the American narrative of sexually tame wife-mother and avidly indulgent consumer.

Unlike Irma Rombauer, who seemed to eagerly subscribe to the role of the housewife even though she set herself apart with such reliance on the word “pleasure,”

Child's subversion of this role goes beyond her erotic implications of her food enthusiasm. Rombauer's book was directly marketed to the housewife audience, using canned foods and convenient short cuts. McFeely calls her a "household saint" and a "surrogate mother" to new kitchen brides, assisting their efforts to provide for their husbands and families (49, 152), and she quotes Rombauer's explanation of her motivation for the book: "I have made an attempt to *meet the needs of the average household*, to make palatable dishes with simple means and to lift everyday cooking out of the commonplace" (166, emphasis added). Like her predecessors, Rombauer's books were geared toward the housewife. Child, while a great fan of *The Joy of Cooking* in many respects, refused to write a cookbook that yielded—by streamlining and editing for ease of accessibility and convenience—to the American housewife, although she was urged to do so many times. In fact, Child admits to hating the very word "housewife," as it connoted simplemindedness, lack of creativity or worldliness, and foolishness or frivolity by the postwar ad campaigns. According to Shapiro's biography, "when Julia said 'housewife,' she meant someone who didn't take food and cooking seriously" (139). Yet even though Child did not call herself a housewife or wish to teach that specific audience how to cook, she performed many housewife duties and effectively wore the mask of the housewife. In other words, her complicated kitchen ideology led her many times to perform the role of a nationally conforming, Cold War housewife, while her commitment to good food and cooking led her to subvert this role, or at least blur its boundaries with a more forgiving, realistic narrative.

A specific Cold War rhetoric that linked domesticity with female patriotism urged women to obtain newer domestic technologies in order to protect their homes against nuclear threats. By stocking bomb shelters with canned goods and American appliances

that “symbolized family security and togetherness in the face of a frightening world” (May 93), women could create shelters of safety out of their private spheres. While the food itself underwent technological makeovers in the 1950s as Levenstein delineates, appliances to aid in the preparation of these were also prized as “miracles of domestic technology” for the woman in the kitchen (May 145). Spending money to stock homes with appliances was not just a way for housewives to build a safeguard against the nuclear threat, but it was “the validation of the free enterprise system” as a superior idea to communism (May 145). And although Julia Child spent much of the 40s and 50s outside of the U.S., her actions would suggest that she was very much aware of the political efforts to link domesticity and pride for country. Child took much pleasure in purchasing gadgets for her French *and* American kitchens. In her memoir, Child describes her Paris kitchen by gleefully noting all of the “gadgets” she owned, including “enough knives to fill a pirate ship,” “copper vessels, terra cotta vessels, tin vessels, enamel vessels, crockery and porcelain vessels,” enumerating everything from her array of measuring cups to alternative cooking surfaces. She laments, “My kitchen positively gleamed with gadgets. But I never seemed to have quite enough” (78-9). While most of her gadgets and tools, at least at this point, are suited for traditional French cooking (a mortar and pestle was very atypical of an American kitchen), Child’s language closely echoes the enthusiasm of “patriotic purchasing” that May categorizes in *Homeward Bound*. And more importantly, it echoes the language of the consumer-housewife, who often purchased domestic frivolities on a whim, or who associated security with “privatized abundance” (May 154).

As another challenge to this security, Child also acts as a cultural bridge between Europe and the United States with her cooking, which also subverts the patriotic housewife

by introducing a foreign and consequently “un-American” cuisine to the American kitchen.¹ Orlando Ramirez writes that “once she broke the barrier Americans were less reluctant to experiment with foreign ingredients and cooking techniques” (“Julia at 85). Child’s foreign instruction and foreign techniques, while daunting to a novice, passes on her instructional command in the kitchen, thus Child’s encouragement steers American cooks away from isolationist or xenophobic worldviews that may have discouraged them from bringing foreign techniques into their homes. And though she ushers in foreign influence, she assures her audience that using French techniques does not imperil the home; it only enriches it. She writes, “Sauces are the splendor and glory of French cooking, yet there is nothing secret or mysterious about making them. While their roster is stupendous to look at, it is not mind-boggling when you begin to realize that their multitude divides itself into a half-dozen very definite groups” (*Mastering* 54). Child therefore encourages cooks to infuse their kitchens with “splendor and glory,” highlighting the tantalizing nature of French cooking. In one of her recipes, Child writes, “Many of the delicious soups you eat in French homes and little restaurants are made just this way,” suggesting that one can recreate the environment of an outdoor French café in his or her own home without overstepping the boundaries of becoming “un-American” (40).

With her French cookbook, Child successfully marketed a foreign food to an American audience. Using a Cold War discourse, Child was in a sense a “double agent” for

¹ Although European tourism began picking up after the war and France was an ally to America during World War II, the traditionally collective view of Europeans (specifically the French) was that they were generally “snobbish,” and that “[t]o most Americans, whose finest restaurants were still shrines to shrimp cocktail, steak, and baked potatoes, it was all eye-poppingly sophisticated” (Levenstein 139). And because many ingredients for French foods were absent in American supermarkets and restaurants, Americans were reluctant or even belligerent about trying them. Child effectively quelled the anxieties conjured by myths about foreign food.

Cordon Bleu and French cooking in general. Child did not usually find much resistance to her efforts to teach Americans how to cook with a foreign flare because her success was due in part to her catering to Americans and specifying where her allegiances lay. Her recipes, with French titles such as “Poulet en Cocotte Bonne Femme” or “Rôti de Porc Poêlé” did not seem to distract from her specifically American purposes. All of the measurements had been translated from the European metric system to cups, spoons, and ounces, and the cookbook was equipped with a glossary of “ordinary American cooking terms” with their French counterparts (*Mastering* 11). In her 1970 cookbook of recipes from *The French Chef* called *From Julia Child’s Kitchen*, Child knowingly combats anxieties about European stereotypes and continues asserting that even though France is her second home and the place where she learned to cook, “I remain very American indeed. I always look at French cuisine from an American point of view” (ix). She also demystifies the idea that French cooking is somehow un-American because its origins recall elitism and snobbery. She says, “French food, by the way, isn’t fancy unless, like other cooking, it wants to be fancy; perhaps it sounds so because it is in a foreign language, but a *Coq au Vin* is a chicken stew, a *Pot-au-feu* is a boiled dinner, a *Mayonnaise de Volaille* is a chicken salad . . . and there is nothing fancy about any of them” (xii). Even though Child knew she was teaching a foreign art, she reiterates that her efforts are not *for* the French, but specifically and entirely for Americans, and therefore, should give no pause to the American cook.

Even though she made it very clear that unlike her taste buds, her sympathies were purely American, she encountered challenges in making that adaptation. First, Child and her main collaborator, Simone Beck or “Simca,” often disagreed on which foods needed changing to suit American audiences. In a dispute on a recipe in the final version of

Mastering, Simca declared, “This cake—it’s not French. It’s an American taste. We can’t have it in the book” (*My Life* 250). Other discrepancies between “French tastes” and “American tastes” also found their ways into Child’s attempts to write for Americans. Not wishing to overthrow Americans’ senses of taste, Child had to foresee what tastes and techniques Americans would (or would not) be willing to try, or what would be available to them in the States. She often wrote Avis DeVoto, asking her to mail her certain American ingredients, like all-purpose American flour (Reardon). After deliberations with Houghton Mifflin, their first prospective publisher, over the sheer size (over seven hundred pages at first) of the cookbook, Child laments, “We knew we’d have to emphasize the simpler *cuisine bourgeoise* dishes over the *grande cuisine*. After all, our readers wouldn’t have mortars and pestles for pounding lobster shells, or copper bowls for whipping egg whites, and they weren’t used to taking the time and care over sauces that the French were accustomed to” (*My Life* 231). Child also noted that “hardly anyone used fresh herbs here [in America], that U.S. veal was not as tender as the French, that our turkeys were much larger than their birds, and that Americans ate far more broccoli than the French did” (*My Life* 226). Child’s attempts to disseminate French culture through cooking techniques required deliberating with an “us versus them” rhetoric.

While advertisements, cartoons, and popular images were mocking the housewife for buying too many shoes or not knowing how to bake the perfect cake, Child challenged the popular image of the consumer housewife, but not by directly countering these images. In several ways, she seemed to conform to these standards by virtue of her domesticity. However, Child was more obviously resistant to the prescribed, patriotic housewife. As an employee to the Office of Strategic Services (a precursor to the CIA) and a self-proclaimed

enthusiast of overseas cultures, she had to put more effort into proving her “Americanness.” In addition, Child simultaneously confronted *and* maintained yet another prescribed image of the housewife—that her duty as a mother and homemaker (or as a mother-like figure) overshadowed her duties to her sexuality, her personal needs, and her selfhood. Cold War femininity was erotically contained within the confines of a heterosexual marriage, but it was also contained as a threat to masculinity. According to May, “The wifely focus of the 1940s marked a shift from the flamboyant sexuality exhibited by the stars of the 1930s, like Mae West, to a prudent responsibility” (56). Women were advised to “be sensitive to the needs of returning soldiers,” often through cooking them meals, as Betty Crocker would urge, and were to have little or no other aspects to their sexualities other than being the head of the private household, and any sexual behavior was acceptable only underneath that roof. Uncontained sexuality was threatening and “predatory” (57). Furthermore, “[w]omen of the fifties, constrained by tremendous cultural and economic pressures to conform to domestic containment, gave up their independence and personal ambitions” to “embrace domesticity” (201). Child challenged the boundaries of this typecast in many ways, however, she often subscribed to them as a cooking instructor and a cookbook writer. In fact, many of Child’s decisions led her to be the typical “contained” housewife of the 1940s and 50s. Child’s first interest in cooking stemmed from a very contained arena: her marriage to Paul Child. In her memoir, *My Life in France*, which was written about her overseas stay, Child writes, “In preparation for living with a new husband on a limited government income, I decided I’d better learn how to cook” (5). During her years at Smith college in the “liberated” 1930s, Child wrote “No occupation decided; Marriage preferable” under her vocational choices. Her biographer,

Noël Riley Fitch writes that when *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963, Child had “set about becoming the consummate housewife so typical of this period defined by Betty Friedan,” and lived most of her life touting the image of the housewife (Fitch 145). And although Child was never a mother, she expressed regret for not having children. Child told a magazine columnist, “I would have been a complete mother” (Fitch 451). For this, Child was criticized and her validity as a cook was under attack because she mothered no children. Madeline Kamman, a Frenchwoman and a contemporary of Child, questioned her authenticity as a voice for French cooking by attacking her femininity; she eventually “moved to condescending innuendos and veiled attacks, referring to Julia’s surgeries [a hysterectomy and a mastectomy] and to her not being a mother” (Fitch 352).

On the surface, Child also endorsed Cold War beliefs that homosexuality was a threat to a specifically American narrative—an “other” that imposed a leaky narrative on American attempts to celebrate security and family values. Elaine Tyler May writes about the anxieties surrounding homosexuality during the Cold War, explaining that any “nonmarital sexual behavior” was seen as a threat to Americanness. She writes, “The logic went as follows. National strength depended upon the ability of strong, manly men to stand up against communist threats . . . [and] sexual excess or degeneracy would make individuals easy prey for communist tactics” (82). In addition to May, Alan Nadel articulately points out the backwardness of these assumptions, noting the “similarity between the narrative of the closet and the narrative of containment,” and pointing out that the “secretiveness of these narratives constructs the closeted conditions that the historic specificity of post-Enlightenment Western discourse . . . has made most legible in terms of ‘homosexuality’” (29). For Child, being gay was not actually a threat to Americans as much

as it was “unnatural.” The Childs had several gay and lesbian friends, such as Cora DuBois, whom they met while in the OSS, and the famous chef James Beard, whose biographer described their relationship akin to “brother and sister” (Fitch 284). Their rhetoric did not completely parallel that of the Cold War, but it did situate gay men and women as pariahs. And although Paul was “accused” of homosexuality by McCarthy investigators, he and Julia did not embrace or readily accept homosexuality in their own, blurred narratives.

According to Fitch, Paul Child “shared his generation’s scorn of male homosexuals (‘fairies,’ he called them)” (194). And in a letter to Avis in 1953, Julia writes concerning May Sarton, a friend and lesbian author, saying, “It is certainly not easy, I should think, to live happily in our culture with her special problem” (Reardon). It seems that the “problem” she was referring to was not that someone was homosexual, but that a man was not “manly,” or a woman who liked women was unfortunate because it couldn’t “be much fun” to not be attracted to a man (Shapiro 135). According to Shapiro, “Homophobia was a socially acceptable form of bigotry in mid-century America, and Julia and Paul participated without shame for many years . . . It appears never to have struck Julia that she was talking about homosexuals the way her father talked about Jews, blacks, foreigners, intellectuals, and artists” (*Julia Child* 135). So although Child absconded the prescribed, Cold War gender roles for women and men, she still upheld them, in a way, when it came to gay men and women.

Paul himself was a threat to Cold War containment, and did some gender-bending on his own. Paul, employed by the United States government, was investigated because of his lascivious libraries, plentitude of art, and sensual lifestyle, and McCarthy investigators “accused” him of homosexuality that allegedly cultivated Communist sympathies. Paul’s

role in Julia's kitchen maturity goes beyond his encouragement and sensual nature. He spent most of their relationship in the secondary position of "assistant," sketching or photographing things for Julia's cookbook. Shapiro writes that "Paul was one of the few men of his generation who found it natural, even admirable, for women to have careers," even if that career made them more financially successful than their husbands (*Julia Child* 131). He also would have been a prime candidate for what May calls "Momism," coined by Philip Wylie, which denoted a son who had been "smothered" by an overbearing mother, thus resulting in a "weak or passive," or in other words, effeminate son. Paul and his brother were raised by their mother, who "taught her boys that . . . 'artists are sacred'" (Fitch 116). According to May, "As a fervent patriot during the war and a virulent anticommunist after the war, Wylie argued that the debilitating effects of Momism would seriously weaken the nation and make it vulnerable to an enemy takeover" (64). Although Paul was both artistic and an advocate of sensuality, Julia described him as very manly, complemented by a muscular physique.

Paul's involvement with Julia's cooking career, while heavy, was very much a behind the scenes role, which put him not as the household breadwinner, but in the background. Julia was the one who had control. Even though women were supposed to have domain over the kitchen, their control, even in this domestic space, produced anxiety. Regardless of her subscription to housewife agendas, Child made many efforts to reclaim this control and ownership that was wrested away from women in the Cold War (and previously). For her, as well, control over the kitchen meant control over her household's income. Although Child did not purport to be a feminist in disguise, she effectively reclaimed control for the kitchen-wife and transformed domestic drudgery into a task with instant, physical

gratification. Camille Paglia called her “a prewar feminist like Eleanor Roosevelt,” and Helen Civelli Brown called her “a symbol of women’s liberation” (Fitch 387, 388). Indeed, like Ellen Richards and Fannie Merritt Farmer, Child’s attempts to professionalize (and infuse with pleasure) the traditionally tame female space were very successful, and she was beginning to develop a notably male audience. However, when Child was approached about her role in the cause for women’s rights, she would not claim the title of feminist because she assumed, “as did many women of her generation, that it meant anti-men” (387). However, Laura Shapiro argues that Child “was a feminist in spite of herself,” meaning that she reclaimed the domestic ideology in a way that promoted physical pleasure and serious scholarship in the kitchen (*Julia Child* 142). Her housewife “mask” brought the two worlds of domestic life and radical feminism together in what Joanne Hollows calls “domestic femininity.” Similar to her domestic science predecessors, Child passed up radical feminism for something more shrouded in values of Cold War domestic ideology. According to Hollows, instead of liberating herself *from* the kitchen, Child liberated herself *through* the kitchen, merging the separate gendered spheres into one space. Child “blurs the distinction between public and private, and between labour and consumption, divorcing domestic practice from the singular gendered identity of the housewife” (44). Therefore, by essentially being both the feminist and the home cook, Child manipulates Cold War domestic codes of housewife sexuality in her favor.

Conclusion

For Child, subverting mainstream ideologies about food, pleasure, and women was not a task or a scheme, but something that seemed to come naturally. Her methods encouraged, enlightened, and enlivened, but not in such a way that raised alarm or suspicion, as many subversive things did in the Cold War. Working under the guise of a woman in the kitchen, Child did stir the pot of Cold War politics and norms. Encouraging the use of fresh, raw ingredients, Child urged cooks to be creative and think independently in the kitchen. Urging cooks to enrapture themselves in the various intoxicating smells and tastes allowed for kitchen folk, especially women, to re-claim pleasure, even in the kitchen, as a source of erotic sensuality. And even as a non-feminist feminist, Child (and her husband) politely pushed the boundaries of gender roles, using domestic spaces as an equalizer. Though the Childs' politics were liberal for the most part, they embraced certain domestic ideologies that seemed somewhat conservative, and in doing so, were able to reach a wider audience, and create a more successful kitchen campaign in 1960s America.

III. *THE FRENCH CHEF'S* "HOME INVASION": THE COOKBOOK QUEEN ENTERS THE REALM OF THE VISUAL

For Julia Child and her co-authors, the pivotal moment of their culinary careers was when Alfred Knopf decided to publish *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume 1*. Though it was considered a wild success with over 30,000 copies printed in the first week, Julia Child would not have been the icon that other professional or television cooks mimic without her cooking show. *The French Chef*, which first aired in 1962, featured Julia Child instructing her audience about French techniques and food histories, attempting to replace the trend in post-war America of using cake mixes and artificial sweeteners with home cooking and rich, raw ingredients. Child captured home viewers—male and female—and professional reviewers, including writers of *Time*, who in a 1966 article write of Child's "verve and insouciance," and claim, "So good is she that men who have not the slightest intention of going to the kitchen for anything but ice cubes watch her for pure enjoyment" (74). In addition to reaching across gender lines from the television, *The French Chef* not only pushed Child from gastronomic instructor to a household name, it made complicated cooking techniques accessible with live, visual instruction to households who would have reluctantly (if at all) picked up the voluminous French cookbook. What the 1950s considered a normative nuclear family was now exposed to an imposing woman who insisted that good cooking did not come from a nice package. Julia's stage presence, teaching methods, and overall television personality, like her written works, co-opt a

dialogue and a tradition of Cold War housewifery only to complicate them. Child both adapts to and subverts the persona of the American housewife.

Even though much of the hype from the problems of Cold War ideology dissipated by the end of the 60s, the legacy and rhetorical influence of the Cold War carried over into issues of food, home, and femininity well past the height of Cold War, especially when discussing the American family unit. Additionally, this decade marks a shift in Cold War attitudes toward foreign influences, as many historians explain that Child's appearance on television was concurrent with the rise in popularity of French cuisine and European travel. In other words, Child's television appearance seemed to premiere in a time when Americans were more willing to accept an un-American narrative. This, and other markers of progression in the 1960s mark a shift in consciousness, but this does not mean that conceptions of national security, sexuality, and foodways were suddenly free from a Cold War consciousness.

Child's arrival occurred on the cusp of an era that vehemently rejected threats to a normative consciousness, and icons like Child were only beginning to question the limits of these, especially the role of the kitchen-wife, which in the 1940s, 50s, and even into the 60s, was considered one of the only normative gender roles for women. Kathleen Collins, author of *Watching What We Eat: the Evolution of Television Cooking Shows*, writes, "Media images of the homemaker and the changing reality were increasingly at odds in the 1950s. New food products, their advertisements, and most cooking programs reinforced the traditional notions of gender roles," which served to contain women, and have since continued to do so (though not without some modification) well past the era of June Cleaver and Betty Crocker (45-6). Collins writes, "[T]he late 1940s and the lion's share of

the 1950s are often remembered for the appreciation of conformity, with images of Levittown and its brethren providing the cover art” (44). The television cooks and meals of the 1940s and 50s reflect these values of contained womanhood, and these legacies carried over into later decades, with the ideology of convenience and homogeneity replacing a hands-on interaction with food. As one who contributed to this image *and* resisted it, Child’s presence grew in the American household through the end of the Cold War and into contemporary households. In borrowing the image and some of the practices of the 1950s domestic housewife, Child was able to subvert these appearances and attitudes that deified and romanticized the roles that women like Mrs. Cleaver played.

“A Feast for the Eye”: Television in American Homes during the Cold War

In order to track the influence that Child’s televisual presence had on Americans, it is important to examine what television’s home presence represented to Americans of the mid-twentieth century. As this population saw a post-war increase of income by more than 60 percent, there was a national emphasis on the benefits of consumer spending and the loyalty to country this spending reflected. Kathleen Collins writes,

The postwar emphasis on family togetherness as well as the magnetic force of a television itself converged to make home the ‘it’ place. The 1950s saw a steep and rapid rise in saturation of the television medium as well as a greatly expanded programming repertoire. In 1940, there were fewer than 4,000 TV sets in the U.S., while, by 1960, there were some 45 million with 90 percent of homes owning at least one set. Sets were becoming ubiquitous . . .

[and] they were ideal companions for housewives and a perfect forum for cooking instruction.” (45)

Modern appliances filled homes, and according to Elaine Tyler May, housewives “would reap rewards for domesticity by surrounding themselves with commodities. Presumably, they would remain content as housewives because appliances would ease their burdens” (146-7). Effectively, the television was, itself, a commodity that encouraged the purchasing of other commodities, and for the typical Cold War housewife, these other commodities presumably enhanced the station of the housewife. Spending in general was very focused on the household, with purchases of stoves, refrigerators, and televisions seeing a higher increase in sales than any other appliances (148). Because of television advertising, the immense popularity of television itself, and its centrality to many Cold War (and contemporary) households, its purposes were not only to entertain or instruct, but to boost the sales of other commodities. Additionally, *Television Studies* notes that TV is more likely to promote the status quo, or in the case of Cold War America, encourage the values of conformity, than it is to disrupt traditional norms (Casey et al. 48). Television reinforced the values of the Cold War era, including the codes of the housewife promoted by Mrs. Cleaver herself. And according to Collins, “the lady of the house was the dream marketing target” by magazine and television advertisements (59).

Perhaps more than the programs themselves, TV ads and food marketing campaigns targeted the American housewife, reducing her to a capricious, limitless, and irrational spendthrift. Subjects of studies conducted on grocery store shoppers were primarily women. In an America where food sales came from supermarkets, women were not their family’s masculine “hunter,” but its female gatherer, and consequently the ones responsible

for feeding their family. In a book originally published in 1957 about the potential deceptions of the advertising world, Vance Packard writes about the vulnerability of consumers, who in Packard's book, are solely female. Quoting an advertisement firm's vice president, Packard writes, "You have to have a carton that attracts and hypnotizes this woman, like waving a flashlight in front of her eyes" (112). In this chapter that addresses the modern phenomenon of impulse buying (a crime of which only women are apparently guilty), Packard also writes, "For some years the DuPont company has been surveying the shopping habits of American housewives in the new jungle called the supermarket. The results have been so exciting in the opportunities they suggest to marketers that hundreds of leading food companies and ad agencies have requested copies" (112). The results of the study culminated in hypnotized housewives purchasing products that food marketers and psychologists designed for quick consumption. One such product is none other than a box of cake mix, with pictures of "mouth-watering frosted cakes" that possessed a "dreamlike quality," supposedly that an average domestic woman would pick up based on its appearance and not the quality of its ingredients (115). Ads like these were designed for women audiences, and eventually, television became the "magazine of the air," with ads promoting domestic hardware, targeting the housewife and touting the improvement of household by domestic consumption (Collins 59).

This very visual quality of food in magazines, advertisements, and television programs did more than display "dreamlike" qualities. The aesthetics of food and the visual nature of television itself changed the ways that Cold War households absorbed information. As quoted by Tim Woods, Nicholas Abercrombie writes, "Contemporary societies are about creating an image, refining a *look*, presenting a *style*" versus absorbing

information through written text (198, original emphasis). Woods surmises that this shift comes from the constant barrages of advertisements and cultural images, or “consumerism as people are encouraged to buy an image” (198). The advertisements for food and cooking, too, were equally centered on food’s inherent ability to form stylistic images. In fact, “decorative cooking,” a method used much earlier than the 1940s and 50s, took precedent in Cold War America over traditional cooking methods. As a part of the continuum from the domestic scientist cooks from the nineteenth century, decorating dishes with garnishes and making them aesthetically appealing were considered both jobs for the housewife (to beautify her dishes) and examples of feminine superfluity. With the inception of Betty Crocker’s image, her *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* (1950), and the popularity of televisions in American homes came the shift from text and audio media to a preference for visual media, especially within the realm of cooking. As a testament to this, *Betty’s Picture Cook Book*, though not the first to include photos in addition to instructions, sold more than two million copies within its first year of publication (Marling 203).

According to Karal Ann Marling, author of *As Seen on TV*, the sheer number of photos in this picture cookbook “and the emphasis on vision—on the picture over the written word—also link the enterprise to the television set which, by 1950, was as much a desirable feature of the suburban home as the washer, the dryer, the electric range, or the General Mills pop-up toaster” (214). With this emphasis on appearance, color, and presentation, taste was often a discarded priority in the making of food, and “the pleasure of the eye was meant to compensate for the loss incurred by the tastebuds,” while a majority of recipes were “concocted for their visual appeal alone” (221). Marling’s connection between the aesthetics of food and of television gives the female appetite an acceptable place in the

realm of the visual. She writes, “Americans were what they ate, and under the tutelage of *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* they had learned to nibble their way through the 1950s on the basis of an enormous appetite for beauty. Life in the age of television was a feast for the eye” (240).

In *Uses of Television*, John Hartley expounds on the consequences of these images, writing, “Supermarkets needed TV advertising, where people at home would be reminded every day (hour) of what they were going to buy in the weekly trip to the supermarket,” and that “TV advertising was, and remains, *obsessively orificial and alimentary*, concentrating on what people put into their mouths” (102, emphasis added). Therefore, the connection of television and advertising, perhaps, is almost as strong as the connection between television and food. Going to supermarkets and feeding families were both jobs ascribed to mothers and wives. Hartley argues, “The technology [television] which transformed all this [American lifestyles and consumerism] was centered on the kitchen, not the lounge” (103). Hartley even goes as far as claiming that the purposes of the refrigerator are equal to those of the television, claiming that both appliances are “central icons” in 1950s households, both send out messages of cleanliness, food preparation, convenience, and both are symbols of middle class nuclear families and domestic ideology (102).

While marketing targeted women, the tendency for television shows themselves to be instructional also provided a platform for “teaching” (some might call it programming) women how to be better or happier homemakers, providing tips that were geared to add a silver lining to a housewife’s daily drudgery. And consequently, with the boom of television sales came the increasing number of cooking demonstration shows, which were, needless

to say, also aimed at female audiences. These instructive programs were the answer to making the homemaker's job more palatable, creating a potential "cure" for the women who deemed housework and cooking unnecessary labor. They gave quick tips and mixed instruction with entertainment. Although many argue that television cannot truly teach because it does not permit audience interaction, for Hartley, television provides instruction (the virtue of which is debatable) to the general public, "teaching public virtues by means of dramatic entertainment," which seemed most useful to the American housewife (44). Although he writes at length of the other purposes of TV, Hartley continually asserts, "TV was explicitly educational – teaching women at home the ideology of domesticity – it became the centre of both these aspects of ideology and domesticity" (102). By showing women pictures of June Cleaver and images of the perfect Betty Crocker cake, women were not just lured to purchase, but they were also instructed what to do with these purchases that would make their wifely duties meaningful. After all, the most common shows on television were home economics and cookery programs (Collins 60).

Images of food in advertisements were detailed, tantalizing, and stylized to create desire, but pictures of women, cooking women especially, were far different. In pictures where women prepared food, a mere fragment of her hand might be visible, and this hand was usually petite, youthful-looking, and manicured. In Betty Crocker's cooking show, which first appeared in 1951, for example, Betty was placed as far from food and the kitchen as possible. Betty first instructed from behind a desk, and even when she moved to the kitchen, she provided instruction but was never elbow-deep in the cooking herself, even though the tasks were mostly limited to assembling packaged ingredients anyway ("Betty Crocker" 37). And pictures of women eating or vigorously whipping together a

messy feast were few and far between. Perhaps these were moves to professionalize the woman's station as a homemaker (many argue that Betty Crocker's role was actually subverting standard female roles in this way), but it also perpetuates the nineteenth century maxim that women were not to be associated too closely or too personally with food. Similarly in the Cold War, what Harvey Levenstein calls "The Golden Age of Processed Foods," women were distanced from the trouble of concocting meals from raw ingredients, dirtying their hands with pulp or flesh, and most of all, enjoying the flavors of their labor.

Following a Legacy of Instruction: Cookery Programs before Julia

In order to set up some of the ideological influences on gender roles that the 1950s and 60s television shows and specifically Julia Child's television show had, it is necessary to examine the *tradition* of American cooking shows and those spokeswomen who paved the way for other television cooks. Just as cookbooks, written by and for women cooks had been in circulation since the nineteenth century, cooking shows debuted decades before either television or Julia Child were fixtures in American homes. In *Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food*, Susan Marks chronicles the inception and legacy of Washburn Crosby's (now General Mills's) fictitious spokeswoman, who by the late 20s and 30s, filled millions of homes through her radio show. When letters from women started to flood the offices of the Washburn Crosby Company asking advice on how to avoid confectionary disasters, Samuel Gale created Betty Crocker in 1921 as the house-marm persona who would safely and warmly guide frantic women to culinary security (9). The

face and voice of Betty Crocker, which would eventually be “synonymous with 1950s American kitchen kitsch,” was responsible in part for sustaining a sort of kitchen containment, an ideology that was dominant in the 1950s and one that Julia would subtly resist in her writing and on television (9). When her radio show caught on and built speed in the 1920s, her daytime audience was the kitchen-bound housewife, who would heed many a cautionary recommendation from Betty. She forewarned that a woman had to keep her man interested, and could do so with the dishes that Betty offered; and if a woman didn’t like cooking, she would have to change her “wrong point of view” (31). Marks writes that many of Betty’s recipes exuded a “husband keeping power,” suggesting the imminent containment narrative of marriage, where husband and wife could only have sexual happiness through domestic happiness (42). Although this radio show took place before World War II, Betty Crocker lays down the groundwork for female domestic roles, which momentarily fade out in the 1930s when more women began to work outside of the home, but resurface when World War II wives returned to their housewife-posts in the mid-1940s.

Betty’s persona and public image adapted with each decade to accommodate the most dominant American rhetoric. In the 1930s, she advocated that workingwomen should not have to give up their jobs to have a successful home life. Conversely, during the war, the U.S. government’s Office of War Information “enlisted” Betty to address concerns of rationing, stretching leftovers, and urging housewives to take Victory Pledges to do their patriotic kitchen duties for their men overseas. Betty reasoned with these wives, saying, “Food rationing at home helps to save lives of American service men” (88). After the war the emphasis that domesticity could keep the homes safe did not fizzle, and in 1945, what

Marks calls “The Golden Era of Betty Crocker,” *Fortune* magazine gave Betty the title of the “second best known woman in America.” In keeping with the idea that housewives were the safeguards of patriotism, Betty advises, “Upon you have fallen the brunt of these routines, daily, humdrum activities. They don’t bring medals or parades with cheering crowds, but *there is no greater patriotism . . .* than giving of yourself constantly, day after day, in these simply inglorious tasks” (108, emphasis added). Betty Crocker became a veritable “spokeswife” for American values, and as an official “voice” of the U.S. government, she advocated to “reach, educate, and influence American women and, to a larger extent, the entire nation” (108). This image of the model patriot housewife did not die with the end of World War II, and instead of upholding house and home for husbands or soldiers, Cold War women had a patriotic duty to protect their homes from threatening invasions. Betty did this by providing wives and mothers with reasons and motivation to uphold the values of containment with her persona of the dutiful housewife. Betty was a model for “Mrs. American Homemaker” by supplying the suburban home with homogenous cake mixes and showing women how to bake them in their modernized kitchens. Unlike Child, Betty never married or became romantically involved (though she received several love letters asking for her hand and flirting with her), but this never took away her duty to “serve” her American “family.” She was the perfect housewife/mother because her contained sexuality was non-existent and her willingness to protect her American “household” was unceasing.

What started in the 1920s as a radio show eventually evolved into live (and taped) kitchen demonstrations by the 1950s, where women who fit the Betty Crocker mold would demonstrate their cooking “skills,” to audiences of homebound women. Through the

television, advertisements, and campaigns to be better/happier housewives, Betty used several images, including her own visage, to add to her aura of contained happiness. In an effort to modernize Betty's image for a post-war picture of an ideal homemaker, General Mills conducted several surveys to figure out what physical qualities would create a suitable appearance for Betty. Included in the survey were questions like "Would you want her as a friend? Does she look honest? Does she look like a housewife or a career woman?" (Marks 223). The finished portrait of the new Betty, which debuted in 1955 (the original portrait was unofficial and appeared in the late 1930s on ads and products), was somewhat older-looking than the Depression-era portrait, and according to Susan Marks, "friendlier, softer-looking, and more grandmotherly" (224). Her image, which remained relatively petite and only marginally past her youthful prime, would assure homemakers that they received advice from a mother-figure who could help keep their homes safely within a contained environment.

Betty's home kitchens also became an image of contained housewife-dom. Modernized kitchens called "Betty Crocker Kitchens" that were very similar to the Model Kitchen that served as the topic of Nixon's and Khrushchev's much talked about "kitchen debate" doubled as recipe testing kitchens and tourist destinations, where "Crockettes" led groups of mostly women around Betty's kitchen full of General Mills products and plenty of modern appliances (193). Included in one of these designs (Betty had several kitchens) was the Polka Dot Kitchen, which featured appliances and wallpaper in matching polka dot patterns, and according to Marks is described as the "gayest, most colorful of all," and is noted for its "glossy sheen" (195).

Because Betty was a persona, she had actresses play the part of what was effectively “the current incarnation of a corporate image,” as described by Adelaide Hawley, who was the first Betty Crocker stand-in on television (219). Hawley played Betty from 1950 to 1958, and had several TV shows on major broadcasting networks, such as ABC and CBS, and she appeared on several sitcoms. During these shows, Hawley served as the one-woman rescue crew for women who were not always successful cake bakers. According to Marks, “Hawley ‘taught’ [George] Burns and [Gracie] Allen to use a simple and easy Betty Crocker cake mix . . . consoling Allen on her poor cooking skills, assuring her that even she could succeed with Betty Crocker products” (221). Of course, Hawley did not actually teach women how to cook, but sold them a product that would replace the detail-oriented nature of cooking.

Betty Crocker was not famous for teaching women how to cook, but for teaching women what products they could use to make their jobs easier, which mostly focused on Betty Crocker’s cake mix. Cake, Betty’s most popular dish, is itself considered a “female food,” where historically, men are associated with meat and women with “dainty” foods, such as salads, grains, fruits, or, classically, sweets. Author Amy Bentley analyzes these associations: “During the war, the common assumption, reinforced by the media, was that women consumed more sugar than men,” and women often had to curb their unwieldy sweet tooth, especially when sugar had to be rationed (103). Women, especially Betty, were also directly associated with baking (even more so than cooking alone), and when they baked sweets for their family, it “brought women extra attention and recognition so important to their *identity as homemaker* as well as their sense of self,” and linked baking with female (maternal) nurturing (105, emphasis added). In other words, Betty funneled

all of her “instruction” into helping women do what they were expected to do best: bake. Instead of teach women how to cook, or transform any and all raw foods (whether associated with masculinity or femininity) into edible, cooked creations as Child attempted to do, Betty Crocker’s products stayed within a contained realm that was gender appropriate.

When Hawley was no longer on the air to calm kitchen anxieties as Betty Crocker, General Mills replaced her face with a non-human image that we currently associate with Betty: the red spoon. Because this spoon was used to mix pre-made cake and dough mixes, it was common for a housewife to use, in contrast to the large knives and potentially dangerous utensils that Child wielded. Therefore, the “smooth and rounded dimensions” of Betty’s red spoon that would be “suitable for infants and adults, unlike the sharp-edged knife or pointy-pronged fork” would be a perfect symbol for the one who served as the home’s great defender (Marks 223).

Betty Crocker was certainly not the only woman on television who advised other housewives to use her methods and products, staying within a contained kitchen narrative. Programs on both public broadcasting and commercial television offered many choices for viewers interested in the trappings of kitchen, food, and/or home. Each unique in their own way, many shows provided a new twist on cooking, but almost all of them were fastened to the idea that most meals required little more than assembly of dehydrated ingredients, and their purpose was to provide nutrients, sustenance, and not much else. Collins writes that “the era’s hallmarks were those cooking programs to which we ascribe mental-hygenic properties and which were hosted by stereotypical, earnest home economists” (30). Food, in other words, was meant to sustain, not give pleasure. The

number of these television shows increased in the late 1940s, with programs like Louise Leslie's *Homemaker's Exchange*, Betty Adams' *Sugar 'N Spice*, Ruth Bean's *Shop, Look and Cook*, Ruth Crane's *The Modern Woman*, and Wilma Sim's *Homemaking with KSD-TV*, all whose names connoted delightfully-hosted instructional shows that were contained within a housewife narrative. In the early 1950s, not much changed with the television show called *Home*, which featured home economists like Kit Kinne and Poppy Cannon (31, 62-3). Cannon, the self-professed Queen of Convenience and author of *The Can-Opener Cookbook*, fancied herself the possessor of kitchen tricks, often creating high-end meals with ingredients from cans. Using these methods, Poppy referred to herself as "the artist-cook, the master, [and] the creative chef" (63). While many would argue otherwise, Poppy used the rhetoric of professional chefs (who were mostly, if not solely, men) to promote her show about shortcuts for housewives who had generally been looking for them. Cooking and homemaking television programs, which usually broadcast during the day, when women were more likely at home, taught shortcuts, not techniques, and were made to show the homemaker's poise, her cleanliness, and her veneer of glamour and grace.

The typical cooking shows did not invoke pleasure or personal fulfillment as virtues for the kitchen-wife, but prior to *The French Chef*, a few programs colored outside of the kitchen lines. Though they were few, these television shows transgressed the boundaries of cooking for sake of home and hearth, and instead they professed cooking for cooking's (and eating's) sake. Among these advocates was first James Beard, who eventually earned the title of "Dean of Television Cookery," setting the bar for combining entertainment and instruction in a cookery show, and eventually a close friend of the Child's. Beard's show, *I Love to Eat* (1946), highlighted his large physique and overt love of food's potential for

pleasure, winning him few viewers. Beard's emphasis on entertainment and pleasure was subversive in a cooking show in the 1940s, but it called attention to the pleasure of food, which was directly contrary to the dominant ideology that food was best when science provided nutrients and homogeneity. Perhaps his status as a professional chef helped his career somewhat—he, after all, thought of his own show as a success. And perhaps as a man, Beard was freer to embrace the physical side of cooking and eating.² Collins compares most cooking shows at the time to the nation's "superego," focusing purely on instruction, while Beard's "id" did the opposite of controlling viewer's cravings (28).

Between the straight-laced homemaker in Betty Crocker, et al. and the aesthete chef in James Beard was French-trained Englishwoman Dione Lucas. Lucas, whose 1948 cooking show, *To the Queen's Taste*, which later became *The Dione Lucas Cooking Show* in 1953, straddled the line drawn between cooking for family and cooking for personal pleasure. Like Child, she too played the homemaker in her shows, was an advocate and instructor of French Cooking, graduated from *Le Cordon Bleu* cooking school in Paris, and discussed the values of cooking for fun and eating for pleasure. Her dishes were also somewhat complicated, mostly sophisticated, and very detail-oriented. She, too, abhorred the ideology that food was at its best when science intervened. However, she (like Child) did not drop the rhetoric that kept the home (and the kitchen) as the center of the household. Collins quotes her saying, "The kitchen is the heart of the home and should not be regarded as a scientific laboratory where each ingredient is accurately measured, much as the druggist compounds a formula" (55). As one of Child's predecessors, she certainly

² Though it was not widely known at the time his show was broadcast, or even soon after, James Beard was gay. Had his sexuality been in the open, this may have complicated how 1940s audiences would have interpreted a host who openly indulged in physical pleasures, but because his sexual orientation was assumed to be heterosexual, this was not an issue.

did some trailblazing in the realm of TV cooking. A 1955 *Time* article calls Lucas “a handsome 46-year-old English woman whose lifelong love affair with the fine art of cooking began [sic] in the kitchen of one of the best restaurants in Paris,” and is “the best and most authentic thing of her kind” (“Cooking for the Camera”). Her ideology broke the rules of housewife-dom, not only because she taught that food could be a source of pleasure, but also because she mostly used fresh ingredients instead of ones that were boxed, packaged, or pre-made. In *The Cordon Bleu Cook Book*, Lucas admonishes, “Cooking cannot be relegated to the same category as dishwashing or making beds. Preparation of good food requires time, skill and patience, and results mean the difference between mere eating to exist and the satisfaction derived from one of the major pleasures in life” (x). Like Beard, Lucas rails against dehydrated or freeze-dried ingredients in favor of the pleasure of the process of cooking and eating.

However, Lucas’ subversive kitchen behavior was limited mostly to her discussion of the food itself, and it was entirely absent from her own televisual presence. Lucas’ cooking demonstrations were seamlessly contained; although she was performing difficult tasks—often whisking vigorously and working in front of numerous burners, her façade was not ruffled and her tasks were performed neatly, almost robotically. While Child often made several mistakes, Lucas seemed without fault. Lucas’ petite figure and attire, as well, conveyed a staunch, straight-laced housewife role: “constraining, starched poplin blouses, apron cinched at the waist, and pleated skirt billowing out in a Mrs. Olsen, bustle-suggesting way” (Collins 53). Lucas also signed off her program by saying “Until we meet again, goodbye, and God bless you all,” which suggested a contained Christian rhetoric that also found a home in Cold War ideology.

Lucas also had no problem using her name and status as a front for many commercial products, mainly her Caloric gas stove. Many complained that as much of her show was dedicated to taking advantage of her mass broadcasting to mention the name brands who paid for her expenses as it was to actual cooking (Collins 56). In the introduction to every episode, the scrolling text spells out the purpose of the show, which was “[t]o encourage the American housewife to enhance one of her most creative talents . . . by bringing glamour to the dinner table through the artistry in the kitchen with the aid of GAS – the Modern Cooking Fuel” (*The Dione Lucas Cooking Show*). Many viewers revealed that watching Lucas discouraged them from trying her recipes because they were complicated and required something that only Lucas seemed to possess, and because of Lucas’ several nods to her gas stove, those without one apparently lacked the most important tool. In one episode, Lucas instructs her viewers to place their omelet skillets in a “smokeless gas broiler,” and wait a few moments, or “just enough time to admire your beautiful gas range” (“Omelettes”).

“Visual Antics”: Seeing The French Chef

In the later part of the 20th century, near the end of the Cold War and certainly after the bulk of the fears from the Cold War had long fizzled out, the tendency to refer to Julia Child’s kitchen as a place that inspired pleasure, vivacity, and rich cooking becomes commonplace. Language referring to Child’s proclivity for pleasure and delight in tasting rich foods pervades articles about this kitchen phenomenon. For instance, in a 1989 article in *The Washington Post* entitled “PBS’ Feeding Frenzy: A Raging Appetite for Cooking

Shows,” Eve Zibart praised Child as one who “measures by eye (robustly, when it comes to vermouth), uses her hands for spoons and wipes off the occasionally dropped main course” (6). In a 1997 article in *U. S. News and World Report*, Karen Lehrman compares Child’s revolutionizing legacy to that of Elvis Presley and Alfred Kinsey, two men who were very closely linked to sex: “If Julia Child’s contribution has attracted less notice than that of the Kinsey Report or “Hound Dog” . . . that’s because food is less controversial than sex or rock-and-roll” (58). Although what Lehrman says is foundationally true (and perhaps one reason why Child was as widely embraced as she was), Child’s food is not less evocative of the pleasure associated with sex. Perhaps as current audiences who watch female television chefs prepare succulent food, moaning over the smell and taste in low cut shirts, we are more attuned to cooking shows’ abilities to convey pleasure. Child awakened these senses in Americans during the Cold War and long after, and viewers in the 1960s recognized this on some level. However, unlike the more contemporary articles that describe her career, she accomplished this taste revolution by subtler means, interweaving the narratives of the housewife (a word she admittedly despised) and chef, chaos and culmination, and genuine entertainment and valuable instruction. These qualities, embodied on the television screen in the impressive and gesticulating figure of Mrs. Child, were the very qualities that set her apart from previous television hostesses.

Child was not the only author of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, but she was its only face—its relatable, American, visual delegate. As one who was primarily a teacher of cooking and not a spokesperson of housewife ideology, Child valued the visual potentialities of television more pedagogically than commercially. According to Shapiro, “The *sight* of raw ingredients always restored her equilibrium” (*Julia Child* 102). Child knew

that using television as a teacher was an invaluable tool, and cooking steps, like “the browning of the beef . . . strikingly illustrated how television—at least as Julia conceived it—could be a great teacher of cooking” (103). Like John Hartley, Child used the television to teach more than anything else and was similarly aware that audiences were as drawn to the images of raw and cooked food as she was. Child viewed every moment in the kitchen as a way to demonstrate technique, display the way a finished product should appear, and demystify the harrowing appearances of raw food. Like James Beard, Child had a knack for mixing entertainment into her instruction, but unlike Beard or Lucas, the source of Child’s humor was often her comic accidents in the kitchen. Quoted in Noël Riley Fitch’s biography of Child, James Beard’s biographer Robert Clark claims, “Child’s predecessors in the medium were less Dione Lucas or Poppy Cannon than Steve Allen and Ernie Kovacs,” which put her on par more with male comedians than female home economics teachers. Alone in a new class of television cooks, she “transformed cooking into entertainment” (296).

Child’s mistakes made her both a comedienne and a relatable home cook. Her famous mistakes, such as the potato pancake (which some mistake for an omelet) that she drops on the stove, the chicken that is dropped on the floor, and many other crashes, slips, and faux pas, always ended in a teaching moment. For example, on “Apple Dessert,” or “Le Tarte Tatin,” Child attempts to unmold an apple tart that hasn’t fully cooked because of the show’s time constraints. When the concoction oozes out of the pan onto the serving dish, Child explains, “This kind of thing you’re going to have to expect. Even if you have guests watching you, they can see how clever you are. It’s going to turn out perfectly alright. I’m sure they [original chefs] encountered problems, too. Now you see it doesn’t always turn out the way you want it to, but that’s okay” (*The French Chef*). During many occasions,

Child exclaims that she is actually glad that she made a mistake so she can show her audience what to do in the event of an accident. Child's entertaining goof-ups always resulted in a teaching moment, and because her show was filmed on public broadcasting networks, with little editing, an even smaller budget, and rarely any stops, there were plenty of errors. In Child's *The French Chef Cookbook*, which was published in conjunction with the first 119 episodes of the show, Child writes, "I would far prefer to have things happen as they naturally do, such as the mousse refusing to leave the mold, the potatoes sticking to the skillet, the apple charlotte slowly collapsing. One of the secrets of cooking is to learn to correct something if you can, and bear with it if you cannot" (ix). In fact, in the show's early years, some of her viewers expressed that they thought "initially that she was doing a parody of the traditional cooking program," which valued Crocker's quaint perfection over the practicality of improved technique (Fitch 293). Child often grunted or made silly sound effects ("pweek!" was putting garlic through the press, "wham!" was whacking at fish heads, or "bleep bee-leep!" when grating nutmeg) when she performed an exceptionally energy-exerting task. Child's honest and genuine processes not only entertained, but also encouraged kitchen-adventurousness in both male and female viewers. And although it was still a show about cooking in the home, it transgressed the boundaries of contained kitchen homogeneity. Unlike Betty Crocker's show, Child frequently reminded her viewers that they could often fail, or at the least, have many opportunities for accidents in the kitchen, but they were never to worry, because like Child, they could learn from their mistakes and often correct them without guests being aware of any mistakes. Taste was Child's main concern, not appearance or perfection. And Crocker's slogan that mom could make a perfect cake, "every time you bake . . . cake after

cake after cake,” did not hold ground with Child (“General Mills”). Unlike Child’s show, which showed her dropping utensils, spilling liquids, tasting hot sauces, and forgetting things, Betty’s show performed the narrative of the contained housewife to a fault.

Child’s kitchen, though a place for imperfections, of course, was not without its television artifices. In *The French Chef Cookbook*, however, she deconstructs some of them. For extreme close-ups of the cook’s hands over a pot on the stove, the display kitchen’s ceiling housed a large mirror for the camera (xi). Child’s producers, Ruth Lockwood and Russ Morash, held “idiot cards” for her to let her know when to move on to the next task, remember how long to brown something, or pay attention to a certain burner. The trick, Child explains, is that “[t]he floor manager hold the idiot card just under the camera lens, and the performer appears to be gazing right into your eyes, but is really reading that message” (xii). Because of the 30-minute time constraints the show held on Child, she also had several dishes cooked in different stages (like television cooks have now), so she could move on to the next stage without having to wait. And because things had to be (marginally) seamless, Child had a crew of helpers, often who crouched behind the counter right at her feet, to take her dirty dishes or hand her a specific tool (Reardon). Most surprising of all, Child kept her image intact by wearing a wig on her later shows and by enduring a series of plastic surgeries—the first in the 60s, two more in the 70s, and one in the 80s (*Julia Child* 115-116). Child knew the importance of her image, as a visual figure and as a persona. Her insistence on keeping the news of her surgeries quiet suggests that while she recognized this importance, she did not want to suggest artifice to her audiences. Even with help from technology and medicine, Child’s stage presence and personality suggested an image that was genuine and not commercial, prescribed, or contained.

In spite of the help, Child often made humorous errors accompanied with grand gestures and imperfect narration, but even still, Child most often emphasized the presentation of her dishes. Paralleling the “decorative cooking” techniques of her nineteenth century predecessors and Betty Crocker, more recently, Child emphasized how to accentuate the aesthetics of her food. Although sometimes, like with a pot of browned onions, she would proclaim that it “looks awful,” and follow up with “but it’s perfectly delicious,” Child more than not commented on how to make things attractive with decoration (*The French Chef*). In “The Spinach Twins” episode, Child takes great care to cut petite pastry strips for decorating her spinach pastry. On the “Salade Niçoise” episode, Child sprinkles her commentary on the appearance of the salad throughout the episode. The vegetable concoction, which is “nourishing and beautiful and very good to eat,” is an assemblage of salad items, and Child emphasizes that their arrangement should have order to keep its “pretty design,” as she explains while she assembles. Using colorful utensils, she explains, can also “add to the excitement.” In “The Omelet Show,” Child chirps about the cuteness of her table settings, showing the camera dish after dish with chicken designs on them. And as with many of her dishes, including omelets, fish, and soup, Child sprinkles chopped parsley over the top solely for decoration, often adding that foods like these would be perfect for a party because of their pleasing appearances (*The French Chef*). Unlike the former female cooking show hosts whose audience was undeniably the housewife, presentation did not serve to mask food’s taste, but similar to these predecessors, the superficial appearance of her food was important.

Child’s standards for what constituted beauty in the kitchen, however, were far different than those of Betty Crocker, Poppy Cannon, or Dione Lucas. Like these women,

she often made foods *because* of their alluring exteriors, like a “darling potato basket” made from shredded, fried potatoes, and she referred to many of her creations with awe and reverence (“The Potato Show”). But effectively, Child redefined what television audiences considered to be beautiful in the kitchen because, as she explained, food was a medium for an artistic experience. Previously, as Fitch tell us, “[d]isinterest, ignorance, even fear of food were endemic in suburbia. Every new health warning . . . reinforced America’s puritanical relationship to food and wine. Food was either sinful or a bothersome necessity” (300). Rather than rely on the standards for conformity and sameness that had bled over into the 60s from the era that emphasized the wonders of a clean, uniform suburbia, Child’s ideology determined that a certain surface appearance was derived from the quality of taste, technique, and ingredients. Certain foods like Child’s “Queen of Sheeba Cake” or her “Mousse Au Chocolat” seemed easier to fawn over, and she described them with words like “lovely,” “ambrosia,” and “satiny.” But Child equally admired foods that she admitted Americans were afraid of because of their appearances. When Child goes over all of the different varieties of fish one can use for making Bouillabaisse a la Marseille, including eel and fish heads, she picks up the raw fish without grimacing. In the opening of this episode, she announces, “Look at this magnificent head!” and more than once, she refers to a small butterfish as “a cute little sunfish” (“Bouillabaisse a la Marseille”). On the bits at the bottom of the pan she used for browning beef cuts, she explains that one must deglaze the pan to “scrap[e] up this lovely, brown, coagulated juice” (“Boeuf Bourguignon”). And in “The Whole Fish Story,” Child is in France, talking to Madame Pasqué, a French fish professor about how to filet a fish. Madame Pasqué leaves the heads on, something Americans were (and are) not used to, and in one demonstration, pulls the tail of the fish

through its mouth for presentation, and Child comments that this display is “really very attractive.” More than just talking of the foods fondly, Child touched them, smelled them, and tasted them, commenting on how wonderful they were and how “beautiful” the food not only looked, but felt in her mouth. Perhaps as a part of what Collins calls a “Revolution in the Kitchen,” Child attempted to redefine the standards of beauty that many housewives had been taught to achieve in the kitchen with Betty Crocker’s cakes.

One venue that helped her spearhead this “revolution” was the network from which she broadcast. Child was the first woman to host a cooking show on the Public Broadcasting Network instead of on a commercial cable network, which changed cooking shows in two major ways. First, Child was not obligated to sell anything in conjunction with her cooking. Other than recognizing the grants from companies that supported the network or donated display kitchens (including Safeway, Hills Bros. Coffee, Inc., The Boston Electric Company, and Polaroid), there were no brand names seen or mentioned throughout the episodes. In fact, Child covered the labels of her spices, cans, etc. in order not to tout any brand name items. Additionally, Child refused to let her own image stand for commodities other than her cookbooks. Fitch writes, “Julia refused to become commercial, especially when what Paul called ‘the Madison Avenue hounds’ began calling in 1964 . . . she believed she could never endorse a product or accept money to represent a profit-making institution,” which was a choice connected to WGBH’s public forum (299).

However, Child inadvertently did some ad hocking during *The French Chef*. According to Kathleen Collins, “Julia Child became a brand by virtue of her presence and absolutely no marketing strategy” (85). In each show in which Child featured an ingredient or a kind of kitchen tool—like a whisk, a garlic press, or a kitchen appliance—specialty

stores and grocers, in the Boston area especially, would sell out of that item within a week of its appearance. Additionally, at the end of every show, a voiceover would give due credit to the sponsors, and mention that Child was the author of *Mastering the Art*, or subsequent cookbooks for the later years that her show aired. Her promotions shifted the focus from consumerism and brand names to food and cooking techniques.

Another achievement that public broadcasting allowed Child to accomplish was loosening the wedge between the high culture that was so valued at the end of World War II and mass culture that started gaining popularity around the 1960s. Not only did public broadcasting by nature have a larger representation of audience members from “both high and low culture, ‘from professors to policemen,’” but within Julia’s show, she cracked the walls between haute cuisine and “French home cooking,” much as she did in her cookbooks, by debunking the myth that French cooking meant high art (Fitch 293). From referring to herself and her audience as “us ordinary people,” to making concessions for using canned clam juice or low-fat substitutes, Child made efforts to appeal to the “ordinary” home cook (“Bouillabaisse a la Marseille”). This was in accord with PBS’s “educational mission,” which created a “how-to” without simply training someone to perform a task or regurgitate a set of norms, much in the same way that Betty Crocker and Poppy Cannon did (Collins 86, Hartley 35). Rather, Child’s “cross-demographic” television forum encouraged a mass participation in learning, a community of home cooks, and a public audience of learners (Hartley 35).

Child was aware of the visual advantages of teaching cooking on public television. Like she did in many of her cookbooks, she could show her audience how recipes were supposed to appear from the cook’s perspective, as opposed to the onlooker, viewing the

action from outside of the kitchen. Her audience, vocally appreciative in their letters of Child's methods, was also fixated on Child's physical stature that was so visually available on their television screens. Fitch quotes reviewer's comments, saying "She 'looks like someone's older sister—the one who teaches high school gym class," (293). According to Collins, Child "was one of the first to present a purely food-centered cooking show as opposed to a homemaking show, and, at the same time, as if by accident, a host-centered cooking show" (73). Public broadcasting audiences marveled at Child's size, stature, and flailings, taking note of the highly physical nature with which Child discussed food and handled it. The camera itself assisted them with close-ups of her hands chopping onions, shots of her whipping egg whites vigorously, and camera levels that displayed her height. In a 1966 article in *Time*, one writer describes Child's cooking with a purely, if not exaggerated, physical focus:

The TV camera zooms in for a close-up and focuses on her hands. She may be dicing an onion, mincing a garlic clove, trussing a chicken. Her fingers fly with the speed and dexterity of a concert pianist. Strength counts, too, as she cleaves an ocean catfish with a mighty, two-fisted swipe or, muscles bulging and curls aquiver, whips up egg whites with her wire whisk. (74)

Several reviewers, like this one, marvel at Child, the "6-ft.-2-in.-tall star," and preoccupy their blurbs with commentary on her physical stature. According to her biographer, "Her face and voice were reviewed almost on a weekly basis" (292). Collins writes, "She was tall (six foot two) and, while attractive, was not the mold favored by Hollywood producers. She was sometimes awkward and never tried to feign a TV persona" (75). Indeed, her looming height, her warbling voice, and her deftness with knives (as opposed to Betty Crocker's

spoon) were atypical of the long line of hosts that preceded Child. Child, too, realized what a sort of anomaly she was in the television cuisine world. In the introduction to *The French Chef Cookbook*, Child writes, “There was this woman tossing French omelettes, splashing eggs about the place, brandishing big knives, panting heavily as she careened about the stove, and WGBH-TV lurched into educational television’s first cooking program” (x). Fitch addresses this improbability as well: “Luckily, she found an audience before the television image-makers could discover that she was ‘all wrong’ for television” (296). Child’s image, though not so extremely different from her cookery counterparts in attire, stood out in size and stature, and as far as female cooking hosts were concerned, Child did not fit their mold.

Although Child was not overweight, obese, or even generally considered to be “fat,” her larger size and the fat content of her recipes were frequently discussed topics of many reviews and studies. And because her figure was not a frequently discussed issue until the debut of her television show, Child’s size and her televisual presence go hand in hand. So in this case, it is helpful to borrow theories from fat studies, in which critics give us a foundation to examine the stereotypes and narratives of larger women. Laura Fraser writes, “Thinness is, at its heart, a peculiarly American preoccupation. Europeans admire slenderness, but without our Puritanism they have more relaxed and moderate attitudes about food, eating, and body size” (14). Historically, as Fraser points out, “Americans [at the turn of the twentieth century] believed that it was not only a sign of class to be thin, but also a sign of morality” (13). In other words, larger women’s appetites led them to do immoral things, like indulge in their hunger and/or in sexual appetites. To add to this conversation, Amy Farrell writes that “medical and popular literature, then, can be seen as cultural tools used to *teach* Americans to see fatness in women as a sign of primitive, out-

of-control impulses” (260). An American who cooked rich, French recipes for an American audience whose concerns with body image would increase in the middle of the twentieth century was bound to run into critics who accused her of disregarding weight and health concerns. Furthermore, because women were historically linked to a preference for dainty foods and delicate frames, transgressing these limits was bound to draw attention.

Later in her life, Child was more concerned about her weight and health, as most are, and vowed, “I do solemnly swear that I shall never be fat again,” although she was never visibly overweight (Fitch 418). However, even in her 70s and 80s, she reported to interviewers that diets were not the key to healthy living. In a 2003 interview with *Ms.* magazine’s Martha Smilgis, she says, “Do not diet . . . Eat a variety of high-quality food that is fresh, and limit your intake” (60). Dieting, for Child, meant using artificial sugar and fat substitutes, which was out of the question. Child’s reputation for liberally using butter and cream in many of her recipes originated with *The French Chef*, where Child often relented to replacing cream with milk, “if you’re on one of those hideous diets” (*The French Chef*). Her association with high quality and high-calorie foods often put her in the spotlight as the advocate of eating with abandon, which was not completely the truth, but was not wholly unfounded either.

Clearly there were those who disapproved of Child’s advocacy of rich foods, but many more credit Child with awakening American’s sense of taste. Although trends in dieting and eating foods that eliminated calories would only continue to rise in the following decades, and female television cooks would remain smaller overall, Child resisted the popular movements to sacrifice good taste for a slimmer, daintier figure. As discussed earlier, Child’s connection between food and sexuality only buttressed her love of the

pleasure that food brought her, and reviewers wrote with incredulity about her ability to eat rich foods and remain a healthy weight. In a 1966 article, one writer says, “No purist, she thinks nothing of belting down a couple of stiff bourbons at home just before Paul serves a superb Grands Echézéaux from his 350-bottle wine cellar. She keeps tubs of Marlboros on the kitchen table, gaily dips into them for a smoke between courses. ‘I hate people who put on the dog, don’t you?’ she smiles guilelessly” (82). The author of this column seems at once to passively admonish her indulgence and marvel at her ability and willfulness to do so without regret.

As Amy Farrell notes, “Fatness also posed a bigger transgression for women than for men, however, because women were expected to maintain that line of civilized control” (258). For TV cooks like James Beard, then, who was very overweight, this was not a problem. However, as a female cook, who as a woman was expected to maintain a contained and petite physiology, Child’s largeness and atypical appearance posed a threat to these boundaries. Furthermore, the fact that Child’s size was in front of a camera in millions of American homes for several years magnified this threat. Even more so, she was the subject of many extreme close-ups. Almost every show began with an extreme close-up of Child’s hands chopping or caressing a live lobster. In fact, her femininity was effectively on stage not just for audiences who wanted to learn better cooking methods, but for those who wanted to be entertained as well. With Child’s fragmented body parts and her “female form displayed for [the viewer’s] enjoyment,” Child became the subject, like her cook/host predecessors, of a virtually phallogentric gaze (Mulvey 839). Because those before her were prescribed to appear thin and fit within predetermined limits of beauty, this gaze, to appropriate Laura Mulvey’s theories, was more or less male, and because Child did not

quite situate herself within these patterns, she effectively disrupted this gaze. Critic JuliaGrace Jester describes a play in which a group of larger women takes pride in their bodies, unafraid of bearing their imperfections and deviations from the beauty standard to an audience, and in doing this, their bare bodies “are not really enacting the male gaze because their form violates the typical ideas of male desire and tries to reform what is considered ‘real’ for women and their bodies” (251). Similarly, Child’s actions—her jiggling movements, her whacking fish heads and bread dough, and her flailing over chocolate mousse—disrupt the typical idea of a woman in the kitchen. Yet these actions did not drive away Child’s male (or female) audiences. If anything, more viewers tuned in for the entertainment. All at once, Child was *and was not* a spectacle. In her first episode, “Boeuf Bourignon,” (1962), Child points to her own body parts to illustrate where different slabs of beef cuts would correspond on a cow (*The French Chef*). By using her body as a conduit of teaching audiences how to cook, Child masked her manipulation of this gaze with a practical lesson of instruction. Continuing with this in her 1980 cookbook, Child used several pictures of herself, mostly of but not limited to her hands, to demonstrate certain tasks. This cookbook comprises hundreds of color photographs of the cook’s hands performing an act, from something as simple as scraping seeds from a cucumber to something as complicated as trussing a chicken, providing a photo for each step of the process (*The Way*). As with *Mastering* and *From Julia Child’s Kitchen*, the illustrations and photos have been taken from the point of view of the cook. And Child makes no point to glamorize these photos. Her deft hands, though un-manicured and spotted with signs of aging, handle raw meats purposefully and ruggedly. For Child, providing cook-friendly

visual aids in order to make learning how to cook French food an accessible endeavor did not mean glamorizing or falsifying her appearance.

Conclusion

In addition to Child's cookbook phenomenon, being on television turned her into a visual phenomenon as well. Her recipes captivated cooking audiences, while her height and her movements went beyond the page, reached non-cooking (at least not yet), television audiences. Additionally, the images of food themselves, the close-ups of a roasting chicken and the overhead shots of butter sizzling in pots, were equally as captivating, as if they were actors on stage alongside Child. And with the dawn of color television, Child's later episodes featured a colorfully dressed Julia alongside equally colorful recipes with more vivid, and consequently, more alluring photo quality. With these close-ups and long shots, Child's demonstrations, unlike her televisual predecessors, capitalized on the ability of her visual medium to excite hunger, create desire, and inspire home replications. And with a far leap from the images in Betty Crocker's or Dione Lucas' shows, Child's visual legacy ultimately led to what is now termed "gastroporn" or "food porn" by many contemporary food writers. Assuming that the stereotypical 1950s housewife would shudder at the aforementioned, Child effectively co-opted a medium that was generally created for enforcing this stereotype, and in doing so, begat a new legacy of television cooking instructors. As Child "descended" from the influential ranks of cooking

show hosts, so she bequeathed, in a similar fashion, her own continuum of tantalizing (with their appearances and their recipes), energizing, and stimulating cooking show hosts.

IV. AFTERWORD: JULIA CHILD IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

I would love to say that my motivation to conduct this study began when I was a child in front of the television or behind my mother at the stove, as if I grew up with Julia Child on PBS or on the shelves of the kitchen in my childhood home. It would be great to claim that my fascination with her came about through watching her live, and although her warbling voice could be heard from my living room on occasion, my fascination actually began with the 2009 release of *Julie and Julia*, directed by Nora Ephron, starring Amy Adams as Julie Powell, Stanley Tucci as Paul Child, and Meryl Streep as Julia Child. Before the film's debut, the cultural collective of Child's persona was of a matronly woman who knew a lot about teaching cooking and even more (if that is possible) about how to entertain an audience. However, *Julie and Julia's* story begins before she was the famous name that Americans recognize, with the Childs' arrival in Rouen, France in 1949. Meryl Streep plays this cooking and entertaining middle-aged woman to a fault, but what altered the common perception of Julia Child was the film's focuses on Child's love life, her willful alliance with liberal politics, and her toilsome journey through publishing *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I*, all of which demonstrated how Child was subtly rebelling.

This story not only sheds light on the Childs' subversive political responses during the United States' McCarthy era, but it also portrays Julia Child as a sensual person who was comfortably in touch with her sexuality. In fact, many film reviewers commend Ephron's decision to make the love story of Paul and Julia—as a lustful yet honest one—the subplot

with the greatest fervor and likeability. In an interview with Ephron, Anne Kingston comments on the seeming transformation of a “this beloved dowager and culinary icon” into a “romantic, vibrantly erotic figure in her relationship with her husband,” and asks, “Were you intentionally being subversive in showing how hot a middle-aged marriage can be?” (“Nora Ephron: A Conversation”). Paralleling the lustiness of the Childs’ marriage is the visually enticing portrayal of the food. In the same interview, Kingston says, “As a director, you treat food almost like a character itself. . . . [T]he food in *Julie & Julia* . . . makes you salivate. What is your secret?” In Ephron’s response, she explains that they hired a food stylist, and told all the actors not to pick at their food, but to eat everything with gusto. In a review by Peter Rainer, he reveals that Chris Messina, who plays Julie Powell’s patient husband, was hired for the role because “he ‘simply looked good chewing a mouthful of Lobster Thermidor’” (“Review”). Clearly, the film highlights the connection between food and desire with sumptuous camera shots of buttery mushrooms and simmering beef, which led to a new, popular understanding: someone who loved food so much, who was so cognizant of its physically gratifying appeal, must have been as attuned to life’s other sensual opportunities.

Julia Child and her love affair was the film’s most artistic and revolutionary venture, but only one of the images of Child that revealed her subversive behavior. The reconfigurations of Child as a woman involved in political, sexual, and health debates, and not just as an enthusiastic, cooking-instructor-persona, garners a reexamination of the power that Child wielded within the kitchen and outside of its borders, using food and female sexuality to accomplish these changes. The twenty-first century audience, more so than the 1960s audience, is already more attuned to the food’s presence as a dynamic force,

which perhaps explains the renewed popular interest in Child as a dynamic food politician. Regardless, the renewed interest in Julia Child illuminates how she worked successfully and subversively within a Cold War context.

Celebrating cooking as a contemporary pastime, the film also shows Julie Powell exhibiting the same enthusiasm for her food as Child, presumably because of Child's influence. While Child was one of the central figures in revolutionizing the way we, as twenty-first century citizens, think about growing, buying, eating, and preparing our food, one of her most important roles was central to her persona as a teacher. In an interview with Ephron, Streep, and Tucci, Alex Witchel of *The New York Times* asks Stanley Tucci about his perception of Child, as he remembered her, and his response was that Child was "in essence an artist and a teacher," and that one of her most endearing qualities was her "obvious love for what she does" ("Times Talks"). Famous for demystifying French cooking for American cooks, Child indeed blurred the lines between cooking as an art—a cultivated, seasoned, high art—and something that was more accessible to her mass culture audience. In congruency with many other artists of the late 1960s, who gave pop culture a level playing field with high art, Mark McGurl writes that "popular culture would now be understood as a force of liberation from the strait-jacket properties of 'official' high culture" (217).

In urging kitchen creativity, Child viewed her cookbooks as springboards for eager cooks like herself to use foundations for their own creative, self-indulging palettes, making the techniques and pleasures of haute cuisine available to all who were brave enough to try. Using both text and image, Child utilized multiple media in her cooking pedagogy. Her cookbooks, especially *Mastering the Art, From Julia Child's Kitchen*, and *The Way to Cook*, are

all divided into easy-to-navigate sections, each providing a base with which to work and encouragements like “you know how to do it, and you’ll do it your own way, now, with white wine rather than red, and no onions, only garlic and pepper in the braising sauce, and perhaps a little curry powder” (*From Julia* xi). The article “The Rhetoric of Celebrity Cookbooks,” by Christine Mitchell, in which she examines Child’s *The Way to Cook*, concludes that Child’s pedagogical objectives caused her to assume the perspective of the pupil instead of writing herself as the celebrity/expert. In her cookbooks, “Child rarely focuses on herself, instead choosing to focus her attention on the reader and the emerging cook” (528). Her cookbooks also used her love of pleasure as a teaching aide. Child urged each cook to let the process of cooking take over the senses. Quoting Camille Paglia, Fitch writes, “What Julia Child did is deconstruct this French, classical, rule-based cooking tradition and make it accessible . . . as a source of pleasure” (275). In her television shows, Child often made mistakes, whether they were on purpose or not remains to be seen, but she used these mistakes as teaching tools. As a teacher of cooking, Child participates in what Marianne DeKoven calls “the democritization of all culture, which both contributes to and is produced by the undoing of the high-low divide of modernity, in which popular culture can . . . fully reward the sort of close scrutiny previously reserved for high-cultural productions (196). Moreover, her network, PBS, fostered Child’s mission of accessibility. On food television, Kathleen Collins, quoting Alice Yaeger Kaplan, writes, “Through food . . . access to aristocracy has been democratized, because unlike the Grand Tour, food is both accessible and interpretable by varying social milieux,” and of the food TV genre, Collins coins the word “democrataintment” (224).

By using the more accessible tools—visual aides and the tantalizing promise of pleasurable outcomes— for cooking haute cuisine, Child democratizes the process of cooking, demystifying the practices of what had previously been exclusive to the upper classes. While her pedagogy blurred the lines between mass culture and high art, she also accomplished this objective by using comedy—a genre under which the film is also classified. The rewards of the physical and sensual pleasures of the kitchen resounded in Child’s work, but she also advocated of the pleasures of humor that the kitchen could provide. After becoming a regular on many television shows (including her own), like *Good Morning America* and *The Muppets*, Child’s boisterous humor became a part of her reputation. Her lively but often imperfect performances in the kitchen provided much fodder for comedians, all of whom mimicked her high-pitched voice and “unflappability in crisis,” and Child, according Fitch, “understood the humor and the compliment” (410, 411). Before the many parodies of her kitchen behavior aired, including Dan Aykroyd’s famous sketch on *Saturday Night Live*, Child’s school-aged friends and colleagues knew her as somewhat of a prankster and an extrovert. Her propensity for practical jokes and humor were not phases for her to grow out of, or slip-ups on her journey to becoming more housewife-like, but part of her public persona, in an arena where she could demonstrate cooking Lobster Americana while giggling about its sex organs. Child laced her kitchen-behavior with humor and fun as a sort of rejection of the highbrow seriousness on which many professional New York chefs made their reputations. Child was serious about good food and cooking techniques, but “walked the moderate road between the extremes of French classical and nouvelle cuisine and between the elitism of the Hesses [Charles and Karen] and the catsup-on-cottage-cheese served at the White House” (Fitch 393). In fact,

Child decidedly set herself apart from the “snob mystique” of so many chefs in the increased popularity of gourmet chefs in the 1960s and 70s (274). In contrast, Child considered good cooking a pleasure that everyone should enjoy, not something that should be reserved for the high-minded seriousness of elite foodies.

Twenty-first century products of Child’s example flood contemporary television shows. Cooks like Sara Moulton, Emeril Lagasse, Rachel Ray, Ina Garten, Alton Brown, etc., not only reference Julia Child as their mentor, but attempt to reach their audiences similarly, often using humor and making certain mass-culture-concessions. They too use instruction as a platform for kitchen creativity and courage to attempt the daunting tasks of creating a meal from raw ingredients. Throughout *Watching What We Eat*, Kathleen Collins attributes most of the success of The Food Network’s television personas to the model for teaching and entertaining that Child established in the 1960s. All other shows, Collins says, are the “host of offspring” that Child begat, and while some competitive, sensationalist shows that air today, like *Top Chef* have come a long way from the aims of *The French Chef*, they are still “recognizable member[s] of the same family” (244). As a recipient of cooking lineage, herself, Julia Child’s pivotal performance on the page and on the screen, has bequeathed subsequent generations a rejuvenated interest in good food.

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VITA

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