

“BOLD AT THE DESK AND THE STOVE”: THE RE-IMAGINING OF AMERICAN  
CUISINE IN THE WORK OF M.F.K. FISHER AND JULIA CHILD

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## ABSTRACT

### “BOLD AT THE DESK AND THE STOVE”: THE RE-IMAGINING OF AMERICAN CUISINE IN THE WORK OF M.F.K. FISHER AND JULIA CHILD

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Though often residing on the periphery of literary scholarship, the work of food studies and feminist scholars on the literatures of American domesticity and cookbooks, or collectively “domestic literacies,” reveal a significant and too often ignored aspect of our nation’s history—the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. While many of these scholars emphasize the intersection of labor, economics, and gender issues, culinary practice is an effective—and often overlooked—lens through which we can examine how gender roles developed in a particular historical moment, how domesticity reflected the economic and sociopolitical discursive practices of the time, and how the nation’s relationship to food evolved. Clearly arranging the multitude of discursive practices and domestic literacies involved in one historical period can be difficult; however, systems theory can serve as an effective method for organizing and comprehending how these discursive practices and texts are networked, how they inform and shape each other, how they co-evolve, and how they act recursively and reflexively.

Examining domestic literacies from a specific historical moment, such as the immediate post-World War II era in which gender roles experienced scrutiny and American cuisine suffered an identity crisis, proves more productive than tackling a broad scope of texts. Authors M.F.K. Fisher and Julia Child operate individually and collectively to create perturbations to the network of discursive practice systems that neighbor their texts. They work alongside and challenge texts, such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* that articulate problematic discourses about gender

and domesticity, to reveal the complicated and multifarious relationship among domestic literacies, culinary practice, and this network. By examining these texts, we can further comprehend how the authors reshape the network of discursive practice systems and work to initiate the Good Food Movement that overhauls American cuisine and helps to construct the mid-century American national culinary identity.

The iconic *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* serves as a representative text of the many domestic literacies in this period that functioned prescriptively and proffered conservative ideas of gender and domesticity. Though most often read simply as a cookbook, this text, when considered as part of the domestic literacies subsystem, reveals the multiple networked systems at work that shape the content of the text and how it is organized and structured. While *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* advocates a return to the kitchen for American women to serve their families, prolific food writer M.F.K. Fisher challenges such a linear and austere approach to culinary practice and gender in her text *Map of Another Town*. At the same time, in the early 1960s, Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* debuted and changed the American culinary landscape; it also operated alongside Fisher's work to change and shape American culinary practice. Decades later, Child's memoir, *My Life in France*, centering on the time leading up to the publication of her groundbreaking text sets the stage for the fundamental components of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and the broader culinary practice-as-art. Together, these texts, as a networked representative microcosm of the domestic literacies subsystem, function interdependently with the neighboring discursive practice systems, such as gender, labor, and economics, to alter American cuisine, culinary practice, and gender roles connected with the kitchen.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **DOMESTIC LITERACIES, CULINARY PRACTICE, AND SYSTEMS**

When feminist scholars and, later, food studies scholars began investigating the literatures of American domesticity and cookbooks, their research often remained on the periphery of literary scholarship, residing primarily in the fields of women's studies or the smaller discipline of food studies. Sherrie Inness, Sarah Leavitt, Laura Schenone, and Mary Anne Schofield, among others, have contributed to our understanding of how women used food in their everyday lives to shape the American family and home, which, some of these scholars contend, influenced how the political discourse and American economy evolved.<sup>1</sup> Through their examination of primary texts from early America through the Cold War era, these scholars reveal a significant and too often ignored aspect of our nation's history—the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. Their work has demonstrated that these literatures of domesticity, including memoirs, and cookbooks, or collectively “domestic literacies,” yield a window into America's history that earned little attention from general historical scholarship and has revealed the rich stories and secrets resting in their pages, waiting to be excavated.

One strategy used in these texts to convey such histories and secrets is “culinary practice.” This activity is a productive window into how gender roles were structured in a particular historical moment, how domesticity reflected the economic and sociopolitical discursive practices of the time, how technology developed and entered the everyday lives of American citizens, and how the nation's relationship to food evolved. It is also one of the most emphasized activities in domestic handbooks; cookbooks themselves are rich texts, but they are often examined for the narrative evidenced in them or for the products resulting from the

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, scholars, including Catherine Manton, Frances Short, Anne Bower, Carole Counihan, Kelly Oliver, Lisa Heldke, Deborah Geis, Anna Meigs, and Warren Belasco, have explored, in varying degrees, the intersection of gender and food. Notably, the multi-disciplinary approaches (e.g. philosophy, sociology, anthropology, feminism, history, and literary) reveal the hybrid nature of food studies.

recipes.<sup>2</sup> Culinary practice is frequently overlooked but is the activity that can disclose just as much, if not more about elements of history, issues of gender, and economics for example, rather than simply narratives.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the components—culinary practice, narrative, and product—operate collaboratively, but culinary practice has perhaps been the most neglected in the aforementioned disciplines. By focusing on culinary practice in these domestic literacies, we can unearth much more detail and gain further understanding about certain historical moments, such as the two decades following World War II, adding to the growing scholarship on these texts, food and cuisine, and women's lives.

While these domestic literacies harbor many more secrets, insights, and revelations, some questions that arise include: How can we conduct an analysis of domestic literacies that simultaneously accounts for prior work and steers the scholarship in a direction that might uncover how these domestic narratives operate among and against such various discourses as gender and labor? What method could reflect the multifarious nature of domestic literacies? How can a new approach account for the diverse contexts surrounding and informing these narratives? How can a different lens show the interdependent nature of domestic literacies and the discursive practices with which they exchange information? And, what does this different lens reveal about the effects of such an interdependent relationship?

One potential strategy for addressing these and other questions is systems theory. Like its adaptation by biologist Humberto Maturana to comprehend visual perception and the way living creatures are organized, systems theory has been and can further be applied to literature.

Siegfried Schmidt, for example, has borrowed aspects of systems theory, drawing on Niklas

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<sup>2</sup> Narrative here can be defined as the stories told, specifically about women's lives as that is the area of these cookbooks and handbooks to which scholars pay great attention.

<sup>3</sup> Culinary practice draws on Luce Giard's idea of "doing-cooking" (an idea to which I'll return shortly) and adds the idea of material.

Luhmann in particular, to investigate whether or not literature is, in fact, system. N. Katherine Hayles has shifted the discussion to use the idea of narrative to explain how systems are organized, but the concepts of “seriation” and “interaction” serve as the most productive components that can be extracted from her approach to help perceive how systems and subsystems interact and exchange information. These two ideas show the “interdependent-ness” of literatures, which can then provide understanding about how domestic literacies operate and how this strategy—as modes of organization and comprehension —offers new ways of reading these texts.

Schmidt’s and Hayles’ projects have opened the door for applying systems theory to a range of literatures. Schmidt, for example, addresses “literature” as a system; however, systems are multifaceted, multilayered, and, as Hayles argues, interdependent. Thus, Schmidt introduces one strategy for applying systems theory for understanding literature broadly but does not account for literature’s subsystems (or even acknowledge that literature has subsystems).<sup>4</sup> I argue for subsystems of literature such as domestic literacies, which are more open, flexible, and interdependent modes of organization than genres, for example. These subsystems are constantly evolving and are thus able to examine such change cannot only afford a greater understanding of individual subsystems but also of literature as a system and the multiple neighboring systems.

Systems theory can be an exceptionally efficacious method of analysis. As Cary Wolfe argues, systems theory is a “much more powerful and coherent way to describe the complex, intermeshed networks of relations between systems and their specific environments” (“In Search” 175). And, systems theory enables us to see that cooking, labor, and gender are all parts of a complex and interdependent system operating in American culture.

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<sup>4</sup> Though I will expand upon the idea of systems, subsystems here can be defined as smaller, interrelated systems of a larger, encompassing system. Domestic literacies operates as a subsystem of the larger system of literature, drawing texts out of their “safe” genres and into a new way of examining and reading them.

Using a systems approach, one might ask:

What constitutes a “subsystem?”

How does a subsystem, such as domestic literacies, operate?

How does it communicate with systems outside of itself?

What can looking at this subsystem contribute to our understanding of literature as a system and to the relation between literature and culinary practice and even the bordering systems as well as the texts themselves?

And, is systems theory alone enough to gain a new understanding of how a subsystem such as domestic literacies functions in a complex and heterogeneous environment?

One such subsystem of literature that is ripe for investigation, domestic literacies, offers a prime example of a set of literacies and practices that define gender and domestic norms. Rather than looking at literature as one homogeneous system, it seems much more useful to read literature as a system with many interrelated and interdependent subsystems. The influx of texts into the domestic literacies subsystem is continuously evolving it, in particular alongside other systems and subsystems such as gender, labor, and economics. The “in-betweenness” of domestic literacies, an idea that I’ll address shortly, in the larger system of literature suggests a fallibility of certain methods of categorization, such as strict genre classifications that function more like closed systems. Moreover, domestic literacies as a subsystem includes the additional narratives networked with other systems and subsystems.

Deploying a hybridized systems theory (or a hybrid<sup>5</sup> systems theory model) as a method of examination, we can define and understand the complexities of how domestic literacies and

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<sup>5</sup> I define term “hybrid” as a multi-layered, integrated set of concepts that work cooperatively and interdependently.

the various systems of discursive practices<sup>6</sup> are networked, how they inform and shape each other, how they co-evolve, and how they act recursively and reflexively. Further, this strategy can map the complex relationships among these various systems and their interdependencies, tracing the flow of information. However, tackling American domestic literacies in their entirety would mimic Schmidt's broad scope and not permit a microcosmic view of how this particular subsystem and its orbiting network of discursive practice systems such as gender, labor, and economics and subsystems function cooperatively or interdependently. Instead, narrowing the focus of examination can illuminate such an operation with more clarity and precision.

### **After the Great War: Altering American Food Culture and Domesticity**

The post-World War II era in America was rife with change on many fronts, including shifts in gender norms, domesticity, literature, and culinary practice that a hybrid systems theory approach reveals when used to analyze subsystems of domestic literacies and culinary practice. Because of this atmosphere of change, the subsystems of the 1950s and 1960s are useful to examine. As much as literature might reflect (or produce) its historical context, the sample of texts from the post-World War II moment engages with the ideas of change and the network of discursive practice systems. The iconic *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* serves as a representative text of the many domestic literacies in this period that functioned prescriptively and proffered conservative ideas of gender and domesticity. Though most often read simply as a cookbook, this text, when considered as part of the domestic literacies subsystem, reveals the multiple networked systems at work that shape the content of the text and how it is organized and structured. While *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* advocates a return to the kitchen for American women to serve their families, prolific food writer M.F.K. Fisher challenges such a

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<sup>6</sup> I'm employing Foucault's specific term here, which I'll return to later in this chapter.

linear and austere approach to culinary practice and gender in her text *Map of Another Town*. At the same time, in the early 1960s, Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* debuted and changed the American culinary landscape; it also operated alongside Fisher's work to change and shape American culinary practice. Decades later, Child's memoir, *My Life in France*, centering on the time leading up to the publication of her groundbreaking text sets the stage for the fundamental components of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and the broader culinary practice-as-art. Together, these texts, as a networked representative microcosm of the domestic literacies subsystem, function interdependently with the neighboring discursive practice systems, such as gender, labor, and economics, to alter American cuisine, culinary practice, and gender roles connected with the kitchen.<sup>7</sup>

By folding together concepts and strategies proffered by Schmidt, Luhmann, Hayles, Walter Hölbling, Petra Eckhard, and Ulrich Beck, Michel Foucault, and theories of everyday life from Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, the particular subsystem of literature—domestic literacies—and its network of discursive practice systems co-evolve and reshape not only the reading of the texts themselves but also the systems of discursive practices. As a result, we can reconsider the everyday lives of American women at this time and the way these texts reconfigure American culinary practice, shifting it away from work to art. In the mid-century period, American domestic literacies primarily consisted of cookbooks such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, memoir including *The Egg and I* by Betty McDonald (1945), creative non-fiction such as Shirley Jackson's *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and Cynthia Hobart Lindsay's *Home Is Where You Hang Yourself: Or How To Be A Woman, And Who Needs It?*, and women's magazines including *Ladies' Home Journal*. Generally, these texts frequently reveal the

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<sup>7</sup> I will define these systems later in this chapter.

complexity of American domesticity, from the patriarchal ideals promoted by books such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* to monotonous and debilitating labor often shown through humor by authors such as McDonald, Lindsay, and Jackson.

A hybrid systems theory model shows the ways that these authors and texts reconfigured and activated culinary practice from labor to art. More specifically, Fisher and Child respond directly to the prescriptive and conservative *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* with their culinary practice-as-art system, which dramatically shifts the mid-twentieth century conceptions of culinary practice and cuisine from a linear to a systems perspective, or more specifically from the prescriptive, product-oriented recipe form evident in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* to the more open, creative, and layered master recipe form that Julia Child puts forth in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. As a result, they engage in transformations in three milieus: enlighten food culture, ranging from the Good Food Revolution of the 1960s to the local food movement of today (in both the type of culinary practice and the form of culinary texts); activate change in literary culture specifically with the form of Fisher's writing and the content and form of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*; and illuminate shifts in gender roles with particular focus on changing the homemaker from a laborer to a practitioner or artist.<sup>8</sup> The influence of Fisher and Child's collaborative efforts extends into the twenty-first century, ranging from food blogging to artisanal foods. Culinary practice-as-art redefined American cuisine and culinary practice and put both on the path to assert a more comprehensive and clear identity.

### **Defining Culinary Practice**

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<sup>8</sup> The implications extend beyond the immediate post-World War II moment. The transformation in how culinary practice is perceived, as a result of this methodology applied to these texts, reaches into the 1970s, to Alice Waters and her groundbreaking culinary movement in California, for example. Waters continues revolutionizing the culinary landscape even today with the Slow Food movement and her steadfast adherence to using only local ingredients—a philosophy that began when the doors of Chez Panisse opened in 1971. Additionally, this theoretical model demonstrates how systems theory can be molded in different ways, using different approaches, to read literature—not as an all-inclusive system but as a complex system with multiple interdependent subsystems that are affected by and affect neighboring systems and subsystems.



In America's short history, "cooking," as an activity or task of everyday life, has always been gendered—it is "woman's work." At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, "cooking" was merged with other domestic tasks, and "essays, sermons, novels, poems, and manuals offering advice and philosophy on family life, child rearing, and women's role began to flood the literary market" (Cott 63). These domestic handbooks—not solely cookbooks—intended to construct and validate the American woman's role as Republican Mother and, in some, as household manager. These texts often received more attention than cookbooks, such as Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery*, because of the breadth of content along with the morality linked with Republican Motherhood. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the American household felt the changing tide from the political, cultural, and economic spheres. As a result of the shift towards industrialization and a market-oriented system, changes in the labor force and gender roles also evolved. Republican Motherhood was an attempt to redefine the role of women in this period of change.

Domestic handbooks, such as Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife* (1829) and Catherine Beecher's *The American Woman's Home: or, Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes* (1869), attempted to guide women in this new role, which was perceived as "a mother, committed to the service of her family and to the state, [who] might serve a political purpose" (Kerber *Women* 283). These handbooks affirmed the significant role of the American woman as mother and her influence in the household, on her husband and her children. The responsibilities and expectations of this new position were firmly rooted in domesticity but expanded to include a more political role. This ideology became one of citizenship "that merged the domestic domain of the preindustrial woman with the new public ideology of individual

responsibility and civic virtue” (Kerber *Women* 269). What these texts recognized, then, were that women did have a substantial influence, which countered the argument that they had no economic or political role to play. Domestic handbooks acknowledged that “women’s choices and women’s work did serve large and political purposes,” which functioned to make women’s labor more visible (Kerber *Intellectual* 174). At the same time, the stifling system of American patriarchy relegated this visibility to the clearly delineated space of the home, which remained very separate from the “male space” of policy-making, production, and the like.<sup>9</sup>

Child’s *The American Frugal Housewife*, for example, centers on economics and management, reflecting emerging forms of industrialization, its influence in the household, and the reconfigured class structure. The managerial tone of the text reflects the management/labor structure operating in the burgeoning industrial sector. “Cooking,” then, became absorbed by the broader concept of household management and was seen as simply one of the many fragmented tasks that this “new” American woman—this household manager—must successfully complete for her family and, ultimately, her nation. These fragments are reflected in the structure of Child’s text. Her handbook does not include a table of contents; her chapters are organized beyond simply titles. The only component suggesting any order is the index. The household manager’s day was one of fragmented jobs, all falling under broad categories, such as “cooking,” cleaning, and sewing. While preparing a cut of meat, a mother may be interrupted by a child who has fallen and hurt himself. Her priority shifts from the meat to the child, but she must eventually return to the meat preparation. The interruptions fragment her day into a series of tasks that must be completed in pieces. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Child does not view these tasks as having a moral or religious duty; instead, her framing of domestic labor is economic.

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<sup>9</sup> See Jeanne Boydston, Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd, Nancy Cott, Jessica Ho Foy and Thomas Schlereth, Barbara Haber, Mary Kelley, Leavitt, Lori Merish, Andrea Newlyn, Eleanor McD Thompson, Jean Zimmerman, and Schenone for more detailed discussions about these various and interrelated topics.

In contrast to Child's secular approach, Catherine Beecher's popular handbook reflects the religious reform movement that swept the country in the 1830s and 1840s. She promoted Republican Motherhood as a moral responsibility and as one that was virtuous. For authors such as Beecher, Republican Motherhood retained the convention of domesticity that contrasted world and home (Cott 64). This distinction found its roots in Christianity, and the home—and the tasks that occurred within the home—served as a sanctuary from the corruption and immorality of the world. Morality and virtue, then, became associated with women, and “the responsibility for maintaining public virtue was channeled into domestic life” (Kerber *Women* 287). In contrast to Child's language of economics and efficiency, Beecher employs the language of morality and Christianity that was prevalent in handbooks about women's duties at this time. For example, she frames the woman of the household as “the chief *minister* of the family estate” (my emphasis), and in her introduction, she makes her purpose for the handbook clear: “But to intelligent, reflecting, and benevolent women—whose faith rests on the character and teachings of Jesus Christ—there are great principles revealed by Him [...]. It is hoped that in the following pages these principles will be so exhibited and illustrated” (16). Beecher suggests, then, that the duty of the Republican Mother was to follow the lessons of the Bible and, in turn, teach these principles to her children. “Cooking” for Beecher was not about economic efficiency or budgeting as it was Child; instead, Beecher instructs her readers on eating “healthful foods,” guides them in the “evils of over-eating,” and argues that “Americans eat too much meat” (iii). The task of “cooking” is one of duty—Christian duty—for Beecher, not of labor or a contribution to the national economy.

In *The American Woman's Home*, Beecher foreshadows the rise of domestic science that would hit its apex of popularity at the turn of the twentieth century and during the U.S.'s brief

involvement in World War I. “Cooking” during this time was framed in ways similar to how Lydia Maria Child characterized it—a method of achieving frugality and of contributing to the health of the nation. In the early twentieth century, a population of like-minded women created periodicals to promote the core tenets of the domestic science and home economics movements. Through detailed descriptions of conservation and preservation strategies and supplementary recipes, the home economics journals of this era reflect the ways politics, national identity, economics, and science clash and merge to produce a set of methods, or best practices, for the homemaker as well as validate her labor in terms of fulfilling one’s civic duty to the nation and the war effort. Popular magazines, such as *Good Housekeeping*, instructed women to conserve wheat and other foodstuffs and to preserve various fruits and vegetables. Advertisers in these publications also called upon women to perform their patriotic duty and conserve food in order to assist in the war effort. Much of the substance in these magazines was marketing-driven, such as the use of slogans; whereas, in home economics journals, such as *Cornell Reading Course for the Farm Home* (also known as the *Cornell Bulletin for Homemakers*) and the *Journal of Home Economics*, the focus was on instruction—detailed methods for how to accomplish preservation and conservation tasks, while still appealing to their readers’ patriotism. In March 1918, for example, the *Journal of Home Economics* explains to its readership that providing the Allies with food would be “worth while” but successful preservation and conservation would “do more than that; it [would] prove faith in ourselves” (“Patriotism” 124).

Home economics journals, using the field’s roots in science, offer their readership (primarily home economics professionals/academics and homemakers) not only methods and recipes but also thorough explanations of why particular preservation processes are more effective than others, for example. The approaches to the broad concerns of food preservation

and conservation proffered by these journals afford their audience—predominantly women—with more standardized and professional strategies for fulfilling women’s civic duties during the time of war. “Cooking” at this time, then, accrued a pragmatism that gestured back to the early to mid-nineteenth century but now with an additional component—science. Christian duty is replaced by national duty, and “cooking” as labor is still present but perhaps with a different purpose and with the aid of science.

Through the 1920s until the end of the World War II, the domestic science and home economics movement continues, but the Depression once again shifted how women and patriarchal American culture viewed “cooking.” The emphasis on preservation and conservation no longer had a patriotic tinge to it; instead, these tenets of the home economics ideology became basic survival skills. As the nation climbed out of the Depression and entered World War II, “cooking” reclaimed its patriotic function. It was not until the end of the war and the development of suburbia that “cooking” incurred drastic shifts. Following the Second World War, a small faction of women, including Betty Friedan, began to vocalize discontent with how the mainstream media, primarily women’s magazines, characterized “cooking” and other domestic activities and how, historically, women bore the burden of this unpaid and devalued labor. They began to view these once virtuous and patriotic “duties” as “for what it is—not a career, but something that must be done as quickly and efficiently as possible” (Friedan 469). Friedan also viewed the “stagnating state of millions of American housewives,” who were caught in the “housewife trap,” as a sickness (422, 492).

There were, however, activists who perceived “cooking” in new ways, different from Friedan and company and different from prior definitions of “cooking.” Women such as M.F.K. Fisher and Julia Child re-characterize “cooking” entirely. The concept of “culinary practice”

defined primarily by Giard's notion of "doing-cooking" addresses the problems associated with "cooking:" it is burdened by the historical and problematic weight that Friedan articulates, and it falls short of accounting for the "active-ness" that comes to the fore in the postmodern moment following World War II. Also, this definition of culinary practice combines necessarily with the notion of "the material." "Material," here, is literal—the tools and foodstuffs necessary for one to "practice the culinary."

Simone de Beauvoir's ideas about women and cooking (and its place within domesticity), specifically the way that she characterizes domestic work, set the stage for how Michel de Certeau and Giard take up the notions of everyday life and the "culinary." In her scathing critique and analysis of "the situation of woman," de Beauvoir examines how domesticity and cooking have contributed to woman's "status of the Other" (xxxv). Regarding domesticity in general, she argues that the "manic housekeeper wages her furious war against dirt," and in doing so, "she forgets her own existence" (452). Similar to how she characterizes housework as "more like the torture of Sisyphus," de Beauvoir views cooking as "tiresome, empty, monotonous" because of the repetitious nature of the *work* (451, 453).

However, she does gesture towards what Giard will take up decades later: the "doing" part of cooking. De Beauvoir acknowledges, though briefly, that "the preparation of food, getting meals, is work more positive in nature and often more agreeable than cleaning" (452-53). In cooking, a woman "effects the transmutation of substances: matter becomes food," and she can find "poetry in making preserves" (de Beauvoir 453). However, the potential for cooking to become a "revelation and creation" is negated because "repetition soon spoils these pleasures" (de Beauvoir 453). De Beauvoir further hints at the "active-ness" of culinary practice when she argues that an individual who engages in a household task, such as cooking, "is also a producer,

a creative worker;” therefore, this work is “naturally integrated in life as are the organic functions” (453). For this reason, she contends, domestic tasks by men “seem much less dismal; it represents for them merely a negative and inconsequential moment from which they quickly escape” (453-54). It is the division of labor, argues de Beauvoir, that “dooms [woman] completely to the general and the inessential” (454). De Beauvoir’s recognition that within cooking lies culinary practice, in the sense of creativity and action, establishes much of the foundation on which de Certeau and Giard build. By foregrounding the role of repetition in cooking and how it is decidedly gendered, de Beauvoir also recognizes the work needed to dismantle the debilitating division of labor. In this way, she seems to challenge de Certeau and Giard to take up such a task.

At the outset of *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2*, de Certeau articulates how he organizes the text, doing so around two motifs. One is the “neighborhood” and the other is “culinary virtuositities,” which he designates as establishing “the plural language of stratified histories, of multiple relationships between enjoyment and manipulation, of fundamental languages spelled out in everyday details” (13). The plurality and multiplicity referenced here nicely mirror the multifariousness of the networked systems operating around and with Fisher’s and Child’s texts.

In the same volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Luce Giard explores cooking and gender, utilizing primarily an anthropological approach. She addresses cooking in the context of everyday life; as such, she examines aspects of everyday life like routine. Her primary focus, though, is cooking, or “doing-cooking,” specifically. Giard’s “doing-cooking” offers a backbone to the concept of “culinary practice” as a process.<sup>10</sup> Her use of the progressive tense twice

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<sup>10</sup> We can also think of process in terms of chaos theory: process is the lived everyday experiences or actions while those same actions would be viewed as structure in phase-space.

suggests an always already “in progress” state, which privileges process over product, and the use of “do” suggests both an active state and an action. Because of the ephemerality of the product in culinary practice, prioritizing of the process affords focus on the practice itself—the “manipulating of raw material, [...] organizing, combining, modifying, [...] inventing,” and creating (de Certeau 153). Giard further perceives “doing-cooking” as “rest[ing] atop a complex montage of circumstances and objective data, where necessities and liberties overlap, a confused and constantly changing mixture through which tactics are invented, trajectories are carved out, and ways of operating are individualized” (de Certeau 201). In accounting for the complexity inherent in culinary practice, Giard severs it from a singular and isolated activity—“cooking”—and acknowledges the multiple and often simultaneous activities that occur within culinary practice. She also elucidates the “in progress” nature of culinary practice and how one of the many skills called upon during this process is problem solving—to address the confusion with a newly invented “tactic” thus individualizing culinary practice.

While “cooking” is equal to other tasks, or labor, of domesticity, culinary practice operates as both an essential component of everyday life and domesticity while at the same time working as its own separate practice, especially when it is activated as art. The linear nature of “cooking” becomes most evident in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*; whereas, the more complex and multifarious (or three-dimensional) “culinary practice” emerges in Fisher’s and Child’s texts. Fisher presents the challenges and even pleasure that come from negotiating how culinary practice functions in this simultaneous manner in her own life. Child shares a similar pleasure but reveals the multifarious and systemic nature of culinary practice in connection with her formal culinary education and her at-home practice. Shifting the lens to read Fisher and Child



together shows how culinary practice becomes art—through a blending of the creation of a culinary discourse with process, technique, and material.

### **A Dash of Foucault: Defining Domestic Literacies and Gender, Labor, and Economics Systems**

The notion of “discursive practice,” which Foucault defines as a “body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function” serves as one component of this hybrid systems theory model (*Archaeology* 117). Foucault’s concept here reflects a system-like construction, and its emphasis on a “given period” allows for change in these “rules.” The flexibility allotted here compliments the notion of co-evolution—multiple and simultaneous shifts occurring in the subsystem of domestic literacies and the networked discursive practice systems that the texts are informed by and inform (or simultaneous "input" and "output").

The subsystem of domestic literacies embodies Foucault’s notion of discursivity insofar as the texts within this subsystem are defined by a particular set of historical rules, such as the gender and labor systems within the post-World War II period. Traditionally, scholars, such as those mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, designate cookbooks, domestic handbooks, memoirs, and domestic fiction as subgenres of literature, using particular characteristics of form and content to do so. Cookbooks, for example, gain attention for the narratives about women’s lives revealed by the recipes, as many of the critics in Anne Bower’s collection illustrate. In this case, the content of these recipes falls under the microscope, privileged over the form of the cookbook itself. Likewise, memoirs, such as those by Fisher and Child, incur a dissection mostly of their “content” to reveal the details of the lives of the authors. Laura Shapiro and Joan

Reardon examine Fisher's and Child's texts to gather information to create a comprehensive picture of these women as culinary icons. Shapiro and Reardon, in this case, seem to take the books' form for granted.

Rather than reading *Map of Another Town* or *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* solely within the parameters of memoir or cookbook respectively, a systems strategy shows how these texts operate not only in conversation but also how they exchange information, ultimately creating a discourse and practice. The genre of cookbooks, for example, set forth a rather specific set of characteristics regarding form and content, generally, which prepare the reader for the text. As such, the reader enters the pages of the book with defined expectations, such as recipe structure and organization of content. The resituating of such texts outside of the boundaries of their genres whether cookbooks or memoirs for example—or better, in addition to their genres thereby creating a multi-layered structure—creates the space in which we read and understand these works across multiple sets of characteristics, forms, and types of content. *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* extends beyond but still includes the characteristics of its traditional genre but can also be read and understood in relationship to Fisher's text and its network of gender, labor, and economics systems, for example, as a text that assesses these concerns along with those of American national cuisine. These texts, when read within the subsystem of domestic literacies, show a shift in American cultural perceptions, particularly those of women, of cooking from labor and a linear-orientation to art and process-orientation.

The systems of gender, labor, and economics that inform this set of domestic literacies function as a representative sample of how systems operate interdependently in relation to similar systems, in this case those governed by a particular set of historical rules, as well as with disparate systems, such as domestic literacies and culinary practice (a system defined by a

specific discourse, process, techniques, and materials). Also, when examining *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, Fisher's, and Child's work, the systems of gender, labor, and economics, in the period of post-World War II America, surface as integral elements that greatly inform these texts and are profoundly informed by them. Blending Foucault's notion of discursivity with the concept of a hybrid systems model illuminates how complex, interrelated, and specifically defined each system is: gender, labor, and economics for the set of domestic literacies in question acquire particular governing rules derived directly from early 1950's America. As Foucault suggests, these rules change as the culture in which they exist also shifts, thereby gesturing to the in-progress nature of interdependent systems. Thus, the interdependency among the systems within the network allows for multiple exchanges among the systems that ultimately create change in the network and the individual systems. Also, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* proffers the conservative, patriarchal rules that structure and shape the triangulated network of gender, labor, and economics in this particular historical moment; through it, we can analyze how discursive practice systems shape a text and how that text then articulates this set of rules to its readers. In this way, Foucault's idea that, within archaeology, discourses operate as practices enlightens how we can consider the work that the gender, labor, and economics do in their networked relationship with the texts in question.

While gender, labor, and economics exist as independent systems, their networked relationship emerges as more influential on understanding their role in shaping other systems when connected with these domestic literacies and culinary practice.<sup>11</sup> In the context of culinary practice (or, more precisely, "cooking") during the early 1950's in America, women's roles in the domestic space experienced a shift to a historically familiar image: the housewife whose

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<sup>11</sup> Though these systems connect quite clearly to the system of domesticity, for the purposes of my discussion, I desire to narrow the focus to culinary practice in order to hone in on one primary element of domesticity rather than tackle the multiple elements of this system.

labor remained but was deemed essential to the health of the nation and who was not valued economically but made significant household financial decisions and contributed to the American economy through her purchasing power and these decisions. The prevailing desire to impose this return to this familiar role on women required outlets through which it could reach its intended audience. Similar to the nineteenth century, the conduit for these rules became the pages of domestic literacies; in the early 1950's, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* served as one of the primary sources for these prescriptions.

The male/female, public/private binaries, as examined by scholars across disciplines, shape this conservative role for women during post-World War II America. These rules instructed and reaffirmed that women assume the roles of primary caregiver to children, primary household labor, and wife to her husband, who was the sole money earner. Here, gender, labor, and economics operate interdependently, influencing one another via elastic boundaries. The characterization of domestic labor serves as a useful example of how these three systems inform each other. As Jeanne Boydston and others have shown, American patriarchal culture during the nineteenth century, in particular, placed great moral value on the unpaid domestic labor of women. In Catherine Beecher's influential text, this labor assumes a Christian moral purpose that is meant to heal the nation following the Civil War, as discussed earlier.

In the early 1950's, despite victory in the war, America required psychological and emotional repair, and women were called upon to be that primary "healthcare providers." Instead of framing women's domestic duty as Christian or even strictly moral, the American woman's responsibilities fell under the umbrella of national duty, specifically through the attention she was to pay to the physical and emotional well-being of the nuclear family. As a result, women experienced a significant and problematic paradox specifically connected to economics and

labor: unpaid domestic work appeared to be culturally (and to a degree, economically) valued yet not valued enough to warrant financial compensation or to be equated with work in the male public sphere. The result of this paradox positioned women in a limited role of labor in service to others, one that would prove suffocating and debilitating. Within this paradox, we witness how the three discursive practice systems function interdependently, exchanging information and shaping one another.

*Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* translated this paradox into a set of prescriptive domestic guidelines, centered on cooking; in other words, this set of historical rules to recall Foucault's idea, crystalized in this triangulated network of gender, labor, and economics systems, and worked to concomitantly shape the relationship among American women, food, and cooking in a way that would prove damaging. This General Mills text, along with other comparable domestic literacies, served as a vehicle by which this troubling message was delivered to American women; these trusted publications performed rather unscrupulous work on behalf of the patriarchy. In response, Fisher and Child deploy culinary practice-as-art in their own texts to illuminate a new perspective for how gender, labor, and economics could be perceived. Specifically, Fisher and Child enlighten how cooking could be detached from labor and shifted to art thereby removing the role of laborer from the American homemaker and resituating her as an artist or practitioner.

Returning to Foucault, his archaeology mimics, in many ways, how systems operate. His methodology is neither linear or a "logical schema of simultaneities;" instead, Foucault's approach "tries to show the intersection between necessarily successive relations and others that are not so," which is one possible way to read networked systems (*Archaeology* 168). Undergirding any concept of a hybrid systems strategy is Foucaultian archaeology, and this

seems fitting for a project that works to unearth new meaning in texts that are quite frequently relegated to particular categories or genres of literature and remain unexamined, and to look at such texts through a lens of systems theory. He argues, for example, that archaeology “describes discourses as practices,” and such a mode of analysis serves as an effective lens through which we can read Giard’s notion of “doing cooking,” or culinary *practice* (*Archaeology* 131).

(Foucault’s method of archaeological analysis also pairs well with Luhmann’s notion of how systems emerge, which will be addressed later.)

Foucault’s archaeology does not try to discover “a common form or theme” in an object—a text, for example; instead, “it tries to determine the extent and form of the gap that separates [the contradictions as objects]” (*Archaeology* 152). This idea of the “in-between” reflects not only the position of these texts within the broad system of literature but also culinary practice, for it has lingered between labor and craft, never finding roots. By looking at these gaps, at the “in-betweenness,” we can seize the opportunity to revise meaning as have Julia Child and M.F.K. Fisher in activating culinary practice-as-art, decidedly shifting it away from craft and labor and positively affecting the restrictive gender roles of the era.

Further, Foucault’s ideas regarding this discursive practice and “in-betweenness” provide additional dimension to how we understand the ways that systems are networked, specifically domestic literacies and gender, labor, and economics systems that are operating interdependently with these texts. In the period following World War II, these three interdependent and layered systems evolve to embody a set of conservative rules that reflect a ‘backlash’ against the disruption to each of these systems during the war. With the primary goal of re-stabilizing the nation following the upheaval of the war, these three systems express the traditional and patriarchal beliefs that women were best suited for domestic—unpaid—work, including cooking

and that the nation required such work in order to regain to stability and productivity. The triangulated network of gender, labor, and economics systems articulate these concepts, and texts such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* serve as vehicles to deliver these rules to the large population of women at whom these instructions are aimed.

### **Systems Theory, Narrative, and De-differentiation**

At the end of a discussion entitled “Theory of a Different Order” between Niklas Luhmann and N. Katherine Hayles, moderated by William Rasch, Eva Knodt, and Cary Wolfe, in 1994, Rasch joked, “Maybe the system in question should be dinner” (134). Though an off-the-cuff remark to end an engaging conversation about Luhmann’s and Hayles’ work on systems theory, Rasch’s quip inadvertently places authors such as M.F.K. Fisher and Julia Child at the same table. Both women advocated for culinary practice-as-art while also defining it<sup>12</sup>; though, they never articulated it specifically as such. A systems theory approach to their texts illuminates this unarticulated perspective. Moreover, the connection between dinner and systems serves as a useful entry point to understanding culinary practice as a system as well as art.

Building on a foundation of different aspects of general systems theory and second-order cybernetics from scholars such as Humberto Maturana & Francisco Varela and Luhmann with key concepts from the work of Schmidt, Hayles, Hölbling, Eckhard, and Beck produces an effective hybrid systems theory approach (or a multi-layered and multi-faceted strategy constructed from a variety of sources). By extracting specific concepts from the work of these latter theorists including heterogeneity, multilevel systems, de-differentiation, seriation, interaction, and multiplicity, I construct a hybrid systems theory approach that integrates these multi-faceted ideas that operate interdependently and cooperatively; in this way, the theory itself

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<sup>12</sup> I will develop this idea of culinary practice-as-art later.

mirrors how the systems and subsystems, which it illuminates (such as culinary practice and domestic literacies), function. I am not aiming to read domestic literacies and culinary practice through the lens of systems theory; instead, I am applying a blend of various systems theory approaches to domestic literacies and culinary practice as an organizational strategy and mode of understanding of how these systems (domestic literacies and culinary practice) interact and how they co-evolve, exchange information, and operate interdependently and independently. Following the delineation of this hybrid systems theory approach, it will be applied briefly to the beginning of Julia Child's *Boeuf Bourguignon* recipe to demonstrate how the various elements extracted from multiple scholars' work blend together to show how culinary practice operates as system.

In *The Tree of Knowledge*, Maturana and Varela adapt and apply systems theory to further understand the biology of cognition. Beyond the general understanding of systems theory, which at "a simple level can be defined as: elements, which are in exchange, and which are bounded," Maturana and Varela offer some key ideas that have greatly influenced others who seek to appropriate systems theory for disciplines outside of computer science (Gregory). Autopoiesis, or "self-reproducing," which they perceive as how "living beings" are organized, emerges as one significant concept that they proffer (Maturana and Varela 43). Maturana later contributes a more refined definition of autopoietic systems to which Luhmann appears drawn: they are "systems that are defined as unities, as networks of productions of components, that recursively through their interactions, generate and realize the network that produces them and constitute, in the space in which they exist, the boundaries of the network as components that participate in the realization of the network" (Maturana qtd. in Luhmann "Autopoiesis" 174). The emphasis on boundaries here functions integrally to Luhmann's development of systems



theory within a sociological framework. When considering domestic literacies as subsystem, for example, Maturana's idea provides the opportunity to consider texts as elements that are active and productive, working collectively to inform one another. Also, the concept of "unities" suggests that the elements, or in this case texts, operate around a node that provides such unification. For domestic literacies, these "unities" can be multiple and not solely stem from theme, form, or purpose, for example.

Maturana and Varela also outline how a system is constructed by differentiating between "organization" and "structure," which is useful when considering how systems change, in particular how domestic literacies and culinary practice network with gender, labor, and economics systems. Maturana and Varela define "organization" as that which "denotes those relations that must exist among the components of a system for it to be a member of a specific class;" they characterize "structure" as that which "denotes the components and relations that actually constitute a particular unity and make its organization real" (47). As Wolfe explains, the distinction between organization and structure rests at the center of Maturana and Varela's work insofar as it enables "a reconceptualization of the relationship between *system* (organization + structure) and *environment* (everything outside the system's boundaries)" (180). This "reconceptualization" also proves significant for considering how the subsystem of domestic literacies and its orbiting discursive practice systems operate as a network, especially when we take into account Maturana and Varela's concepts of "triggers" and "perturbations." Using the nervous system as their model, the authors contend that, at the structural level, interactions occur between the system and its environment, and this distinguishes systems such as the nervous system from a computer, for example, because strict inputs or outputs do not exist; rather, "interactions" manifest (169). The structural state "specifies what perturbations are possible and

what changes trigger them” (Maturana and Varela 169). They stress, though, that information cannot be “picked up” from the environment, a point that Luhmann also emphasizes (169). Rather, the system “brings forth a world by specifying what patterns of the environment are perturbations and what changes trigger them in the organism” (169).

This concept of how systems are structured and operate not only demonstrates a break with first-order cybernetics, as Wolfe suggests, but it also provides a way of recognizing how systems might connect to their environments (“Search” 180). And, the nature of systems, as theorized by Maturana and Varela here, shows that they are simultaneously open and closed—closed at the organizational level but open at the structural level; Wolfe identifies this as a “central innovation” of second-order cybernetics (Luhmann “Theory” 118). Luhmann, while drawn to Maturana and Varela’s characterization of autopoiesis, does not take up their notions of “triggers” and “perturbations,” instead reading the system/environment distinction through a more formalistic lens.

Luhmann abstracts Maturana and Varela’s notions about autopoiesis, in particular, from living beings to apply it to social systems and later to art and the law. He builds on Maturana and Varela’s definition by contending that an autopoietic system is one in which “the elements of the system are produced within the network of the system’s elements, that is, through recursions” (*Art* 49).<sup>13</sup> But, this does not solely apply to the elements; rather, it also applies to “processes, boundaries and other structures, and last but not least to the unity of the system itself” (“Autopoiesis” 174). Luhmann adds that this recursivity is not a process of “simple replication, merely [...] substituting disappearing for one another” (*Art* 49). Instead, “something new must follow,” and operational closure “requires information in order to move from operation to

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<sup>13</sup> In other words, “autopoiesis is the recursive production of the elements by the elements of the system,” according to Luhmann (“Autopoiesis” 187).

operation” (*Art* 50). And, these operations are singular, insofar as an autopoietic system is “limited to one type of operation” (*Art* 50). Despite such a restriction, this operation possesses a “dual purpose;” it produces “further operations and [...] [creates] structures that serve as programs for this production and allow the system to distinguish between system-immanent/system-external events” (Luhmann *Art* 50).<sup>14</sup> According to Luhmann, the operational closure of an autopoietic system produces a difference, “namely the difference between system and environment” (*Art* 13). This distinction also gains support by the fact that autopoietic systems are “sovereign with respect to the constitution of identities and differences” (Luhmann “Autopoiesis” 174).

Luhmann’s ideas about how autopoietic systems function have evolved somewhat over the course of his career, as Erkki Sevänen and others have indicated, where he revises his ideas about how such systems operate—and not necessarily only autopoietic systems. These revisions are more useful for considering domestic literacies as a subsystem and culinary practice as a system than using Luhmann’s initial ideas because the notion of “dual purpose,” while productive for his purposes in exploring autopoiesis, appears rather limiting when looking at the complexity of a system as it still remains within the notion of operation closure. The inability to account for complexity represents the most significant reason why Luhmann’s theoretical approach cannot function as the singular lens through which we read domestic literacies and culinary practice, as both rely on complexity as an operational component.

Initially, Luhmann appears very strict about the system/environment distinction and the

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<sup>14</sup> Using social systems as an example, Luhmann explains how such an autopoietic system functions. He attests that, for social systems, “communication is [the] particular mode of autopoietic reproduction” (“Autopoiesis” 174). To illustrate this “network of events which reproduces itself,” Luhmann elucidates, “[The synthesis of information] has to be recreated from situation to situation by referring to previous communications and to possibilities of further communications which are to be restricted by the actual event,” and it cannot use the environment (“Autopoiesis” 174-75).

boundaries that define a system (“Cognitive” 66, 68). The simple statement: “No system can perform operations outside its own limits” perhaps best illustrates his formalistic viewpoint (“Cognitive” 68). Boundaries, then, function “not to pave the way out of the system but to secure discontinuity,” in effect suggesting that a system cannot connect itself with its environment (“Cognitive” 68). The absence of Maturana and Varela’s concepts of “triggers” and perturbations” becomes rather noticeable at this point in Luhmann’s work. He does, however, discuss “interactions” but mostly within the context of system organization.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, Luhmann adds to this formulation of how such systems operate by further defining the function of distinctions and the relationship between system and environment, a factor that will illuminate, once layered with other elements of the hybrid systems theory approach, how domestic literacies interact with their neighboring systems and culinary practice, specifically how they operate interdependently by exchanging information. He notes, “[A]ll distinctions [...] are purely internal recursive operations of system,” which means that such operations “are not able to go beyond the system [...] or] pull something into it” (“Cognitive 69). Yet, he supplements this with an intriguing caveat regarding the distinction between system and environment; despite the idea that “no information [...] moves from without to within the system,” he also contends, “[A]n observer can observe [...] how a system is influenced by its environment or deliberately and successfully acts upon its environment” (“Cognitive” 69). Here, Luhmann demonstrates his work on second-order observation; only a second-order observer can view a system from the outside, revealing the inseparability of observer and system (similar to the system/environment relationship). This facet of Luhmann’s systems theory proves to be a significant contribution to the development of second-order cybernetics.

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<sup>15</sup> See Luhmann, “The Autopoiesis of Social Systems.”

He also provides additional stipulations for distinctions, though. For example, when discussing how a “cell can observe,” Luhmann contends that it does so by making “a distinction with input/output, what it takes in or what it refuses to take in” (“Theory” 115). He adds, “I’m not sure whether making distinctions implies the simultaneity of seeing both sides, or whether it is just discrimination” (“Theory” 115). He continues to try and distinguish between ‘observing’ and ‘discriminating,’ which is an idea that Hayles will take up in her work. Despite this potential unknown function, Luhmann asserts, “Even ‘information’ is not something which the system takes in from the environment. Pieces of information don’t exist ‘out there,’ waiting to be picked up by the system” (“Autopoiesis” 175). In this move to differentiate input/output and “information,” he seems to be hampered by the problem of the binary. This limitation cannot work with a complex system such as domestic literacies or culinary practice; the binary of input/output cannot account for multiplicity or interdependency among multiple elements or multiple systems.

Luhmann attempts to further distinguish the input/output from “information,” this time along the line of operations: “A system makes a distinction because it couples its own operations to its environment over time and has to select fitting operations, or it simply decays. Then, if it makes such a distinction, it has no way to handle the environment except by reconstructing or copying the difference between system and environment into the system itself” (“Theory” 122). Luhmann characterizes this shift in this manner in order to examine the relationship between a system and other systems as well as the system and its environment. And, we can use such a lens to more clearly define input/output perhaps outside the distinction of system/environment, which can contribute to an understanding of how the subsystem of domestic literacies, for example, networks with culinary practice and the systems of gender, labor, and economics. In particular,

moving outside the strict input/output and system/environment distinction accounts for the multiple, simultaneous exchanges among domestic literacies and their neighboring systems.

Given these particular features of systems and the distinction between system/environment, which becomes a guiding principle for not only Luhmann but also for a good portion of systems theory, it is not entirely surprising that Luhmann's rather formalistic approach has come under review and reconsideration. More specifically, the rigid definition of distinctions and the closed nature of systems, which Luhmann describes, preclude the 'in-progress' nature of "coevolving" systems, and they do not account for the complexities inherent in systems and their subsystems (Leydesdorff 6).<sup>16</sup> Further, Luhmann's defense of differentiated systems (or differentiation) upholds his intransigent structure of systems, which may not be efficacious in recognizing the complexities of systems, specifically domestic literacies and culinary practice.<sup>17</sup> To address these limitations, the work of Siegfried Schmidt, N. Katherine Hayles, Walter Hölbling, Petra Eckhard, and Ulrich Beck emerges as valuable and even integral to understanding the complexity of such a strategy; they contribute the primary layers of a hybrid systems theory approach. More specifically, the concepts of heterogeneity, multilevel systems,

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<sup>16</sup> Coevolving systems, according to Leydesdorff, "shape each other mutually along these trajectories by selecting upon each other in terms of signals and noise" (6).

<sup>17</sup> Luhmann articulates three variations, or combinations, of system differentiation: segmentation, stratification, and functional differentiation. Of these three, functional differentiation, he argues, is the most contemporary and best describes modern society—the system that he analyzes. Functional differentiation accounts for the complexities of modern society by shifting "the distribution of equality and inequality" (Luhmann "Differentiation" 35-36). In functionally differentiated societies, "functions have to be unequal, but the access to functions has to be equal, not dependent on the relation to other functions" (Luhmann "Differentiation" 36). Thus, Luhmann contends, a functionally differentiated society is one of equals, or "has to pretend to be" ("Differentiation" 36). This equality, or illusion of it, occurs at the level of the subsystems; it is at this level where the true functional differentiation occurs. In contrast to stratified societies, in functionally differentiated societies, the "functional subsystems do not depend on a complementary definition of their environment;" instead, "each subsystem can tolerate open and fluctuating environments as long as the other subsystems in their environment fulfill their function" (Luhmann "Differentiation" 36). As a result, a functionally differentiated society "attains a higher level of compatibility of dependencies and independencies" (Luhmann "Differentiation" 36). The structure of functional differentiation appears as a "highly diversified scheme" according to Luhmann, and it maintains boundaries despite the openness at the level of internal environments. Its selectivity, which reduces the systems' internal complexities, is what Luhmann contests rests at the center of this "highly diversified scheme" ("Differentiation" 36). His conceptualization of functional differentiation becomes essential to how he reads art as a social system.

de-differentiation, seriation, interaction, and multiplicity comprise the core of a hybrid systems theory strategy, building on the foundation created by Maturana, Varela, and Luhmann.

Integrating some of the aspects of Schmidt's ideas about a systems approach to literary studies proves productive insofar as he underscores the importance of heterogeneity, which is a key feature of a hybrid systems theory model. He favors a model of literature that "is a complex unit with several interrelated dimensions," which he designates as a "heterogenetic system" ("Systems-Oriented" 123). This heterogenetic system, which he further defines as "a cyclically operating dynamic process system [...] [that] is dependent on a so-called permissive environment that contains no restrictive systems," is "constituted by the coupling of relatively autonomous [which can survive outside of the system] and non-autonomous [which cannot survive outside of the system] heterogenetic subsystems" ("Systems-Oriented" 123-24). While Schmidt positions literary scholarship as the second-order observer thereby aligning his approach with Luhmann's along second-order lines, his method differs from Luhmann's approach to art as a subsystem in a few key ways. Luhmann reads art as a strict "autopoietic system," or a subsystem specifically. This characterization suggests that the subsystem of art is a "separate island in modern society" (Sevänen 95). Schmidt, though employing a systems approach, acknowledges the interrelatedness of systems, specifically taking issue with Luhmann's application of Maturana and Varela's notion of autopoiesis to social systems and art ("Literary Systems" 143). This notion of "interrelatedness" works in parallel to Schmidt's emphasis on heterogeneity, both signal a significant characteristic of a hybrid systems theory model—multiple elements that are connected across multiple nodes. For example, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, *Map of Another Town*, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and gender, labor, and economics systems

operate in an “interrelated” fashion, exchanging information simultaneously (such as the notion of unpaid labor of the American homemaker moving across these multiple elements).

Further, Schmidt rejects Luhmann’s insistence that the “social system literature *must* be modeled in terms of communication systems” (emphasis in the original) (“Systems-Oriented” 122). Instead, he turns towards the idea that a system of literature is one that contains “*several interrelated dimensions* (or subsystems)” (emphasis in the original) (“Systems-Oriented” 122). In this sense, Schmidt argues that subsystems do not need to be contained only in one system (“Systems-Oriented” 124). Rather, “they may form part of several systems to the degree of their relevant contribution to the respective systems” (“Systems-Oriented” 124).<sup>18</sup> By making this move, Schmidt challenges Luhmann’s notion that systems’ autonomy and self-organization are “all-or-none” characteristics. Instead, Schmidt contends, literature as a system operates as a “multi-level system with intersections between its component systems and with continuous interaction with other (multi-level) social systems,” so it is more of a matter of degree than “all-or-none” (“Systems-Oriented” 125).

This approach to literature emerges as essential when considering the set of domestic literacies for this project—multi-level and interrelated texts that interact in varying ways and to varying degrees. *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, *Map of Another Town*, *My Life in France*, and *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* must be read in this way—interrelated and with the notion of multilevel systems at the fore—rather than across the texts in a linear fashion, or as isolated texts, in order to see the shifts in gender roles and culinary practice that they illuminate,

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<sup>18</sup> This notion of interrelatedness and how subsystems can be a part of several systems simultaneously evoke Richard Münch’s idea of “interpenetrating zones,” which he views as the overlapping areas between subsystems (qtd. in Sevänen 96). Similarly, Münch’s concept recalls Hayles’ seriation, though her concept is more specifically about system creation than system interaction. Regardless, the interdependence and interaction articulated by these three scholars suggest that a formalistic and rigid approach (à la Luhmann) may not work for art and literature in a postmodern context.



for example. These shifts occur across multiple systems; therefore, the integration of the concepts of interrelatedness and multilevel systems into a hybrid systems theory approach allow us to read across multiple texts simultaneously.

While Schmidt does retain some of the austerity familiar in Luhmann's systems approach, he does demonstrate a shift in perspective by being inspired by, if not entirely embracing, some of the emerging postmodern ideas and strategies, such as de-differentiation (though not entirely) and "interpenetrating zones." Schmidt continues to make attempts to narrow his scope throughout his later work, but his main focus, which is fairly useful for understanding the interdependency of systems and subsystems, shifts interest "from objects to processes, [...] from knowing-what to knowing-how" ("Systems-Oriented" 133).<sup>19</sup> This emphasis, along with the concepts of heterogeneity and interrelatedness in systems and subsystems, functions productively when examining activities like culinary practice and texts such as domestic literacies that often fall in the "blind spot" of scholarship.

More specifically, rather than reading *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* as a linear cookbook or reading the recipes as objects, the shift to process opens up the opportunity to read in a multilayered, multidimensional mode—to see recipes, in this example, as an integrated and interdependent process rather than a linear object or task to be completed. Further, process serves as a cornerstone of culinary practice-as-art, which is reflected in Child's influential text, and transfers the focus from the object, or final dish, to the interdependent processes involved in its production. Process, as a critical component of a hybrid systems approach, also affords the chance to recognize how domestic literacies are networked with their neighboring discursive

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<sup>19</sup> The importance given to process and "knowing-how" is especially productive when looking at culinary practice, which, I contend, is much more about the process than the product. Julia Child and M.F.K. Fisher foreground process in their readings and deployments of culinary practice, which makes Schmidt's more flexible understanding of systems theory germane.

practice systems. The in-progress nature of this network relies on process to continuously evolve and change. To further develop this understanding of process, it helps to turn to the work of scholars such as N. Katharine Hayles, from whose work we can extract the concepts of seriation and interaction to integrate into a hybrid systems theory approach.

Hayles, in many significant ways, breaks with Maturana and Varela and Luhmann, which proves useful for reading domestic literacies as a subsystem and one subsystem that works interdependently with a network of discursive practice systems. She challenges Maturana and Varela's "assumption that there is no meaningful correlation between stimuli that interacts with receptors and information that the receptors generate" (Luhmann "Theory" 118). Though she acknowledges that this assumption "was a bold and courageous move," she distinguishes between the idea that there is no correlation and "the transformations that take place between the perceptual response and outside stimulus are transformational and nonlinear" (Luhmann "Theory" 118-19).<sup>20</sup> Hayles argues in favor of the latter and adds that it is "important to preserve a sense of correlation and interactivity" (Luhmann "Theory" 119). This serves as an example of one key break that Hayles makes with Maturana and Varela; this difference sets up a trajectory in her work in which she advocates for a more flexible or fluid interpretation of how systems interact with each other and their environments. This fluidity undergirds a hybrid systems theory approach insofar as it describes how systems and subsystems, such as culinary practice and domestic literacies, exchange information and interact interdependently.

One way in which Hayles attempts to achieve this flexibility is by shifting the focus from inside/outside, with which Luhmann and others seem primarily concerned, to "the area of interaction, where inside and outside meet" (Luhmann "Theory" 119). It is in this space or

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<sup>20</sup> Here, Hayles is specifically referring to Maturana and Varela's study about color vision in humans.

moment of interaction where there exists a “correlation [...] between stimuli and response” (Luhmann “Theory” 119). This returns us to Maturana and Varela’s concept of systems being both open and closed. Hayles is arguing for a more fluid picture whereas the notion of closure at the organizational level perhaps resists this flexibility. She takes issue with their idea that “if a system’s organization changes, the system is no longer the same system” (Luhmann “Theory” 122). Rather, Hayles contends, “[O]rganization exists [...] on a continuum and not as a discrete state,” and this notion of continuum works effectively alongside process to further understand how domestic literacies and the network operate—in-progress and not in isolation or as closed systems. (Luhmann “Theory” 122). Much like her reading of interaction, here Hayles calls for a less formalistic perspective regarding how systems can potentially change.

By drawing attention to the notion of continuum and the in-progress nature of open systems, Hayles gestures to Luhmann’s productive idea of “the unmarked space.” Notably, Luhmann does not work much with this idea; instead, he uses it to help explain and develop his theory of functional differentiation. But, this “unmarked space” is rather revealing. By indicating both sides of a distinction, “male/female” to use Luhmann’s example, then “you also create by this very distinction an unmarked space” (“Theory” 127). The “unmarked space” is that which “leaves out what you do not imagine, what you do not see, what you do not indicate” (“Theory” 127). He does continue, though, that if the unmarked space is indicated then one will have “two marks, marked and unmarked” (“Theory” 127). Luhmann further argues that this concept is useful for his theory of functional differentiation because it allows for the “third”: “[I]f I identify codes and systems, then of course I need always a third value or third position: the rejection of all other codes” (“Theory” 127). Having the “marked/unmarked” distinction in this construction, though, seems once again rather formalistic, or too restrictive as binaries often are; however, the

broader idea of the ‘unmarked space’ can offer potential for escaping problematic binarisms, a project that Hayles tackles to supplement Luhmann’s solid foundation.

In discussing the logical structure of language, Hayles contests that part of this logical structure “is to provide a space for the unknowable and unspeakable” (Luhmann “Theory” 129). Though she does not define this ‘unknowable and unspeakable’ as a third space per se, there are certainly parallels in Luhmann’s and Hayles’ ideas. However, Hayles seems to offer more flexibility, specifically with her notion of “interaction,” and this concept provides an opportunity to move beyond Luhmann’s austerity and formalism. She defines ‘interaction’ as “the boundary between the perceptual apparatus and the unmediated flux” (Luhmann “Theory” 133).<sup>21</sup> This unobservable ‘interaction,’ Hayles asserts, “preserves [...] the sense of regularities in the world” (Luhmann “Theory” 133). This definition of ‘interaction’ seems to open up a possibility that Luhmann’s ‘unmarked space’ gestures towards but which the binary of marked/unmarked precludes. Hayles focuses on seeing “what is not seen” and such a dismantling of marked/unmarked by thoroughly acknowledging this “unseen” space gets us closer to articulating how systems, their subsystems, and their environments correlate and connect in ways that account for their complexities and multiplicity. Extracting Hayles’ concept of interaction from the larger body of her theoretical work contributes significantly to a hybrid systems theory approach as it articulates how multiple systems, such as culinary practice, and subsystems, including domestic literacies, speak to each other simultaneously across multiple nodes (or about multiple “topics”). For example, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, *Map of Another Town*, and *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* can engage with each other and with gender, labor, and

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<sup>21</sup> Hayles defines the ‘unmediated flux’ as “the reality ‘out there,’” and “it does not exist in any of the usual conceptual terms we might construct (such as reality, the universe, the world, etc.) until it is processed by an observer” (“Constrained” 2). She continues that the ‘unmediated flux’ “interacts with and comes into consciousness through self-organizing, transformative processes that include sensory and cognitive components” (“Constrained” 2).

economics systems at the same time. This interaction, then, can contribute to revealing the shift in perceptions of culinary practice and gender, for example. The notion of seriation, specifically Hayles' variation of it, adds a vivid and dynamic layer to "interaction" and to the larger hybrid systems theory approach.

Hayles adapts the term "seriation" from archeological anthropology to name the "patterns of overlapping replication and innovation" that she sees occurring in systems ("Cut" 151). She reminds us that when these replications and innovations occur that they emerge from "previous instantiations and contexts that are partly changed and partly replicated" rather than "woven [...] out of whole cloth" ("Cut" 151). Hayles advocates for "seriation" as a way to consider how systems develop because she perceives the strict systems approach as one that "treats systems as self-contained unities" (specifically Maturana and his notion of autopoiesis) rather than accounting for their complexities and interdependency ("Cut" 151). To locate those complexities and interdependency, she argues for the exploration of "the exhilarating and chaotic space of constructions that are contingent on time and place" instead of looking at system next to system ("Cut" 161). Here, Hayles' narrative organizational strategy aligns with Foucault's notion of discursive practice insofar as both are dependent on this historical contingency. Thus, for the domestic literacies in question, a specific historical framework not only constructs the discursive practice systems but, because of the networked structure, also deeply informs and shapes the texts.

Further, seriation surfaces with the system of gender and the role of homemaker, for example. In *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, the role of the homemaker experiences partial change and partial replication from its nineteenth-century manifestation. In nineteenth-century domestic literacies such as Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife*, the

homemaker served as the primary household manager who shouldered the burden of unpaid domestic labor. In the General Mills text, this role is replicated insofar as the homemaker still functioned in this manner but is changed via the shift away from a moral framework that was often linked to the nineteenth century household manager duties and the emphasis on new technologies in the home to help ease the burden of the homemaker's labor (whether real or an illusion).

In order to understand further how systems function interdependently and multifariously, Walter Hölbling and Petra Eckhard's concept of "de-differentiation," which extends beyond systems theory to explain the "dissolving of boundaries," proves useful and is, in fact, an essential component to a hybrid systems theory approach (93). De-differentiation marries effectively with the concepts extracted from Hayles because it deepens the idea of seriation as well as substantiates Hayles' desire to examine the "chaotic space of constructions." De-differentiation, as Hölbling and Eckhard note, "[affects] the way we conceive of time and space today" in addition to the "intermingling of genres, cultures, disciplines, agencies, and art forms" that the "dissolving of boundaries" affords (93).<sup>22</sup> Their articulation of de-differentiation evokes how Hayles views the simultaneous interdependence and independence of subsystems, and I would add, entire systems to this formulation.

Ulrich Beck contributes another aspect to this larger notion of de-differentiation by highlighting one particular characteristic: "the boundaries between different sub-systems become unclear and elastic" (Sevänen 98). Hölbling, Eckhard, and Beck foreground one of the most valuable aspects of de-differentiation: the permeability of boundaries. Not only does this characteristic proffer a way to comprehend the complexities and multifariousness of postmodern

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<sup>22</sup> In the context of systems theory, de-differentiation is often read as a response to Luhmann's concept of functional differentiation.

systems but it also furnishes a means to understand how changes in systems and subsystems can occur. De-differentiation makes interactions and exchanges—and the changes that they produce—more readily visible with this concept. Despite the argument that de-differentiation limits the validity of systems theory, making it “increasingly obsolescent,” de-differentiation, when blended into a hybrid strategy—and with an emphasis on the pliancy of boundaries—opens up systems theory rather than rendering it anachronistic (Sevänen 99). This component of a hybrid systems theory approach serves as one of the most crucial because it articulates how multiple systems and subsystems can successfully exchange information and co-evolve. Also, this amalgamated approach reveals what is not seen—what a strict systems approach precludes. Pulling this cloak back, or locating the ‘blind spot,’ allows us to see how coevolving systems and interdependent subsystems affect each other and create change as well as provide an opportunity to see the heterogeneous elements that constitute each system. Rather than a singular line of input/output between systems framed by rigid boundaries, de-differentiation, through elastic boundaries, opens up multiple lines among multiple systems and subsystems, which facilitates culinary practice, domestic literacies, and gender, labor, and economics informing and shaping each other while specifically highlighting the shifts in perceptions of gender and culinary practice, for example.

In addition, a hybrid systems approach, as a mode of analysis, allows us to perceive how discursive practices systems conceptually resituate domestic literacies, subsystems, and actions such as culinary practice, or, to use Matarana and Varela’s term, a perturbation occurs.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the continuous perturbations among these multi-level, multifarious systems and subsystems surface and become readable. From such perturbations that are afforded by the

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<sup>23</sup> They define “perturbation” as “all those interactions that trigger changes” (*Tree* 99).

boundaries' elasticity, an always already in-progress action like culinary practice can be altered—reconfigured and activated from a craft or task of labor to art. The implications extend beyond the action itself, back out and affecting those systems and subsystems in the network, ultimately creating dramatic change to the systems in question.

### **Culinary Practice as a System**

Thinking of culinary practice as a hybrid system within a notion of domestic literacies envisions culinary practice as both system and art. The primary emphasis of this project is the latter; however, understanding how culinary practice functions as a system can be helpful in realizing, on a micro level, how systems and subsystems, such as domestic literacies and the network of discursive practice systems, interact and change. Culinary practice possesses the key characteristics that comprise a system: interdependence, independence, flexibility, and in-progress as well as the interaction with the environment. Further, perturbations from both internal elements and external systems/subsystems affect culinary practice. Two primary benefits emerge from reading culinary practice (specifically culinary practice-as-art) as a system: they privilege process over product and foreground the multiplicities involved in culinary practice (e.g. multiple materials and simultaneous multiple actions in the form processes and techniques). Despite the form of many recipes for example, culinary practice does not exist as a series of isolated, chronological steps (as cooking does) but a complex network of interactions and exchanges among multiple elements (ingredients, techniques, processes, and the practitioner) and environment.<sup>24</sup>

The processes, techniques, materials, and practitioner (read: cook) form the structure of culinary practice, or system. The interaction and exchange among the elements and environment

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<sup>24</sup> Because a number of the scholars whom I cite use “elements” rather than “variables” to describe the features of a system, I will employ the same term, but “elements” possesses the same definition as variable in this instance: a feature of a system “that [varies] as time progresses” (Lorenz 209).



constantly change the composition of the system. Rather than individual moments of input/output, as Luhmann might view a standard system, culinary practice operates more as an in-progress system, always evolving and changing.<sup>25</sup> The interdependence among the elements and environment and the elasticity of their boundaries permit these multiple and simultaneous exchanges. The beginning of Julia Child's classic recipe for *boeuf bourguignon*, for example, shows how culinary practice functions as a system.<sup>26</sup>

## Table 1

### BOEUF BOURGUIGNON

#### BOEUF A LA BOURGUIGNONNE

[Beef Stew in Red Wine, with Bacon, Onions, and Mushrooms]

As is the case with most famous dishes, there are more ways than one to arrive at a good boeuf bourguignon. Carefully done, and perfectly flavored, it is certainly one of the most delicious beef dishes concocted by man, and can well be the main course for a buffet dinner. Fortunately you can prepare it completely ahead, even a day in advance, and it only gains in flavor when reheated.

#### VEGETABLE AND WINE SUGGESTIONS

Boiled potatoes are traditionally served with this dish. Buttered noodles or steamed rice may be substituted. If you also wish a green vegetable, buttered peas would be your best choice. Serve with the beef a fairly full-bodied, young red wine, such as Beaujolais, Côtes du Rhône, Bordeaux-St. Émilion, or Burgundy.

*For 6 people*

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<sup>25</sup> I'm employing the phrase "in-progress" to convey the interactions and exchanges that occur among systems and subsystems, which are a constant and consistent *process* rather than a singular event. It also refers, in simple terms, to the hybrid systems model—the blend of de-differentiation, seriation, interaction, and exchange.

<sup>26</sup> In Chapter 4, I analyze Child's master recipe and variations for *Fricassée de Poulet à L'Ancienne*. Thus, the discussion regarding *boeuf bourguignon* remains brief in order to introduce the idea of culinary practice as a system.

Table 1 (cont'd)

A 6-ounce chunk of bacon	Remove rind, and cut bacon into <i>lardons</i> (sticks, ¼ inch thick and 1½ inches long). Simmer rind and bacon for 10 minutes in 1½ quarts of water. Drain and dry.
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Preheat oven to 450 degrees	
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A 9- to 10-inch fireproof casserole 3 inches deep 1 Tb olive oil or cooking oil A slotted spoon	Sauté the bacon in the oil over moderate heat for 2 to 3 minutes to brown lightly. Remove to a side dish with a slotted spoon. Set casserole aside. Reheat until fat is almost smoking before you sauté the beef.
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3 lbs. lean stewing beef cut into 2-inch cubes (see preceding list of cuts)	Dry the beef in paper towels; it will not brown if it is damp. Sauté it, a few pieces at a time, in the hot oil and bacon fat until nicely browned on all sides. Add it to the bacon.
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1 sliced carrot 1 sliced onion	In the same fat, brown the sliced vegetables. Pour out the sautéing fat.
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1 tsp salt ¼ tsp pepper 2 Tb flour	Return the beef and bacon to the casserole and toss with the salt and pepper. Then sprinkle on the flour and toss again to coat the beef lightly with the flour. Set casserole uncovered in middle position of preheated oven for 4 minutes. Toss the meat and return to oven for 4 minutes more. (This browns the flour and covers the meat with a light crust.) Remove casserole, and turn oven down to 325 degrees.
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Table 1 (cont'd)

3 cups of a full-bodied, young red wine such as those suggested for serving, or a Chianti	Stir in the wine, and enough stock or bouillon so that the meat is barely covered. Add the tomato paste, garlic, herbs, and bacon rind. Bring to simmer on top of the stove. Then cover the casserole and set in lower third of preheated oven. Regulate heat
2 to 3 cups brown beef stock or canned beef bouillon	so liquid simmers very slowly for 2 ½ to 3 hours. The meat is done when a fork pierces it easily.
1 Tb tomato paste	( <i>Mastering the Art of French Cooking</i> 315-17)
2 cloves mashed garlic	
½ tsp thyme	
A crumbled bay leaf	
The blanched bacon rind	

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Before any preparation of ingredients begins, the system of economics influences what materials the practitioner can purchase, such as the cut of beef, type of wine, quality of bacon, and even the casserole dish recommended in the recipe. Further, economics will determine what type of kitchen is used. The practitioner's skill level (e.g. the time required for preparation, knife skills, and knowledge of the different materials and techniques used) will also affect, or "perturb," the system. As such, culinary practice operates as an individualized system, or a system with the flexibility to account for a practitioner's set of personal elements, such as environment and skill set.

Child's recipe begins with the preparation of the meat, which is one of many elements in this system. Once the practitioner finishes sautéing the bacon in oil and removes it, she adds the

beef, which immediately both shifts and merges with the oil. The beef uses the fat from the bacon and the heat to begin the cooking process while it renders its own fat to contribute to the flavor foundation that began with the bacon. Here, this is a hybrid system that amalgamates the concepts of de-differentiation, seriation, and interaction, for example, instead of a paradigm that relies on strict binaries and impenetrable boundaries.

De-differentiation occurs when the bacon fat imparts the oil with its flavor—the boundaries between the fat and oil shift and create a new form of the oil. More broadly, for the flavors of the beef and bacon to merge and create a new flavor (giving the dish a base on which to build), the boundaries among the ingredients and the environment that provide the heat must be flexible to allow for such an exchange and interaction. Next, the infusion of the bacon-flavored oil into the beef serves as an example of an interaction, or what is not seen. Within culinary practice, these interactions often are best understood as the chemistry occurring among ingredients. Finally, the multiple flavors—oil, bacon, and beef—represent a moment of seriation, one mode in a pattern of overlapping and innovation within this system. With each process, technique, and/or material added, the pattern will develop, ultimately creating a flavor palette for and appearance of the dish. All three of these facets of a system (de-differentiation, interaction, and seriation) operate interdependently and frequently simultaneously.

The system of culinary practice continues to change as the beef cooks (later, the vegetables) and does not stop but instead continually exchanges flavors among the other ingredients. Further, the textures and appearance of the elements change, caused by the interactions with one another, with heat, and with the addition of other ingredients, such as salt, pepper, tomato paste, wine, beef stock, garlic, thyme, and a bay leaf. Here, the multiplicity of the hybrid system surfaces; the layers of textures and flavors that alter via these different ingredients

reveal the in-progress nature, the simultaneity, and the complexity of this system. Further, the use of the flour drastically shifts texture, appearance, and flavor because of its interaction with the fat and heat, which exemplifies one of the many layers of change occurring alongside other processes. A strict reading of input/output would be inaccurate here. Change occurs in the system because of the elastic boundaries among the ingredients and environment and the constant exchange and interaction that occurs. The interaction (not a singular event) of the flour, the fat from the beef and bacon, and the heat generate a thickening agent that alters the texture and appearance of the dish.

This in-progress nature remains constant and evolves until the practitioner activates a perturbation by removing the casserole dish from the oven and plating the stew, in effect stopping the direct cooking process. But, the in-progress nature does not stop with the plating; instead, it continues as an evolved system: the same elements but altered as a result of interaction and perturbation. After this dish is consumed, the practice will begin once again with different elements while retaining the influence of systems such as economics.

### **It Begins in the Kitchen**

Chapter 1, “A New and Different Cook Book for a New Age: *Big Red*,” begins with the immediate post-World War II period and the best-selling *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*. The form of the recipes and the supplementary chapters, some of which focus very little on cooking, serve as the most useful examples of this product-oriented focus of the cookbook. The form of the recipe privileges speed with the goal of getting the dish on the table for the family over engaging with the process, techniques, and materials. Most significantly, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* illustrates how cooking operates, not as a dynamic, in-progress, and complex system but as a linear and brief series of steps with the objective of creating a product to serve

one's family, which is reflected in the content of the text and the form of the recipes. Also, the surrounding chapters often shift the cookbook's focus from cooking to larger issues of domesticity, which also reinforces cooking as subsumed within the larger system of domesticity and emphasizes its function as labor as well as the homemaker's role as laborer. Further, this text serves as a representation of those domestic literacies that promulgated hegemonic concepts about women and their place within American domesticity that stem from the discursive practice systems of the era, specifically gender, labor, and economics. This network of gender, labor, and economics systems sustains cooking alongside other forms of suffocating domesticity, such as general routine cleaning and child care within the home, and this further entrenches American women in debilitating, "unvalued" labor. Domestic literacies, such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, hold influence beyond their pages as they simultaneously integrate and promote the systems of gender, labor, and economics, demonstrating how they operate as one element in a larger network of systems.

Chapter 2, "Mapping Provence: Fisher's Discourse and Culinary Practice" shifts to M.F.K. Fisher and focuses on her travels and experiences in France during the mid-twentieth century with primary attention paid to the figure of the map as an organizing structure of the text and the strategy for how she articulates her discourse of culinary practice-as-art. In *Map of Another Town*, Fisher maps her journeys through Dijon and Provence, and though this text is most commonly categorized as memoir, a hybrid systems theory approach, in this case within the domestic literacies system, creates the opportunity to read this text outside of its genre classification. Through this lens, the chronicling of a series of events expands to subsume the chronology within a three-dimensional map. Fisher's text is not simply a memoir of her life but also a system map that builds a complex system of discourses, centered on culinary practice. The

form of Fisher's text mirrors the form of the map—elements networked together, such as architecture, history, literature, and sensory experiences, to comprise a complex and interdependent system. In *Map of Another Town*, Fisher draws attention to how she constructs the text, the map, and the discourse. Her project, like culinary practice-as-art, emphasizes process, specifically regarding writing and the development of her culinary philosophy. By mapping the culinary practice system, Fisher demonstrates how a nation's cuisine develops out of the individual homes and restaurant kitchens and generates a discourse that articulates the process of this cuisine development to include national history, economics, issues of gender, and regionalism. Her discussion, then, provides a model that can help emendate American cuisine's identity crisis at the time; her discourse upsets the already unstable system of American cuisine in the mid-century period. Further, Fisher's discourse, which is the philosophical component of culinary practice-as-art, can liberate American women from the debilitating labor of cooking and the broader and oppressive discursive practice systems that are proffered in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. Fisher's discourse, though, assumes a more effective position when merged with her friend Julia Child's work—to complete the activation of culinary practice-as-art.

Chapter 3, "Mastering the Art: Julia Child in Paris and Culinary Practice-as-Art," investigates Child's culinary awakening in *My Life in France*, which works, in many ways, consonantly to Fisher's *Map of Another Town* insofar as Child articulates how she perceived the influence of French culture and cuisine. From those experiences in Paris, Child coalesces what she learned and turns her attention back to America. In *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child, along with co-authors Louisette Bertholle and Simone Beck, creates a practice that privileges process, technique, and material and functions similarly to Fisher's discourse—to perturb the destabilized system of American cuisine and offer the American housewife a way out

from under the labor of cooking and the monotony of routine. Child's iconic text also mirrors the system of culinary practice-as-art that it proffers in terms of how it asks to be read and understood. The linearity familiar to readers of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* remains absent from *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*; instead, readers must understand the text as interdependent elements that create a larger practice, or system. The form and readability of this text alters not only how the practitioner engages with the practice but also how many "cookbooks" would change fundamentally in years to come to incorporate the successful yet rather complex elements of Child's work. In this text, she activates this practice, which also takes into account a number of other elements that she articulates in *My Life in France*, as culinary practice-as-art and rethinks and repositions culinary practice out from under a classification of product-oriented labor. In addition to proffering process, technique, and material over product, culinary practice-as-art repositions the housewife as an artist and practitioner rather than a laborer, liberating her from service and locating her in a place that values creativity, variation, discipline, taste, and history in addition to the primary triangulated elements.

Finally, the concluding chapter, "The Philosopher and the Artist," examines how Fisher's discourse and Child's practice incorporate to alter culinary practice, specifically in their collaborative work, *The Cooking of Provincial France*. They activate culinary-practice-as-art, detaching cooking from its association as labor and resituating it as a practice that foregrounds process over product, accounts for the multifariousness inherent in culinary practice, and blurs boundaries that, in the past, have limited creativity, in particular with respect to women and the home kitchen. Culinary practice-as-art, then, disrupts American culinary practice, cuisine, and the neighboring discursive practice systems, including gender, economics, and labor.



Furthermore, Fisher and Child's sustained influences of the series of perturbations must be taken into account to understand how deeply their work shaped American cuisine and culinary practice. With culinary practice-as-art, for example, the impact resonates almost immediately; first, the debut of Child's *The French Chef* on PBS sets in motion the use of television as a avenue to reach the American cooking audience (read: women) and share culinary practice-as-art. Also, in the mid-1970s, a young Northern California chef opened the doors of Chez Panisse and initiated the local food movement. Alice Waters draws on Child and Fisher's collective model to proffer the discourse, practice, and set of materials to create a culinary renaissance that is, perhaps, more significant today than three decades ago. Also, culinary practice-as-art continues to evolve alongside technology. This culinary paradigm exists in the multiple sites today in which we see the "foodie" culture, artisanal movement, and local food movement being developed and discussed. On television and across social and new media, culinary practice-as-art continues to unsettle discursive practice systems of gender, economics (capitalism in particular), and labor. As such, I contend, it demands that we confront questions of sustainability with regards to food, the relationship between gender and culinary practice in today's sociopolitical environment, the relationship between the home and professional kitchens, and how the culinary practitioner is situated within the larger and, arguably, more complex American culinary landscape.

With their direct response to prescriptive and conservative *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, Fisher and Child shifted the mid-twentieth century from a linear to a systems perspective and dramatically influenced three spheres: food culture, literary culture, and gender roles. They enlighten food culture, ranging from the Good Food Revolution of the 1960s to the local food movement of today, in both the type of culinary practice and the form of culinary texts. With

Child and Fisher's emphasis on fresh and local foods, for example, culinary practice-as-art initiates a change in the American food economy, away from mass produced and processed foods made by large companies, including Betty Crocker's parent corporation General Mills, and towards food items and produce from small businesses and farms, which ultimately acts as a direct assault against these companies. The culinary awakening, represented by the Good Food Movement, occurred simultaneously with the rise of processed and packaged foods, thereby creating a more complex and often contentious food culture. Despite conflicts between the Good Food champions such as Fisher and Child and the convenience food advocates, including Poppy Cannon, American food culture expanded positively and aimed towards establishing a clear culinary identity, much like the French.

A similar shift occurs in literary culture, specifically culinary writing, which is best illustrated by Fisher's writing and by the form (recipes and general organization) of Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Though, reading these texts through a hybrid systems theory lens and within the domestic literacies subsystem affords a greater understanding of these changes in literary culture. Fisher establishes food writing as a legitimate subgenre of literature, activating a dramatic change in how authors perceived and discuss food in written form. The content and form of Fisher's work inspired multiple generations of writers, from Laurie Colwin to today's food bloggers. Child challenges the linear structure of recipes and cookbooks of the era, such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, and alters how recipes are read and how culinary practice occurs in the kitchen. Her three-dimensional recipe structure insists that the practitioner rethink how she engages in culinary practice. Rather than reading all of the ingredients then moving to the processes and techniques, Child constructs her recipes based on a series of steps that are comprised of the triangulation of process, technique, and materials. Her focus rests on

the "how" or the process of culinary practice-as-art rather than on the "what" or the end product. With this structure, Child overhauls how culinary texts present culinary practice-as-art, and current authors, such as Rachael Ray, draw clearly on Child's recipe form, ultimately bringing this focus on process and culinary practice-as-art to a new generation.

Further, this reconfiguration of culinary practice is not solely reserved for the likes of Alice Waters or Grant Achatz; rather, as Fisher and Child reveal, every American kitchen can—and should, they would argue—be home to this culinary practice-as-art. In fact, Fisher and Child wanted the revolution to occur one meal at a time in American kitchens across the country and by the hands of the artist—the American housewife. The shift in gender roles, through the activation of culinary practice-as-art, operates more subversively than the more visible attack on food corporations. Fisher and Child's system worked clandestinely to maneuver the American housewife out from under the suffocating labor of "cooking" and into the creative, liberating role of culinary practitioner or artist. With this change, the two authors confront the austere American patriarchy—a complex and difficult task—and demand change, one kitchen and one woman at a time.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**“A NEW AND DIFFERENT COOK BOOK FOR A NEW AGE”: *BIG RED***

**Spaghetti with Meat Balls**

Mix and form into 1 ½” balls...

- ¾ lb. ground beef
- ¼ lb. ground pork
- 1 cup fine dry bread crumbs
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp. minced parsley
- 2 small cloves garlic, cut fine
- ½ cup milk
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. pepper

Pan-fry until browned in 4 tbsp. hot fat...

- 1 cup minced onion
- The meat balls

Blend in...

- 2 tbsp. flour

Then add and simmer about 1 hr. ...

- 5 cups cooked tomatoes (2 #2 cans)
- 6 tbsp. minced parsley
- 6 tbsp. minced green pepper
- 2 ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 3 tsp. sugar
- 2 small bay leaves, crumbled
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

Serve hot over hot drained Boiled Spaghetti (8 oz. uncooked) (p. 380) on hot platter. Sprinkle with grated sharp cheese.

Amount: 6 servings. (*Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* 385)

At a glance, this recipe from the first edition of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* (1950) suggests a quick and easy meal: the five key steps and sets of materials with fragments of instructions beginning each step line up in one narrow column. It reads as linear and singular with a final plating step that emphasizes how it should be served: hot, which suggests that the homemaker should place it on the table for one's family immediately. Because of the weight placed upon service, this recipe privileges the product, or the dish itself, over the process,

technique, and materials the homemaker employs to create it. As a representation of the recipes in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, this sample embodies “cooking” rather than culinary practice, or a closed system rather than a hybrid system comprised of multiple, interdependent elements. Cooking, as proffered by texts such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* and other domestic literacies at this time including *Better Homes and Garden Cook Book* (1951), emphasizes product- and service-oriented labor. Cooking also precludes flexibility and creativity, among other elements, which is evident in the specific measurements for all materials, for example, and without those two components (flexibility and creativity), the homemaker cannot enjoy the process, simply for the sake of the technique (e.g. mincing an onion or adding butter to a sauce in its final stage).

Cooking is the culinary approach that Child and Fisher believed needed to be challenged and reconfigured. They responded with a system rather than a linear approach—with culinary practice. Their system embraces flexibility, creativity, and process and networks these multiple elements together into a layered and complex system. Cooking with its linearity and service-oriented labor, however, operate to reinforce the conservative ideals evident in the network of gender, labor, and economics systems.

The linear structure of the recipe, with the emphasis on product, appears to belie the overall organization of the text, which seems centered on cooking but instead reflects an attention to the labor of general domesticity, or the tasks commonly associated with household labor such as cleaning, sewing, cooking, and child care. Traditionally, cookbooks follow a familiar structure, very much mimicking the linearity and streamlined structure of the spaghetti recipe: appetizers, vegetables or sides, entrées, and desserts. Of course, this general formula undergoes some adaptation, such as meat, fish, and poultry under the larger entrée header, but

the reader generally knows what to expect when she opens the cover of an American cookbook during this period. Because General Mills designates the text as a “cook book,” the audience enters with a set of expectations immediately challenged not by the recipes themselves but by the organization of the text. Thus, the reader must alter her expectations as she reads *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, beginning with the first pages. Rather than focus on cooking, the table of contents and accompanying tabs include designators or descriptors of work that clearly extends beyond cooking. The self-proclaimed purpose of “cook book” becomes nebulous. Upon further reading, these additional, clearly prescriptive sections recall the domestic handbook more than a traditional cookbook. This shift from cookbook to a domestic handbook works in conjunction with the linear, product-oriented recipes to provide instruction not only in cooking but also in domesticity. It privileges prescriptions for behavior, driven by the conservative ideas embedded in gender, economics, and labor systems.

The shift also incorporates cooking as part of domesticity, equating it with other tasks of domestic labor such as sewing and cleaning, and further establishing the homemaker as a laborer and cooking as “unvalued” work. While cooking does not operate as a system, the text networks with the systems of gender, labor, and economics within the subsystem of domestic literacies. Gender, labor, and economics work interdependently to inform how cooking remains a linear, product-oriented structure.

While it echoes the nineteenth-century domestic literacies such as the Beechers’ *The American Woman’s Home*, the shift from cookbook to domestic handbook leaves out some key characteristics of the earlier texts. An absence of moral duty and technology signals two changes that distinguish *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* (and other comparable domestic literacies such as *Better Homes and Garden Cook Book*) from their nineteenth-century handbook

predecessors. These post-World War II domestic literacies hinted at national duty rather than a religious or moral imperative as the nineteenth-century texts frequently did. *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, for example, makes no mention of a larger sense of duty beyond one's family, in fact. The increasing presence of technology in American culture, ranging from food storage to televisions, found its way into the pages of these popular domestic literacies; *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* features a section on the space of the kitchen and how the latest kitchen technology can give the homemaker the kitchen of her dreams while also making her "fit in" with American culture-at-large. Though these two characteristics in post-World War II cookbooks indicate a shift away the nineteenth-century domestic handbook, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* retains some of the significant facets of those earlier texts, including a prescriptive function with the objective of keeping the homemaker confined to the home (and the space of the kitchen) and a continuation of the networked connection among gender, labor, and economics systems.

*Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book's* prescriptive functions originate in how it foregrounds domestic labor that makes the homemaker's cooking *appear* complete and effective, in how it simultaneously seems to privilege the role of homemaker while re-inscribing it as one of service (even of subservience and self-sacrifice), and how it slips away from the primary purpose of cookbook to a focus that resembles a nineteenth-century handbook by subsuming cooking with other domestic tasks and by offering advice that does not solely center on cooking. This broad objective reflects an attempt to reach a wide consumer base not only for corporate profit—for a company such as General Mills—but also for broad and sweeping influence—returning many women to the kitchen and into service-oriented labor. This function does not merely exist in the content of this text but also in its structure.

The text also reveals the complex paradox that existed for homemakers and domesticity in general, with cooking at the center: American culture-at-large did not value the homemaker's labor as true *work* but insisted that the home and domesticity were her responsibility (for the health of the nation—physically, morally, and psychologically), used different strategies to make her “not-work” appear as valuable as her husband's (e.g. “Short Cuts” and “Meal-Planning” sections) while discounting its value, and recognized that she needed to rest and recover from this “not-work” (as demonstrated in the “Short Cuts” section). Thus, a paradox emerges in the content of the text and in its form—a domestic handbook “disguised” as a “cook book.” The prescriptive function of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* works to assert a conservative ideal for women and domesticity and perpetuates and complicates this paradox of ‘unvaluable’ value. Similarly, this paradox also extends into the realm of economics. With this type of work, the homemaker also appeared to assume a position of economic power, specifically regarding purchasing power and household goods. Through *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, General Mills advocated that the reader buy certain products, such as Gold Medal Flour, which it claimed could make her cooking more efficient and better for her family. Rather than offering a true sense of empowerment to its readers, General Mills, instead, fattened its bottom line. Their profits came at the expense of the homemaker and her ‘unvaluable’ value. Thus, the economics system informing the text functioned interdependently with labor and gender and further developed the prescriptive historical rules evident in the text. In addition to the ideas outlined in the introductory chapter regarding the gender, labor, and economics systems, the aforementioned ways that issues of gender, labor, and economics come together define how these three systems operate in a networked fashion with *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* and cooking.



The spaghetti recipe's emphasis on product serves as a useful example of how *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* promotes these early post-World War II era's discursive systems, using cooking—a common domestic task that is positioned equally alongside others in this text—as the medium: *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* instructs homemakers of this time to engage in labor to assemble a product, both of which are in service of the members of her household. Similar to instructions in women's magazines of the time, the recipes and other instructional content of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, such as the “Short Cuts” section, work to affirm traditional gender roles in an effort to stabilize the nation following the upheaval of World War II.<sup>27</sup> Yet, the effects on American women and cuisine run deep and will eventually require change, a challenge that M.F.K. Fisher and Julia Child tackle.

### **The Rise of *Big Red***

The cultural influence of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* cannot be underestimated. Thousands of American homemakers eagerly anticipated its September 8, 1950, debut, and prior to this date, General Mills teased audiences of the *Betty Crocker Magazine of the Air* about “Betty's Mystery Gift,” “which, unbeknownst to listeners at home, had been strategically distributed to food industry tastemakers just before the publication date” (Marks 133). The hype surrounding the release of *Big Red* and its marketing plan reflected the political and economic impetus—via corporate efforts—to return women to their traditional place in the kitchen and in the patriarchy as secondary helpers. In other words, General Mills' marketing department cannot assume full responsibility for hatching the plot surrounding the release of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* because the systems of gender and economics, with an emphasis on labor,

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<sup>27</sup> The move to the suburbs, exposure to paid labor during the war, and any political and/or economic gains felt from the 1920s and 1930s posed threats to the efforts to resituate women in those roles rooted in tradition (and all of the dominant discourses attached to them), but *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* articulated strategies—through simple and illustrated instructions—of how to avoid these threats and return to the ‘proper’ place of the kitchen.

also bear some of that ‘credit.’ Patriarchal American culture, which gender, labor, and economics systems promulgate, already had shifted in this direction and found support in corporations such as General Mills. This carefully planned debut concluded with Betty Crocker “appear[ing] to have the postwar nation by the purse and apron strings as recipe loving customers lined up in stores to purchase Betty Crocker’s culinary masterpiece,” a text that would quickly challenge the *Bible* for the top spot on the bestseller list (Marks 133-34).<sup>28</sup>

American homemakers were not the only audience to “smell” the success; department stores and drug stores pleaded with General Mills to carry *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, and “thanks to ten years of kitchen testing by home economists and housewives, the quality of the finished product earned the kudos of the most demanding critics” (Marling 203-04). *Big Red* became a hit and not simply because it earned larger profits for General Mills by advocating the use of its Gold Medal Flour in its recipes or by further cementing Betty Crocker as a corporate icon. *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*’s form and content, encouraged—and even insisted that—American women to return to the kitchen to perform their national duty of stabilizing an anxious nation following the upheaval of war.<sup>29</sup> This required the reassertion of traditional

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<sup>28</sup> In 1951, a year following *Big Red*’s debut, Better Homes and Garden released the twenty-first printing of its popular “De Luxe” edition cookbook with a red checked cover. The red checkerboard became Better Homes and Garden’s signature graphic that would continue with the *Better Homes and Garden New Cook Book*, which is still on shelves today. Another comparable text in this domestic literacies subsystem is the *Joy of Cooking* written by Irma Rombauer. The timing of the fourth edition—1951—seems calculated as it was released to operate in direct competition with *Big Red* and *Better Homes and Garden Cook Book*. The “new kid on the block” *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* needed to distinguish itself from the fierce competition, and with the backing of a national corporation, it succeeded in becoming a best-selling text.

<sup>29</sup> This call to duty is certainly not novel. Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example, in *The American Women’s Home* (1869) called upon American women to embrace their domestic role as their Christian and national duty. The religious context reflected the lingering effects of the temperance movement, and the American homemaker’s national duty was to help re-stabilize the country via the home following the turmoil of the Civil War. Also, during and after World War I, we witness a similar push to rebalance the nation via the home, but this effort finds its roots in science rather than religion. The domestic science movement that began in the late nineteenth century and continued through the First World War advocated that American homemakers conduct their patriotic duty in support of the war and, following the war, by employing scientific practices in their kitchens. By adhering to the principles of chemistry, for example, in the realm of cooking, American homemakers could prepare properly balanced meals for their children and husbands, thus creating healthy and productive citizens who could

patriarchal organizations and gender roles such as the division between public/private space and reaffirming the service role of the homemaker, which was understood to underwrite national security and stability. The network of gender, economics, and labor systems, evident through the text's recipes and instructions, reinforces these roles and, with them, monotony and routine (and vice versa). To begin exploring how this advancement of the network of systems and how the text promotes the paradox facing American women occur, it is helpful to focus first on *Big Red's* self-identified primary purpose: to guide the homemaker in the task of cooking.

### **“Spaghetti and Meat Balls”**

Four components of this popular and familiar recipe reveal the prescriptive functions of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* as well as how the gender, labor, and economics shape this text via instructions, materials, techniques, and measurements. The abbreviated linear structure of the recipe resists complexity and multiplicity, which, among other features, would characterize it as a system; in this way, the recipe form reflects cooking rather than culinary practice. This structure also cloaks in simplicity the labor involved in cooking any dish, which is perhaps most evident in the five instructions or steps listed in “Spaghetti and Meat Balls.” These short directions suggest ease of preparation regarding both time and skill level with very little work; all that the homemaker must do is “mix,” “form,” “pan-fry,” “blend,” “add,” “simmer,” and “serve” to complete this dish (*BCPC* 385). The brevity of these instructions also creates a quick reading pace for this recipe, suggesting a rapid completion of the dish. Also, four recipes fill the 8x10 page. Yet, the time, required skill, and work of producing this dish cloak this simplicity, or the brief instructions with little explanation. And, the ellipsis at the end of each step performs a similar function (and do so throughout the text); ellipses hide the time, skill, and

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rebuild the nation following wartime disturbance. As these brief examples demonstrate, the American homemaker and her management of the home became the source for national stability following great conflict, and her duty to her country was to ensure the family unit and home remained secure and prosperous.

labor involved in each step and the entire dish.<sup>30</sup> The homemaker must then fill in what the recipe omits here but without any instruction or guidance in how to do so. With the masked simplicity and the extensive work of the ellipses, we see in these instructions the privileging of convenience and product, the illusion that cooking is not work and can be completed without fuss, and any level of cook can easily make “Spaghetti and Meat Balls.”

Similarly, the techniques required of the cook in this recipe work with the instructions to emphasize convenience and ease of production while masking the real labor involved, which reflects product-oriented characteristics of cooking as a linear rather than systemic structure and demonstrates how the gender and labor systems network to shape the text. Each technique receives a brief definition in the instructional pages at the beginning of *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, but, like the instructions in this recipe, these directions lack detail or much explanation. *Big Red* briefly defines blend, simmer, beat, and mince in the “Meaning of Terms” section (12). But, the short definitions also make it appear as if there is little labor involved in each of these techniques (in order to privilege the completion of the task or dish), or that they may require little practice or even additional information to complete.

For example, “Betty” defines “mince” as “to cut with knife or scissors into *very* fine pieces” (*BCPC* 12). In the “Spaghetti and Meat Balls” recipe, three materials require this technique, yet only one—the onion—receives additional instruction, which occurs later in the text under the “How to Prepare” section. Here, one picture depicts an onion being “chopp[ed] or minc[ed]” with a short explanation underneath the photo (*BCPC* 27). “Betty” does not provide further explanation about the difference between chop and mince, and the method for producing the small squares being sliced off of the onion in the picture does not receive explanation: “Cut

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<sup>30</sup> I would further argue that these ellipses elide multiplicity by eliminating any additional work.

end slice from peeled onion. Discard. Cut exposed surface into tiny squares to any desired depth. Cut crosswise into thin slices” (*BCPC* 27). Notably, the instructions for chopping or mincing an onion exist out of order; the crosswise thin slices should be made first in order to achieve the small squares of onion that are shown. The attempt at convenience and at reaching a range of skill levels falls short with such instruction; the lack of clarity and explanation hinder convenience if a new cook attempts this technique. Moreover, mincing parsley and a green pepper do not deploy the same process (albeit an incorrect one) described for chopping or mincing a pepper or herb.

Finally, the text does not distinguish the instruction to “cut fine” the garlic from mince; thus, the book does not meet the objectives of convenience and accessibility but instead reflects cooking’s product-orientation. To learn how to mince an onion, pepper, and parsley as well as cut the garlic “fine” requires work on behalf of the homemaker, not simply with a knife but also perhaps some research to gain a better or more detailed explanation of this technique; this all requires time—something according to *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* that the homemaker simply does not have. The text elides time by masking it in similar ways to how it hides labor: abbreviated instruction and the prevalent use of ellipses in the recipes. The brevity of the recipes, assisted by the ellipses, creates an illusion of ease and speedy completion of each dish; thus, the homemaker enters a recipe such as “Spaghetti and Meat Balls” with the assumption that the dish will be completed quickly, in effect mimicking the short and brief text itself. *Big Red* also assumes a level of expertise in the homemakers, despite marketing itself for all levels of skill.

The materials required for “Spaghetti and Meat Balls” reflect the emphasis on convenience, or, in other words, the type of materials required for the dish can easily be found in the homemaker’s grocery store. And, the familiarity of this dish intends to address all levels of

skill as well as suggest that the average homemaker does, in fact, have the financial ability to engage in these processes. However, similar to its treatment of labor, *Big Red* elides the financial limitations of some of its readers, thereby alienating them while still insisting upon the completion of the work. The exception to convenience and familiarity, perhaps, may be the parsley. However, the brief description within the “Herbs” subsection of “Meaning of Terms” suggests that most of *Big Red’s* readers, at the very least, would recognize it. However, they may not know how to use it, and the explanation provided in the text offers little indication of how it should be deployed: “When used as a tasty, nutritious addition to sauces, soups, stews, meats” (BCPC 11). The lack of clarity and detail in this ‘definition’ or ‘suggested use’ leaves the homemaker with little direction as to why a cook would use parsley apart from a nominal nutritional value. “Tasty” offers nothing specific regarding flavor; the vague description here remains consistent with many explanations throughout the cookbook. The homemaker, then, knows the vague use of parsley but not know it functions in these of dishes. Thus, the confusion revealed by these instructions reflects a problem with the both content and organization of this text—the absence of clarity in the directions and a lack of additional detail regarding how these techniques can be developed. These gaps also further expose the opaque purpose of the text overall and point to how these elisions produce the appearance of ease. And, the homemaker, who is left in the dark as a result of these fissures, must perform added labor to obtain this knowledge or fall short in adhering to the standards set before by the networked discursive practice systems and the text.

Further, the omission of such detail reflects the prescriptive, patriarchal nature of the texts: the homemaker, or worker, should simply follow the instructions and not question *Big Red’s* authority. The privileging of product over process also becomes evident here as does the

linearity of the text and cooking; a focus on why the parsley is used would constitute an emphasis on process, while the glossing over of its purpose for the sake of the “recipe calls for it” favors the product and, ultimately, the completed dish. Despite *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book’s* provision that recipes and instruction for convenient and easy-to-prepare dishes at all skill levels, the succinctness of the text often precludes the accomplishment of these objectives, thereby leaving the homemaker with questions that bely the promise of the text—to be a “cook book.” In addition, the structure of the text, with its many tabs and sections, would suggest extensive education, but the generalized and rather nebulous content within each subdivision belies the reader’s expectations of comprehensive instruction. In this way, the text’s structure functions comparatively to cooking: neither is a complex, interdependent system but puts forth the illusion of one. This dual illusory work, then, substantiates the paradox facing the American homemaker or “unvaluable” value, drawing the systems of labor and gender to the surface once more.

Finally, the measurements for “Spaghetti and Meat Balls,” specifically the precision and delineation of measurements for *all* materials, reinforce the central problems in the text identified earlier. The exact measurements for salt and pepper at both points in the recipe (in the first step and the last) highlight the linearity of a mode of cooking that does not require thought. Homemakers should simply follow each step and measurement as the book instructs, and they will successfully complete this dish. *Big Red* establishes the pattern for this blind precision early in the text, under the heading “How to Get PERFECT Results from Recipes in this Book...” (6). It provides eight illustrated steps to achieve this goal, and the sixth step instructs, “Measure as Exactly as Druggist follows a doctor’s prescription! Two minutes spent measuring carefully may save you hours of grief” (6). This ‘prescription’ for measurement underscores the apparent

linearity and cursory attention seemingly required for cooking, and the text's insistence upon exactitude precludes any creativity.<sup>31</sup> This underscores the notion of the homemaker as a laborer who does not "need" added detail—she only needs to serve her family, according to the text and its neighboring and interdependent gender and labor systems. With precise measurements and instructions, the opportunity to season using salt and pepper, for example, as one would like (e.g. by taste) cannot fit within this mode of cooking; in other words, the flexibility required by seasoning for taste cannot fit within a non-hybrid system like cooking. *Big Red* suggests, then, that "Betty Crocker" has done all of the labor of creating the recipe so the homemaker would not have to expend time and energy doing so herself; she can mindlessly follow the directions instead.<sup>32</sup> In this way, the small example here represents a significant feature of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* in both form and content—the masking of labor, which contributes to the larger elisions operating in the text.

At the same time and paradoxically, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* also insists on the place of creativity in the kitchen. Promoting a homemaker's creativity through cooking mirrors one of the functions of the text—the simultaneous validation of hidden labor while containing the homemaker within the home.<sup>33</sup> And, this simultaneous purpose exemplifies one

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<sup>31</sup> We can juxtapose this with the instruction that Julia Child provides in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*; she insists upon weaning oneself from recipes and to season according to taste, which is one of the strategies used to shift cooking to culinary practice (and ultimately, culinary practice-as-art) and is done so by removing cooking's linearity and privileging flexibility and creativity.

<sup>32</sup> "Betty" reiterates this factor in the "Meal-Planning" section towards the beginning of the text. "Smart homemakers" (who are anonymous) provide testimony to the numerous instructions that *Big Red* provides regarding meal planning, including "Follow tested recipes carefully" (35).

<sup>33</sup> In *Homeward Bound*, Elaine Tyler May pays particular attention to the concept of "domestic containment," which she contends "was another manifestation of containment, the political philosophy of combating communism in the Cold War era" (xxiv). May continues that the home was "the sphere of influence" and "domestic containment was bolstered by a powerful political culture that rewarded its adherents and marginalized its detractors" (xxiv-xv). Because the home was a secure space for the family, May argues, domestic containment "undermined the potential for political activism and reinforced the chilling effects of anticommunism and the Cold War consensus" (xxv). We can extend May's notion of domestic containment to correlate with the function of the Cold War era political system. Beyond working to resist political ideologies antithetical to the American way of life, domestic containment, in the context of the political system, operated to contain gender roles within the walls of tradition. In



of the ways that the gender and labor systems inform this text. Similarly, creativity and cooking during this time “presented women with a paradox: cooking was viewed as an outlet for creativity; however, this creativity was encouraged in very structured, controlled ways,” and “while women were expected to express their creative energies through their cooking, this creativity was subordinate to the need to be of service to the family” (Endrijonas 159). Creativity in the kitchen, in fact, can be an outlet, but the constraints on creativity enacted by *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* along with the idea that creativity benefits the homemaker actually hide creativity from the actual audience and benefactors of this creativity—the family. Moreover, creativity embodies flexibility and multiplicity, which are not characteristics of a closed system such as cooking, but, instead, are critical features of a complex, hybrid system, such as culinary practice.

The paradox of creativity (a primary feature in *Big Red*) appears, in the “Spaghetti and Meat Balls” recipe, through its insistence on precise measurements in contradistinction to an idea of authenticity (the introduction of “ethnic” food to her family demonstrates the homemaker’s “creative” cooking skills, expanding her culinary horizons and exploring new and different cuisines, according to “Betty”).<sup>34</sup> In addition, “creativity” in the kitchen, as proffered by *Big Red*, functions to further cement conservative ideals insofar as it reflects the larger paradox of ‘unvaluable’ value promoted by the text. And, “creativity in cooking,” argues Sherrie Inness, “represented a way for a women [...] to set herself apart from other women,” and domestic literacies such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* suggest that “a meal prepared with the right

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this way, then, domestic containment serves as one of the many elements that comprise the discursive practice system of gender.

<sup>34</sup> The notion of authenticity works effectively alongside the version of “creativity” that this text advocates because they are both illusions: the Italian cuisine in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* appears authentic to its largely unknowing audience while serving such “authentic” food demonstrates the homemaker’s ability to be “creative” in the kitchen.

creativity could serve as a lasting sign of a woman's success as a hostess and cook" (*Dinner Roles* 148).<sup>35</sup> This success, in turn, contributes to her overall achievement of the American homemaker ideal. The way that "Betty" positions creativity in this text recalls, in some ways, the patriotic call to duty that was prevalent in nineteenth-century domestic handbooks; these texts insisted that it was the American homemaker's national duty to engage in a series of demanding domestic tasks with the ultimate goal to produce a healthy and morally upstanding citizenry. Yet, these women simultaneously possessed profound influence within their homes but garnered very little (if any) political power outside of the home. The creativity in *Big Red* functions in a parallel fashion: the homemaker could be "creative" in the kitchen but only within a specified set of parameters, not defined by her but by the text. Thus, the *illusion* of creativity serves as another example of elision within the text, creating an added paradox. The interdependent systems of gender and labor appear here as the homemaker is restricted by the specific parameters in which she must work and in which she is "duped" by the illusion of creativity. This illusion functions on behalf of the patriarchal, conservative ideal embodied in and propagated by the gender and labor systems to contain the homemaker in the home and in the role of laborer in service to her family.

Finally, the network of gender, labor, and economic systems becomes evident in this recipe primarily through the emphasis on product and the work of cooking, undergirded by the tenet, with a long history in America, that women must serve as the primary home cooks and domestic laborers. In the "Spaghetti and Meat Balls" recipe, the illustration directly under the recipe further substantiates the emphasis on product; the hand-drawn picture appears as though

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<sup>35</sup> The notion that creativity was "a highly competitive way to demonstrate [...] domestic talents" is a manifestation of the economic system, capitalism and the free market in particular (Inness *Dinner Roles* 148). Like her husband who must compete in the world of business/paid labor so, too, can the homemaker. This framing of cooking as capitalist competition once again articulates the era's network of systems and simultaneously equates and suppresses the role of the homemaker with her husband's position.

the text leads directly to the product that the homemaker should mimic. Together, these factors echo the mass production of everyday products that the homemaker, who uses this recipe, most likely purchases—the privileging of product over process for the customer’s consumption. In this way, General Mills, as author of this prescriptive text, seeks to position the homemaker as both subordinate to the American corporation while also mimicking it in its mode of production. Economically, this strategy serves General Mills and other similar companies positively, specifically the bottom line and marketing its image.

At the same time, cooking as a profession was seen as legitimate work, yet, in the home and when executed by the homemaker, cooking lost its classification as professional work and validity as such, again reflecting the paradox of ‘unvaluable’ value particularly when networked with gender. And, the elisions that occur throughout *Big Red*, specifically within the recipes themselves, demean the mode of cooking done in the home by women as unskilled, which reinforce the paradox. We see these threads, or network of traditional tenets, carried through in the other sections of the text, including “Short Cuts” and “Meal-Planning.”

### **“Smart Homemakers Say:” Meal Planning**

This early section in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* shows the triangulated systems of gender, economics, and labor while also continuing to demonstrate the prevalence of the aforementioned paradox that the American homemaker confronted routinely. The function of women as domestic managers, a role perhaps most prominent during the early- to mid-nineteenth century, comes to the fore again, and while *Big Red* never overtly articulates such a role, the prescriptive, instructive nature of the text recalls many of the tasks and responsibilities authors such as Lydia Maria Child delineated in their domestic handbooks over a century before. Also, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* replicates the expectation of duty that appeared in those

domestic handbooks, though it is never articulated as such. This duty, unlike previous incarnations, did not have a moral or religious tinge; instead, the homemaker, in addition to her routine labor, also shouldered the burden of re-stabilizing the nation via the home following the upheaval of World War II.

In the early post-World War II era, homemakers' responsibilities also take on additional functions, including an emotional component that focuses on the homemaker's happiness via satisfaction in her work and her attention to appearance, both the homemaker's and the home's. This modern reincarnation of the domestic manager works to reinstall women in the home via marketing strategies, from companies such as General Mills, aimed at creating a desire in women to *want* to return to the home because there they will find 'professional' and personal fulfillment by performing "valued" work. We see this role for the homemaker—one that embodies the triangulated discursive practice systems—specifically addressed in the "Meal-Planning" pages of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*.

The form of this two-page section sets it apart from the recipes and the other instructional chapters, which are often organized in small, illustrated grids; "Meal-Planning" is divided into two columns within five small sub-sections (Appropriateness, Appearance, Satisfaction, Nutrition, and Cost): the left column contains the instructions, and on the right, there are quotes from unattributed homemakers reflecting the efficacy of those directions (*BCPC* 34-35). Also, the sub-heading for this brief but significant portion of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* reads "Smart Homemakers Say..." suggesting that "smart" homemakers are the readers of this text and that in order for the reader to join those ranks, she must follow these instructions, too (*BCPC* 34). The two introductory paragraphs reveal the purpose of this section and the objectives for the homemaker in both her cooking and her work within the home. These two pages teach the

homemaker about “planning, preparing, and serving meals,” which may appear difficult at first but can be developed into a “skill which grows easier with the doing” and one that can be learned “without thought or conscious effort” (*BCPC* 34).

Further, “smart homemakers” knew their larger responsibility, part of which could be fulfilled through cooking; “mealtime,” according to *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, “should help build happy home life” (*BCPC* 34). This significant added responsibility is deeply embedded in the historical connection between domesticity and gender; *Big Red* continues to perpetuate this hefty onus throughout the text but clearly articulates it in the last line of the “Meal-Planning” section. Thus, the homemaker is not only charged with closely following the instructions in the subsequent subsections but also must keep in mind that her overall job, in addition to her everyday routine, is to ensure her family’s happiness. This notion of “happy home life” echoes the moral duty of the nineteenth-century domestic handbooks. Yet, unlike the Beechers’ *The American Woman’s Home*, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* does not characterize “happy” in religious terms. Instead, the gender and labor systems via *Big Red* instruct the 1950’s American homemaker to serve her family with the implication that doing so will fulfill her larger duty as a woman. Thus, “happy” translates to the family members’ happiness rather than the homemaker’s, but she will find gratification in creating the environment for her family’s happiness, thus achieving the objectives of womanhood, according to the gender and labor systems and the text.

The system of labor (informed by the paradox facing America homemakers, too) also surfaces here as well in the ways *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* presents the work of cooking. Initially, *Big Red* acknowledges the labor of cooking as work, but the text quickly shifts and cloaks work with “fun,” “without thought or conscious effort.” The direct instructions

remain brief, so the reader's attention shifts to the "smart homemaker" quotes used to demonstrate how the tips can be translated into the everyday life of the American homemaker. The 'evidence' of these quotes, then, shows the readers how to implement the succinct directions and how the homemaker's labor assumes multiple forms all aimed at the same objective—the service of her family to "build happy home life."

*Big Red* instructs its readers to "[cut] your meal pattern to fit" the situation, occasion, and family needs (e.g. "Appropriateness"), and these tips reflect the book's practice of being broad and vague. The "smart homemakers" provide the substantial suggestions here, and two of the four anonymous quotes indicate strategies for achieving the "appropriate" meal, both with the same impetus—accommodating children's food predilections. The first "homemaker" advises, "I plan the meals to be healthful for the children, first, and then interesting to adults without cooking separate menus," and the second "homemaker" submits, "I plan my meals with the needs of my young son in mind. I never cook separately for him, but prepare simple foods appropriate for him and then dress them up for grown-up tastes and add to the menu to meet adult needs" (*BCPC* 34). These "homemakers" echo one another, privileging the child's needs over the adults while also avoiding cooking two meals because the cook can adjust dishes to meet adult tastes. Further, the use of "adult" by both "homemakers" eradicates the "I" from the consumption of the meal; removing the homemaker reflects the in-service nature of cooking-as-labor. The "I" is only present during the labor of cooking and preparing the meal. Neither homemaker articulates how the meal tastes nor if she enjoys it; instead, the satisfaction of the family becomes a priority while her own pleasure (or even basic sated hunger) remains secondary to her husband's and children's. Like the masking of labor that occurs through the text, the service of one's family conceals the homemaker's subjectivity. The elision of the

homemaker's subjectivity, especially in the kitchen, exemplifies one of the primary characteristics of cooking (as opposed to the system of culinary practice) to which Child and Fisher respond. *Big Red's* brevity of instruction, the illusion of creativity, and the repeated erasure of the homemaker's "I" reflect the problematic nature of cooking as a subsumed task within domesticity and as a linear structure (rather than a system). This linearity requires each of the aforementioned illusions and elisions; it needs the elimination of detail to maintain its austere structure and to achieve its product-oriented purpose.

Both privileging children and the elision of the homemaker serve two functions that reflect how labor and gender operate around the node of linear cooking, ultimately pointing to broader cultural expectations of women and domesticity.<sup>36</sup> First, they both underscore the *work* of cooking that is in-service to the family; meal planning is part of cooking-as-labor. For example, the homemaker, as the "smart homemakers" suggest, should take into account nutrition while also working to only make one dish that can accommodate multiple palates, starting with the children. Such accommodation requires additional knowledge and planning; the homemaker must acquire nutritional information for a variety of food products as well as data regarding what nutrition is necessary for children at different ages. Further, she then must find recipes that integrate the materials with the appropriate nutritional elements and those materials that conform to the varying palates of the household members. Finding a set of ingredients and a meal that address these requirements necessitates a great deal of additional work from the homemaker.

Second, the homemaker's place in the kitchen is reconfirmed through this labor, both the dichotomous position of being confined to this space to engage in devalued labor and "choosing" to assume the primary role (via the kitchen) because *Big Red* affirms this "non-work." By

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<sup>36</sup> Historically, a woman was expected to engage in self-sacrifice in service of her family and ultimately, the nation, and this factor remains with the post-World War II incarnation of domesticity and the homemaker. We see extensive of this, for example, Beecher's *The American Woman's Home*.

instructing readers that they must attend to the nutritional needs and various taste preferences of each family member using the strategies of “smart homemakers say,” the text veils the additional labor involved in accomplishing these tasks by validating this work as necessary to creating a “happy home life.” The well-being of her family depends upon her. While the nutritional guidance seems like a logical inclusion in a discussion about meal planning, the added labor of such consideration may not be part of a homemaker’s initial thoughts on the subject. One of the “smart homemaker’s” pieces of advice reveals such *work*: “I have a chart of how much vitamins, minerals, and proteins each member of my family needs according to age and activity” (*BCPC* 35). On the surface, a chart appears rather simple; however, what is cloaked here in the brief sentence is the amount of work involved in compiling such a chart. The vast expectations placed upon the homemaker, once again, get painted with simple, broad strokes to create an illusion that it is not work at all to achieve such standards, once again showing how the gender and labor systems surface.

Similarly, another “smart homemaker” directs, “I have a list of menus for balanced meals which is a helpful guide in insuring good nutrition in my meals” (*BCPC* 35). She suggests that she simply possesses these menus, which obscures the actual labor in developing them. In addition to simply constructing a menu, this “smart homemaker” instructs that the reader to research nutritional information and develop meals based on that information. Thus, the homemaker must not only develop meals based upon financial means and access to ingredients but also keep nutrition in mind. Furthermore, there is additional evidence of the in-service nature of the homemaker’s labor in the three quotes from “smart homemakers.” The emphasis on “I” shows that the homemaker assumes full responsibility for these tasks, which are entirely for her



family.<sup>37</sup> The repeated use of “I” and “my” foregrounds the homemaker as both the worker and recipient, in contrast to the erasure of “I” when the homemaker sits at the table alongside her family and enjoys food that she has created. The use of first person causes the reader to receive a sense of autonomy (whether real or not) in the work and to assume a subservient position. Here, the paradox comes to the fore once again while also demonstrating the often problematic and complex interdependence among gender and labor systems.

There are parallel strategies privileging the significance of the homemaker’s domestic tasks while simultaneously masking the added labor involved in the focus on appearance in this “Meal Planning” section.” The instructions for “Appearance” are limited to cooking, but the guidance provided by the “smart homemakers” is not. *Big Red* directs its reader to “prepare,” “serve,” and “present each food attractively for greater appetite appeal” (34). The “homemakers,” though, offer, in addition to “I think each meal out in detail, so there will be color appeal as well as good eating,” that the kitchen windows “have many plants,” and she uses them in “decorating the table at mealtime” (*BCPC* 34). The broad instructions from *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* cover a range of tasks within cooking, but the “homemakers” advice adds another set of responsibilities—the appearance of the dining table. Meal planning as a task within the labor of cooking fulfills part of the “prepare” directive, which is supported by the first “homemaker” who suggests that the reader “think each meal out in detail.” Yet, the decorating suggestion does not appear to fulfill any of the three *cooking* instructions. The implication, then, is that the homemaker must engage in additional labor to fulfill her ‘true’ responsibilities. This echoes the larger duty that the gender and labor systems insert into the text—the duty of American womanhood, which, notably, is less defined than the moral or religious obligations that appeared

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<sup>37</sup> The third quote provided focuses on the basic food groups that are mentioned in the tip column: “I’ve always tried to balance meals for the whole day. If some of the Basic 7 is left out of one meal, I get it into one of the other two” (*BCPC* 35).

in nineteenth-century domestic handbooks. Similar to the ambiguity that characterizes the instructions in *Big Red*, the homemaker must discern (or work) what comprises these responsibilities to her family.

The first two sets of instructions—“Appropriateness” and “Appearance”—also reflect the manner in which homemakers should present their homes and themselves, accomplished through the labor of cooking and other domestic tasks. Within a conservative set of parameters—derived from the gender, labor, and economics systems—homemakers worked to create the middle class ideal, the images of which are presented throughout *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* along with direction for how to achieve this standard, such as how the kitchen *should* look, complete with curtains and accessories.<sup>38</sup> Given how the instructional material simultaneously centers on cooking and extends beyond the kitchen, the ways that the text instructs work towards developing this model began in the kitchen and then reached into the rest of the home. As such, the “Meal-Planning” section, along with the comparable components of the text, suggests that reinstituting the balance of the nation and establishing a standard on which this balance can be achieved begins with the homemaker in the kitchen, echoing the added component of duty evident in nineteenth-century domestic handbooks but altered here to address a sense of nationalism rather than morality.

To accomplish this balance and to create such standards, the homemaker must be keenly aware of her financial health and purchasing options. The economics system becomes perhaps most prevalent in “Meal-Planning” alongside gender and labor in the final section, “Cost.” As such, the contemporary incarnation of the domestic or household manager role also comes to the

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<sup>38</sup> Such instruction can also be read alongside the discussion about the different types of kitchens, which are presented at the beginning of the text. Each kitchen represents a particular ideal—whether it is one that privileges convenience or one that values aesthetics. They also require a certain economic affluence to achieve. Thus, regardless of the claim that *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* is for every American homemaker, the standards throughout the text find their roots in the American middle class.

fore; the financial responsibility that women assumed in this position comprised a sizable fraction of their range of domestic duties. In the early 1950's, the financial oversight of the household expenses required the homemaker to budget for purchasing food items and other necessary everyday goods, such as toilet paper and cleaning supplies. A new homemaker reading *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* is looking for guidance and advice about the new labor that she will encounter. "Betty" offers four brief suggestions that are broad and rather vague, in part to point to the 'true' advice, which the "smart homemakers" offer.

At the same time, these generalized statements suggest, by their brevity and matter-of-factness, that the labor involved in what is being advised is minimal. For example, "a food budget will help you" and "buy the basic food needs for the family first" comprise the first two instructions from "Betty" (*BCPC* 35). They are simple but leave much in the way of explanation. The "smart homemaker" steps in to elaborate: "We buy the foods we must have for good nutrition first. Then if we feel we can spend more we buy the things that are not so important, but give our meals a lift" (*BCPC* 35). On the surface, this suggestion develops the tips from "Betty;" however, it only repeats the initial ideas and draws upon the nutritional information provided in the prior section. Further, "foods" and "things" without examples or explanation continue the pattern of ambiguity or elision and do not provide the reader with how to go about such decision-making. The homemaker receives the general advice that she may have been seeking but no details for how to implement such strategies; therefore, she must engage in additional work in order to devise methods for integrating these suggestions into her everyday domestic routine.

This economic ambiguity serves two key functions for—or really, against—the homemaker. *Big Red* guides her to construct a food budget because it "will help [her]," but the lack of specificity about what foods possess the best nutrition for one's family, along with a

general sense of their prices, hinders the homemaker (the new homemaker in particular) in the development of a food budget. Second, the potential range of foods and prices included in this ambiguity fails to take into account different levels of class or financial means. Thus, while it may prove much easier for a homemaker in an upper middle class household to budget for nutritional foods, which are sometimes more expensive, the challenges mount for the homemaker in lower or even middle class homes. If she cannot afford certain foods that provide particular nutritional values, the homemaker, according to *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, has failed in her responsibilities to her family.<sup>39</sup> The integration of class issues with the homemaker's labor here demonstrates how the gender, labor, and economics systems network.

Similar concerns emerge with the second direction from another "smart homemaker." In this example, though, she develops the task of budgeting, but the detailed instruction of how to go about such work remains absent: "I find a semi-monthly budget economical, because bulk buying of staples is a worthwhile saving; and if funds are budgeted over longer periods I can take advantage of sales and special values" (*BCPC* 35). The assumptions made here include the idea that homemaker knows how to construct a semi-monthly budget and knows what staples are needed in her kitchen. The labor of such work is, once again, masked by the simplicity and brevity of the advice. The educational process of learning how to budget and what staples are necessary remain absent from not only "Meal-Planning" but also from the entire text. This omission helps the product-oriented focus of the text; it creates the illusion that additional work is not present when, in fact, the homemaker must learn how to accomplish these added financial tasks set before her. This serves as another example of how the gender, labor, and economics systems network to inform this text.

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<sup>39</sup> Such failure, then, suggests that she has not lived up to not only the standards for the American homemaker but also the standards for American womanhood.

This absence of process becomes more explicit in the final advice and subsequent “smart homemaker” explanation in this section. The advice from “Betty” reads “grow your own fruits and vegetables, if possible” (35). The suggestion, once again, is vague and requires the homemaker to engage in an entirely different set of domestic tasks, or work. The accompanying “smart homemaker” elaboration further shows the extensive commitment needed to perform this labor: “I’ve always had to consider the cost but have learned to manage by buying in season, taking advantage of sales, and by raising quantities of vegetables which we eat in abundance in summer and can for winter use” (*BCPC* 35). In addition to learning how to grow vegetables and financing the work, the homemaker must also have the space in which she can grow these products. The “smart homemaker” also advises that the reader can, or preserve, the vegetables that she has grown to use in the off-season. Thus, the work of cooking has become extended beyond the kitchen, requiring two new sets of tasks that the homemaker must learn and master, and the generalized instruction leaves her without the tools or strategies to accomplish the goals.

The “Meal-Planning” section demonstrates how the gender, labor, and economics systems simultaneously work together to train the homemaker to work for no reward or credit, again emphasizing the troubling paradox of “unvaluable” value, and promulgate patriarchal, conservative values that ultimately create the frequent elisions evidenced throughout the text. As an introductory portion of *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, “Meal Planning” further solidifies the pattern of ambiguity or lack of instructional detail that routinely leaves the readers with additional work to fill in the excessive gaps in information but does so in a way that highlights how the gender, labor, and economics systems operate interdependently, specifically the way that this added work keeps the homemaker in the home to produce “output” via her unpaid labor that contributes to the household and national economies. Further, “Meal Planning” makes clear

the expectations of the homemaker—from her common duty of cooking to tasks that seem disconnected from cooking, such as home decorating—and the reader quickly learns that this range of domestic labor does—and must—fall under her purview. In this way, the gender, labor, and economics systems triangulate to create a traditional, and even familiar, role for women while suppressing their subjectivity, disguising this range of labor as “fun,” and creating the illusion that completing this work is financially feasible for all homemakers. With this function, the text reveals how complex, interdependent, and often contradictory this network of systems can be.

### **“Make work easy:” Short Cuts**

As a bookend working with “Meal Planning,” the final section of *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* offers advice and strategies to create the ideal home, and subsequently, achieve personal fulfillment, or, as Susan Marks suggests, “‘Short Cuts’ [was] a detailed blueprint for improving domestic life” (144). “The Short Cuts” range from managing kitchen space to meal planning to personal care so as to position *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* as a guide to achieving the domestic standard, which recalls the domestic handbooks of the nineteenth century but altered via the historical rules of the post-World War II period embodied in the gender, labor, and economics systems. This last section also reminds the reader that cooking is not her sole responsibility but is, instead, one of many that she must fulfill successfully to achieve the standard for American womanhood and domesticity. With an emphasis on convenience, time management (including “thinking ahead”), and the homemaker’s well-being, the “Short Cuts” reinforce the problematic paradox facing American woman at the time while also demonstrating how the triangulated systems of gender, labor, and economics surface in *Big Red’s* instructional pages in ways other than in the recipes.

“Short Cuts” is sub-divided into two sections, beginning with longer (more than one sentence) instructional items under the umbrella of “let your head save your heels” (*BCPC* 429). On this page, the eleven “short cuts” reflect the domestic concepts of meal planning, general time management, efficiency, and convenience. Four of the “short cuts” reiterate the idea of meal planning, reinforcing the text’s earlier section on the subject. And, like “Meal Planning,” the advice here fails to provide the reader with specific instructions about how to accomplish these tasks successfully. For example, the direction to “prepare for tomorrow while cooking today” suggests that the reader “make gelatin, salads, cream sauces [and] salad dressing ahead of time,” which appears to be a useful time-saving strategy (*BCPC* 429). Yet, the absence of how to balance a day’s cooking—in addition to the other domestic work—hinders the homemaker’s ability to know *how* to do the task. While the text repeatedly instructs her to plan her day to accomplish all of the work that she must complete, *Big Red* fails to provide a “how,” and in this case, the absence of a “how” affects the homemaker’s time management, cooking, and other domestic tasks. She must plan her cooking for these meals, and now, with this direction, she must also allow time to make dishes ahead of time—she must plan to plan ahead. This added work for the homemaker reflects a simultaneous shift away from earlier (pre-twentieth century) perceptions of gender and labor (moral or religious), specifically surrounding cooking, and retention of traditional aspects of the networked relationship between the gender and labor systems—in particular the additional layer of duty, whether it was to nation, Christianity (or God), or family. Also, cooking as a linear structure—one that privileges product over process—reinforces the absence of “how”—the “how” or process can only function in a system, one that allows for interdependence, multiplicity, and fluidity.

Perhaps the instruction that best demonstrates the challenge of planning ahead as well as the way gender, labor, and economics operate interdependently comes in the second-to-last “tip” in this opening “Short Cuts” section. And, the “perfect your homemaking skills” advice also shows the extensive nature of domestic labor itself. The text instructs readers to “practice each task until it goes smoothly and easily. Thus develop techniques in[:] meal-planning, cooking, marketing, sewing, dishwashing, home-beautifying, nursing, bed-making, cleaning, [and] laundering” (*BCPC* 429). The scope of labor delineated here demonstrates the daunting amount of physical and emotional work that faces the homemaker on a daily basis. The direction to “practice” these varying tasks suggests another layer of work; in addition to executing this labor routinely in service of the family, “Betty” suggests that the expectation is that this work is perfected via practice. The ambiguity that defines much of the instruction in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* also surfaces here. “Home-beautifying” lacks the specificity of “bed-making” or “dishwashing;” therefore, the homemaker must seek out (read: more work) additional information regarding “home-beautifying,” what it means, and how to carry it out within her own home. And, the ambiguity combined with the scope of expectations gestures to the paradox of “unvaluable” value so prevalent throughout the text.

Moreover, *Big Red* does not directly address economic concerns here but does bring the economics system to the fore despite this absence of a direct discussion. Financial resources limit each homemaker; thus, she must prioritize labor, and “home-beautifying” may not assume a high position on that list. The consequences, however, seem rather considerable; if she does not fulfill the task of “home-beautifying” successfully, or even at all, will she fail to adhere to the standard of American domesticity and womanhood? The stakes appear to be high, especially as indicated throughout this “Short Cuts” section. And, the text suggests that there is no room for



compromise. In this way, *Big Red's* prescriptive nature dramatically comes to the fore and affirms its conservative, patriarchal agenda.

This initial “Short Cuts” page ends with perhaps the most ambiguous and confounding suggestion: “Organize the family to cooperate” (*BCPC* 429). Before the specific instruction about “how” to achieve this particular task, an illustration—depicting a smiling homemaker, holding a platter with a perfectly cooked roast atop it, bringing her two grinning children who are helping to set the table, dinner—splits the text, in effect showing the reader how the task can—or should—be accomplished. A subsequent explanation underscores this picture of ideal familial harmony: “Train the children to help with jobs. Very young children can set and clear the table. Older ones can cook” (*BCPC* 429). Again, on the surface, the task appears simple, but the actual execution requires extensive additional labor and the full cooperation of unpredictable children. “Training” an older child to cook, for example, insists that the homemaker knows enough to be able to teach her child, requires the child’s willingness to learn, and necessitates the time and resources to engage in this educational process. *Big Red* omits the instruction regarding *how* to accomplish this work; therefore, the reader, who may find this suggestion useful, receives no guidance but does have the expectation of labor established for her. This particular instruction serves as useful example of how the accompanying content, outside of the recipes, continues the pattern of elision in the text.

With this final instruction, the widespread challenges and unrealistic standards set for American homemakers appear. The paradox confronts the homemaker once again: her labor is perceived as simultaneously invalid and valuable, physically demanding and easy, elided and arduous. Moreover, this instruction begs the question about the homemaker’s responsibilities: if she trains an older child to cook then is she “shirking” her own duty, or is she a “smart

homemaker” who is creating an efficient and happy home? The mixed message works in tandem with the larger paradox to create confusion and uncertainty for the homemaker, and the text fails to fulfill its promise or purpose.

The following two pages in the “Short Cuts” section emphasize two primary concepts: efficiency and ease. These facing pages should be read together in conversation with one another. On the left, the fifteen “short cuts” fall under the subhead of “make every motion count” (*BCPC* 430). Based on the form and content, each brief instruction under this umbrella should enable the homemaker to be more efficient in her domestic work. Her productivity further serves her family by expediting particular tasks and streamlining routine. Such efficient labor, though, requires practice—or additional work. To reach the level of “efficient,” the homemaker must, through trial and error, work enough—perhaps to the point that it becomes routine— so the task becomes familiar that she can execute it on ‘autopilot.’ The added labor to achieve efficiency appears necessary for the homemaker to successfully fulfill her responsibilities to her family and as an American woman.

On the opposite page, *Big Red* instructs the reader to “make work easy” (*BCPC* 431). Like the previous direction to work towards efficiency, the advice to “make work easy” also has the aim of better serving the family, not necessarily the homemaker herself. Efficiency, as demonstrated on the facing page, is not always easy; some of the fifteen brief directions in this second section are designed to assist the homemaker in recovering from “overwork.” Here, the text recognizes that perhaps even with efficiency that the homemaker may become tired or even exhausted, which serves as direct acknowledgement of the *work* of cooking as well as other domestic labor. At the same time, these fragments of instruction suggest that such exhaustion has

no place within the “proper” American household and must be addressed immediately and swiftly.

Further, four-line “poems,” a common device used throughout *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, supplement both subheads. The use of this closed rhyme scheme gestures to a familiar marketing strategy and to a mode for conveying complex or broad ideas in a simplistic fashion while masking the complexity. And, the reader would be familiar with the structure of the poem as they recall the form of popular ad jingles during this time. The poem accompanying efficiency reads:

Planning your work

To save precious time,

Pays dividends...

Without costing a dime. (*BCPC* 430)

The poem links labor and economics to efficiency—efficiency in both work and financial management. The text emphasizes the homemaker’s planning her labor, which requires additional work. The connection to economics through the use of language (“dividend”) more often associated with a masculine financial sector than with domesticity alludes to the world outside of the home while still remaining ‘safely’ inside domestic space. And, efficiency in labor garners financial efficiency. This language also gestures to Inness’ idea about how such marketing strategies worked to make the homemaker feel equal to her husband in terms of labor.<sup>40</sup>

In similar fashion, the poem that supplements the “make work easy” subhead advises:

If you’re tired from overwork,

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<sup>40</sup> “Dividend” also links, what Mary Kelly, calls the public and private spaces.

Household chores you're bound to shirk.

Read these points tried and true

And discover what to do. (*BCPC* 431)

The interdependence of the gender and labor systems comes to the fore here: the homemaker can suffer from being overworked, suggesting that women can be physically and even mentally vulnerable to labor that is simultaneously viewed as not-labor. Thus, the female homemaker requires strategies to combat this exhaustion. *Big Red* denotes a shift from domestic handbooks of the nineteenth-century insofar as those texts did not acknowledge exhaustion as a symptom of labor, and this change may stem from the health movement or fad that was popular at the turn of the twentieth-century or even the rise of psychology as a legitimate profession. However, even with this alteration, this section of the text still features the paradox of the cultural value of “unvaluable” labor. More significantly, as the poem notes, the danger of this fatigue is not the potential detrimental effects on the homemaker but on the labor that she must perform in service to her family.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the attention paid to the homemaker’s well-being and self-fulfillment masks the effects on her labor and her ability to be an efficient worker. *Big Red*, then, resituates the focus on the body and health of the homemaker away from the labor about which the text continuously provides guidance and advice. By doing so, the text accomplishes two goals: first, it creates a diversionary tactic, shifting the homemaker’s attention away from the exhaustion created by the labor promoted in the text and towards a focus on herself; second, and in line with the first, it generates an illusion of care and sensitivity towards the homemaker’s health whereas the true focus is on her ultimate performance as a worker.

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<sup>41</sup> In other words, the strategies offered in this “Short Cuts” section are designed to make the homemaker—and the female body—more efficient in her labor. Thus, we have a conflation of the immediate post-World War II notion of femininity mixed with the “seventeenth-century philosophic conception of the body as a machine, mirroring an increasingly more automated productive machinery of labor” (Bordo 182).

The individual instructional fragments in both sections continue the thread of eliding just *how* the homemaker achieves the tasks in the text. And, like many of the recipes and other suggestions in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, the economic concerns that many homemakers confront continue to remain unaddressed. Both omissions become evident in one set of instructions; with the goal of achieving efficiency in domestic labor, many of the instructions are aimed at multitasking. Like reaching levels of efficiency, multitasking requires practice and trial-and-error; thus, these directions, while helpful on the surface, veil the additional labor involved in mastering not only the overall work but also multitasking. For example, the instruction that is positioned centrally on the page reads: "Combine jobs to save time and energy[.] Bake cake or cookies while washing dishes or cooking dinner; peel potatoes while meat is browning; cook some foods to be served 2 or 3 times...beef for roast, hash, pie" (BCPC 430). While *Big Red* offers brief examples, it fails to provide any additional details, such as how to accomplish these tasks simultaneously or what other tasks can be combined to achieve maximum efficiency. The brevity of this and the other directions suggest that they are simple and require little effort or work.

The homemaker has already learned how to bake a cake or cookies and how to prepare a roast because she has read the recipes in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*—she is, after all, striving to be a "smart homemaker" and to successfully fulfill her duty to her family. While individually these dishes may be simple (though not necessarily for the novice cook), multitasking requires additional to learn and, ultimately, master. The homemaker, then, is left to discover how to accomplish multitasking guided by only the knowledge that she *should*; the pattern of elision leaves her in the dark.

While some of the instructions geared towards achieving efficiency focus on doing work ahead of time, such as “One clean-up process instead of several” or “Bake and cook ahead,” which, again, cloaks the added work involved with these tasks, three of the directions provide very specific advice regarding cooking (*BCPC* 430). Such instruction diverges from the broad advice of the surrounding text, which conveys a mixed message to the reader: if such specificity can be provided with boiling potatoes, grating soft cheese, and making coffee, why cannot similar detail be offered for each instruction? (*BCPC* 430). For example, “To boil potatoes in less time,” *Big Red* suggests, “[Remove] a strip of skin from one side. Boil, then rest of skin peels off easily. *To bake potatoes* in half the time: boil first for 15 min” (emphasis in the original) (*BCPC* 430). The more precise instruction regarding how to cook this singular food item in a more efficient manner certainly offers a more effective strategy to achieving the overall goal of this “Short Cuts” section. Thus, the reader can clearly envision the labor involved in this task and how to apply the advice to her cooking.

At the same time, the detail with regards to a cooking task reminds the homemaker that she is reading a *cookbook* and its primary function—presumably—is cooking instruction. Momentarily, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* returns to its original purpose amid broader domestic instruction. The reader, again, receives a troubling and confusing message from the text. In this way, the homemaker takes on more labor—the work of translator. She must decipher the messages that she receives from this text. Yet, whether its through instruction about how to boil potatoes or how to train children to be domestic “help,” the end game remains the same: to prescribe conservative gender behaviors and standards with the purpose of confining the homemaker in the home and in the service to her family.

Echoing the previous “Short Cuts” section, one instruction, which is aimed at efficiency, targets involving the family once again. Like the previous advice to “train your children,” this “short cut” instructs the homemaker to involve the family members in cooking: “Easy and fun...have the family ‘make their own’ lunch or Sunday supper: Take meat, cheese, leftovers, from refrigerator; set out bread, relishes” (*BCPC* 430). While the general idea of incorporating the family members into the task of cooking appears to be a strategy aimed at achieving efficiency, *Big Red*, once again, masks the additional labor with the simplicity of the instruction. According to the directions, the homemaker must prepare a buffet of sorts from the refrigerator, which requires work, and she will need to instruct her family members in the task of cooking in order for them to “make their own” lunch or supper. Thus, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* confronts the homemaker with another paradox: strategies that are designed to reduce the homemaker’s labor are, in fact, creating additional work. In this instance, the added layer of attempting to recruit and ‘train’ potentially unwilling or resistant family members only complicates the already large task at hand.

Moreover, General Mills and the gender, labor, and economics systems place expanded expectations upon the homemaker here; she must not only be responsible for feeding her family but must also train them to prepare their own meals on occasion. And, the conflicting messages surface once more with regards to the standards set for the homemaker: if her primary responsibility, according to *Big Red*, is to prepare and serve meals, then is training her family to cook for themselves a dereliction of duty? With the emphasis on labor on every page of *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, the simultaneous addition of labor via the training of family members and the delegation of her primary obligation may cause the homemaker to find herself in an ambiguous and uncertain position regarding her own labor. The question of the value of her

labor surfaces as well. If her family members can be trained to cook, even only occasionally, does this call into question the primacy and validity of the homemaker's labor and, by extension, her position in the household? Such a question brings forward the larger paradox facing the homemaker: her domestic tasks are work but not "real" or "true" work; her labor holds a tenuous cultural position—existing between valid and invalid, between work and leisure.

In the second "Short Cuts" section, the emphasis shifts from efficiency to the homemaker's well-being. The inclusion of this page of instructions echoes the domestic handbooks of the nineteenth century more so than reflecting the characterization of this text as a "cook book." The reader receives a reminder that her domestic tasks are *labor* (at least on the surface) through the suggestions about how to cope with the potential physical and mental exhaustion that could occur as a result of such *work*. Further, the focus on well-being steers the text away from cooking, reminding the reader that cooking is just one of many domestic tasks; it does not exist as its own dynamic, hybrid system but as 'just another task' among many others, all with the same effects on the homemaker's physical and psychological health. Following the subhead of "Make work easy" and the poem that emphasizes the effects of exhaustion on the homemaker's ability to successfully complete her work, the fifteen brief instructions target two primary areas of the homemaker's health, which are presented as connecting directly to her capacity to engage in her labor: physical appearance and coping with exhaustion—or to have the homemaker elide the effects of her own labor.

With many of the suggestions, the homemaker must, again, engage in additional work to fulfill not only her domestic duties but also her responsibilities as woman. In this way, we observe how gender and labor intersect but with a slightly altered point of emphasis: the simultaneous connection and (veiled) disconnection from domesticity; these tasks reinforce the



paradox that faces American homemakers. Many of these brief advice narratives allude to the homemaker's sense of self and personal fulfillment, but they are routinely undergirded with the notion that the recuperative strategies and happiness that could be found in "[doing] something refreshing," such as writing, knitting or "[listening] to pleasant music," serve the purpose of returning the homemaker to labor in service of her family and will ultimately benefit her husband (*BCPC* 431). And, such strategies reflect—even bolster—conservative gender standards for women of the era, specifically in relation to appearance and recreational activities.

Beginning with attention to the homemaker's physical appearance, *Big Red* commences this "Short Cuts" page with advice about "personal outlook[:] Eat proper food for health and vitality. Every morning before breakfast, comb hair, apply make-up, a dash of cologne, and perhaps some simple earrings. Does wonders for your morale" (*BCPC* 431). The initial suggestion about food aligns with the scope of the text's purpose. But, the text assumes that the homemaker knows what constitutes "proper food," which appears valid *if* the homemaker has read the sections of the text that outline nutritional information about some foods. However, if she has not, the instructions here fail to direct her to this information. In addition, preparing the "proper food for health and vitality" requires work: to obtain knowledge about the topic, to plan meals, and to prepare the meals. Thus, while this opening sentence of advice intends to assist the homemaker in her well-being, it, in fact, veils the labor necessary to achieve this health and vitality, leaving her directionless and setting her up to potentially fail in her duties.

The subsequent portion of this "personal outlook" guidance serves as the most instructive, however, because the attention shifts away from the purview of the text to the physical appearance of the homemaker—an idea operating divergently with the purpose of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*—while at the same time upholding conservative standards for the

American woman, specifically reinforcing cultural notions of femininity.<sup>42</sup> The intent, as expressed in the last line of the brief instruction, is to assist the homemaker's morale. Thus, *Big Red* implies that in order for the homemaker to feel uplifted or to have a high morale (all with the goal to function as an effective laborer) then she must work to achieve a particular and narrow standard for femininity. In this sense, the instruction sets the stage for the homemaker, who is now appropriately feminine (e.g. who must comply as an object in patriarchy), to engage in *women's* labor; the coiffed hair, make-up, perfume, and jewelry, then, serve as the uniform for her 'job.'

Furthermore, we see these guidelines for appearance reinforcing femininity of the era, specifically how the combination of hair, make-up, and jewelry reflect the prevalent image of the American woman in advertising (e.g. the ad below) and television (e.g. Margaret Anderson on *Father Knows Best*, Donna Stone on *The Donna Reed Show*, June Cleaver on *Leave It to Beaver*, or Nancy Hughes McClosky on *As the World Turns*). The triumvirate of hair, make-up, and jewelry represents the physical ideal of American womanhood (part of her larger duty that goes unarticulated in the text but is clearly implied) but not domesticity, on the surface. In order to

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<sup>42</sup> I employ the term "femininity" to specifically draw on well-known second wave feminist ideas about the feminine and the body as articulated most notably by Susan Brownmiller and Susan Bordo. And, we see the images of 1950's femininity on television, as Marsha Cassidy explores in her work. In advertising of the era, we also observe mothers being addressed directly about the need to maintain such femininity, which is her duty to her family, as seen in this advertisement for Stauffer System from the *Winter Park Herald* (November 16, 1950):  
Figure 1: *FLOWERS FOR A BEAUTIFUL MOM*



connect the two, corporations employed their marketing vehicles, such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, to create this fusion of ideal physical appearance and domesticity. By doing so, these combined concepts and images of American womanhood functioned to constrain women within these prescriptions of femininity and to construct or frame domesticity. The limitations and boundaries composed by this mix of appearance and domesticity extend beyond the kitchen, and they operate to confine and loop any impetus out of these boundaries back into the walls of domesticity-plus-femininity.<sup>43</sup> In order to maintain (patriarchal) stability and order via the home in post-World War II America, this loop must occur; any part of the fusion of American womanhood, both femininity and domesticity combined (or more broadly, the network of the gender and labor systems), that seeps outside of the walls of the home could perpetuate the male anxiety that followed the war.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the “personal outlook” that links physical appearance to the homemaker’s ability to complete her domestic tasks successfully, *Big Red* also advocates that the homemaker should “refresh [her] spirits” in order to, once again, ward off any hindrance, such as fatigue or depression, that could interfere with her labor. In two sets of instructions, the emphasis shifts from physical appearance to health and recreation, and like the accompanying segments of advice, they swell the workload for the homemaker by recommending additional activities to

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<sup>43</sup> We can look at this looping-back-in through two parallel lenses: as a closed-system or in a similar fashion to Deleuze and Guattari’s desiring-machine, one that precludes obtaining of the desired object in order to perpetuate the act of desire.

<sup>44</sup> This notion of control recalls Susan Bordo’s idea that “the discipline and normalization of the female body [...] has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control,” and femininity relies on the “seemingly willing acceptance of various norms and practices” (166, 167). These norms and “the rules for femininity” govern the construction of “the appropriate surface presentation of the self,” which we observe in this particular “short cut” (169-170). We learn these rules through “bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required” (Bordo 170). Though she addresses her contemporary moment specifically with regards to the use of images as the primary medium of transmission of these rules, Bordo’s ideas can certainly be applied to the textual dissemination of such rules and norms that we see in the immediate post-World War II era. *Big Red*, then, functions as an apparatus to assert both this control and as a principle messenger of the rules of femininity.

support her labor. “Exercise, sunshine, fresh air are part of health,” *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* asserts, “Get outdoors every day. Take a walk, do some gardening, take the children for an outing or pay your neighbor a short visit” (431). While the text positions these activities to assist the homemaker and her well-being, they also require that she dedicate time to these activities amid the vast number of domestic tasks that she must complete daily. Further, these activities should be brief, according to *Big Red*, as noted by the use of “some” to describe gardening and “short” to limit the social visit with a neighbor. Thus, the homemaker must find the appropriate balance between her labor and those recuperative activities, for which the text fails to provide instruction.

At the same time, the suggestion to “take the children for an outing” integrates part of her work with these healthy activities: her role as mother and the work of childcare are cloaked by the larger purpose of “fresh air [is] part of health” (*BCPC* 431). The homemaker still engages in labor while taking the children for an outing; she must constantly attend to their safety and needs and, according to *Big Red*, find some respite for herself while outdoors. As a result, the homemaker finds herself in a catch-22, similar to the problem of trying to find the appropriate balance of time. Here, though, “Betty” instructs her to find rejuvenation with work, an idea contradicted by the surrounding instructional narratives that advise the homemaker “[to] sit down, put [her] feet up on a chair [...]” for example (*BCPC* 431). The ways in which gender and labor intersect in this portion of “Short Cuts” prove not only troubling and contradictory but also ambiguous, which may be more debilitating than the overt conflicting instruction. The lack of direction within these instructions causes two primary effects for the homemaker: first, she must fend for herself regarding how to fill in the gaps of these instructions, which proves ironic given the overall purpose of the text, and second, she remains stagnant regarding her duties as

homemaker while living under the weight of the conservative expectations for who she *should* be as an American woman.

Similar to “[getting] outdoors every day,” *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* also suggests multiple activities to “refresh [the homemaker’s] spirits,” all of which center on the idea of recreation (*BCPC* 431). Each recommended activity reinforces gendered ideas of recreation while also masking the time necessary to engage in each pursuit, again requiring the homemaker to find time in her already busy and complicated domestic schedule, further revealing the thread of elision in the text. *Big Red* begins with the advice: “‘Recreation’ means ‘re-create’...for enthusiasm and courage,” which suggests that the subsequent activities will reinvigorate the homemaker and give her the courage necessary to continue engaging in her domestic labor (431). The text implies that she requires both to sustain the will to complete her tasks; the personal satisfaction that comes from this labor, as the text suggests, may, in fact, create an emotional and psychological drain on the homemaker.

The difficulty that *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* faces, then, is how to negotiate these two contrarian positions in this “short cut.” It must simultaneously privilege the personal fulfillment that domestic labor, cooking in particular, can presumably generate while also acknowledging that such work may cause strain and stress for the homemaker; *Big Red* cannot, however, trump the former with the latter but must, instead, create a delicate balance. This tenuous equilibrium finds some roots in this type of “short cut,” which advises the homemaker to “garden, paint pictures, pursue any hobby, look through a magazine for home planning ideas, read a good book, or attend club meetings” (*BCPC* 431). Notably, some of these recommendations actually support the homemaker’s domestic labor; gardening and home planning help cooking and home beautification, both of which are ‘required work’ for the

homemaker. They also require time and work. Thus, under the guise of recreation, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* advances suggestions for activities that function as domestic labor, blurring the boundaries between work and leisure for the homemaker. Her ability to delimit leisure from work becomes more precarious while simultaneously solidifying the hegemonic gender and labor standards and expectations for American domesticity.<sup>45</sup>

Comparable to the “personal outlook” and “refresh your spirits” suggestions, *Big Red* advocates that the homemaker should focus attention on her mental work and leisure as well, further supporting the broader idea that the homemaker’s well-being is essential to her success as a laborer. Whereas the “refresh your spirits” guideline cloaks work with leisure, the two narratives that privilege “head work” can be juxtaposed, one emphasizing work while the other appears to foreground “pleasant thoughts” over the work (*BCPC* 431). Both function to accomplish the same goal: prepare the homemaker to be an efficient and effective worker. First, the text instructs, “Your mind can accomplish things while your hands are busy. Do head work while dusting, sweeping, washing dishes, paring potatoes, etc. Plan family recreation, the garden, etc.” (431). *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, once again, advocates multi-tasking but notes how this essential domestic skill can be accomplished both physically and mentally. The expectation that the homemaker must be thinking about work while working reveals the extent of her labor, which is further supported by the list of tasks along with the double mention of “etc.”<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the familiar domestic tasks such as cleaning and cooking, this “short cut” also

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<sup>45</sup> In other words, if the homemaker cannot distinguish between labor and leisure then the work that she is performing, whether intentionally as a domestic task or unintentionally via “recreation,” contributes to the successful maintenance of the home and family. Thus, she fulfills her role as laborer, adhering to the ideals for American womanhood and domesticity and affirms the ‘advice’ (read: prescriptions) proffered by corporations, such as General Mills, that have financial and marketing interests in the homemaker’s conformity to said prescriptions.

<sup>46</sup> In this example, we also observe how cooking (“paring potatoes”) is subsumed alongside such other domestic tasks rather than assuming a foregrounded position, which draws attention to the purpose of the text and how, in many cases, it reflects the domestic handbook format rather than a more familiar cookbook form.

reveals some of the other tasks that fall under the homemaker's purview, including family recreation; according to the text, she is also responsible for the recreational activities of the family—or, in other words, she must provide ways for the family members to relax following their own labor activities. Family recreation, then, is leisure time for the family members but not the homemaker; for her, this activity becomes another domestic task, ultimately demonstrating how women developed an “other-oriented emotional economy” (Bordo 171).

Two panels below the above instruction, *Big Red* suggests, “Harbor pleasant thoughts while working. It will make every task lighter and pleasanter” (431). First, the text acknowledges that domestic labor can create mental exhaustion but then can simply be combated by these “pleasant thoughts,” thereby suggesting that the labor is not *that* strenuous and any stress that results from the work can easily be remedied. Perhaps more significantly, though, is the mixed message put forth when this “short cut” is read alongside the multitasking advice provided earlier on the page. In the latter, the homemaker receives instruction to use her mental energy to plan her other domestic tasks while engaged in work; however, the suggestion to “harbor pleasant thoughts” undercuts the earlier advice. Thus, the homemaker may not know where to direct her energy: multitasking or “pleasant thoughts.”

The ambiguity evident here continues a familiar and problematic trend within *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*: the simultaneous specificity and absence of detail in many of the instructions for cooking and for other domestic labor. As a text that positions itself to be an authority on cooking (though this comes into question with the frequent shifts away from cooking as noted in the “Short Cuts” section) and domesticity, the uncertainty represented here hinders not only the homemaker's ability to comprehend the instructions but also may create

anxiety for her insofar as she is not fulfilling her domestic responsibilities (and by extension, not fulfilling her role as a woman).<sup>47</sup>

Also, the ambiguity combined with this potential anxiety points to the complex and often unstable nature of the relationship between the systems of gender and domesticity. In this network's attempt to uphold (impossible) standards for how women should behave and look within the home and as they complete their domestic labor, contradictions and gaps appear, as noted in the two "short cuts." *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, as a device to advance this hegemonic network, works to cloak such gaps and contradictions, in this case, by surrounding the inconsistency with other narratives of advice. With so many tasks facing the homemaker, the assumption appears to be that she will not notice the contrary advice and will work to achieve *all* of these "short cuts." Thus, while the text acknowledges that domestic labor can cause unpleasant thoughts for the homemaker (though not explicitly stated but rather implied), it fails to correct the ambiguity and contradictions evidenced not only in this section of the text but throughout *Big Red*.

The lack of specificity regarding how to achieve the advice offered comes to the fore once more with "harbor pleasant thoughts" because the homemaker is not overtly instructed about what "pleasant thoughts" could mean for her and her labor. Instead, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* provides small illustrations to suggest the possible "pleasant thoughts" on which the homemaker could focus. These pictures offer fantasies to the homemaker (e.g. golfing with her spouse, relaxing on a beach, sailing, and dancing with her husband), away from her

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<sup>47</sup> Of course, the source for such anxiety—whether or not the homemaker successfully adheres to the standards for domesticity, womanhood, and femininity—finds roots in texts such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*; the ideals are threaded through the various instructions and recipes throughout the text, so much so that the homemaker cannot escape their presence. The "Short Cuts" section, perhaps, serves as one of the most notable examples of the precarious mix of the advancement of these standards, the unspoken but known 'consequences' of not achieving these ideals, and the ambiguity of instruction.



labor, yet the purpose of these small drawings is to provide a way to make her work easier and “pleasanter.” The homemaker’s labor does not allow her to enjoy the activities featured in the illustrations; she can only daydream about them. And, according to *Big Red*, even the daydreams must support and even contribute to her domestic work and to the “other-oriented [...] economy” that defines the homemaker’s role (Bordo 171). Together with the “short cut” mentioned in the other three squares, this “pleasant thoughts” instruction functions to further the contradictory nature of the text and to draw attention to the simultaneous recognition of the homemaker’s task as labor and the denial of this labor as challenging work—or “unvaluable” value. Instead, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* suggests that domestic labor can easily be managed with multi-tasking, and any potential ‘stress’ caused by it can be addressed simply with “pleasant thoughts.” The attention to such broad domestic tasks, diverging from cooking nearly altogether, also further calls into question the overall purpose of the text.

By subsuming cooking alongside other domestic work here and throughout the text, *Big Red* highlights cooking’s product-oriented, linear structure—all of this domestic work (e.g. cooking, laundering, cleaning) shares a singular objective: to produce meals, clean clothes, and a clean home, for example, for the family. The gender and labor systems surface here as well; the breadth of labor shouldered by the homemaker exists simultaneously with the homemaker’s added work in deciphering the perplexing messages and instructions in the text, such as employing “pleasant thoughts” as stress management but in a way that supports her labor. Cooking as labor, which is further delineated in the “Short Cuts” section, becomes the type of product-oriented, linear structure away from which Fisher and Child desire to shift.

While *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* appears to be “just a cookbook,” its subsumption of cooking with other domestic tasks and the attention paid to these additional

facets of domestic labor belies the overall purpose—and marketed purpose—of the cookbook and readers’ expectations. By doing so, *Big Red*, with this “Short Cuts” section, subverts these expectations and surreptitiously advances conservative prescriptions for femininity and American womanhood: to restrict the woman to the home and to assign her with work that is in service to others. Further, we can look at cooking as representative of domesticity in general at this time, specifically with regards to the stifling labor and the paradox facing the American homemaker.

The effects of the simultaneous privileging and de-emphasizing of cooking in the text along with the prescriptive functions surface in varied ways within American homes and within domestic literacies. And, gender, labor, and economics operate as networked systems to shape the cultural space in which *Big Red* and other domestic literacies exist and to construct the text itself, in effect providing the pieces by which those prescriptions are developed. In addition, the ambiguities and gaps created by the lack of specific directions and contradictory instruction in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* also significantly influence the American homemaker in her daily routine, ultimately demanding that she create strategies to address these problems. Thus, the text fails to uphold its promise of providing thorough cooking instruction; rather, it promulgates prescriptive, patriarchal values and behaviors. And, the broad paradox facing the American homemaker that *Big Red* promotes and the problematic and debilitating effects of the hegemonic network of gender, labor, and economics systems further contribute to how the text falls short of its purpose and, in conflict to its stated mission, creates additional work for the homemaker. Yet, this added labor supports the (unspoken) prescriptive function: to return women to the kitchen and the home with the express intent of serving the family. Economically, this same labor supports the growing corporate culture in America at this time. With General

Mills as the author of *Big Red*, it directly promotes its own products while also supporting other companies that make packaged or processed foods. The text, then, operates as an advocate of patriarchal corporations and their bottom lines while at the same time claiming that they are providing the homemaker with economic empowerment via their purchasing power of household goods. But, this “empowerment” only serves the corporations rather than the homemakers or local economies.

Despite its claims, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* operates as a text that advocates cooking-as-labor, a task that exists amid many other domestic functions; it does not adhere to the form and content of a traditional cookbook, thereby belying readers’ expectations. Instead, the text elides these intentions and instead functions as a tool operating on behalf of a corporation and patriarchal conservatism. Cooking, then, does not hold a clearly privileged position in this text, which, in turn, influences how homemakers perceive this practice: it will not hold a favored position in their homes and will affect American cuisine as a result.

Not long after *Big Red’s* debut, Fisher and Child respond to this troubling development in American cuisine through the coordinated creation of a discourse and practice that activates culinary practice-as-art—a multi-dimensional, interdependent system that will overhaul American cuisine and culinary practice while also liberating women from the stifling labor of cooking.

## CHAPTER 2

### AMERICA IS READY FOR A CHANGE

America in 1963 stood in the midst of a revolution, in spirit and in practice. An often-overlooked pocket of revolution was the dramatic shift occurring within our national cuisine and culinary practice. The overshadowing of these changes could, in part, be attributed to the emerging attention at this time being paid to the plight of the American housewife, as articulated by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.<sup>48</sup> At the same time that Friedan's text began to generate waves in the broader civil rights movement, Julia Child and M.F.K. Fisher stirred their own pots of change. With their respective experiences in France—Child predominantly in Paris and Fisher in Provence—and through their instrumental texts, these women called for the overhaul of American cuisine and culinary practice via a shift from a linear to a system perspective and illuminated a new view for how gender, labor, and economics systems could be perceived.

All three women desired emancipation in some form: Friedan wanted women liberated from the oppression of unpaid labor and unequal access to education and economic opportunity; Child and Fisher wished to emancipate American culinary practice—and by extension the American housewife—from the category of labor, out of the shadow of domesticity, and shift it to culinary-practice-as-art. In Fisher's *Map of Another Town* and Child's *My Life in France*, we learn about their respective foundations for the activation of this register shift—from labor to art.<sup>49</sup> Fisher proffers the discourses for this activation, while Child, in *Mastering the Art of*

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<sup>48</sup> The shift from “homemaker” to “housewife” here is intentional as to reflect how the respective texts, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* and *The Feminine Mystique*, refer to this domestic labor position.

<sup>49</sup> I'm using the term “activation” here intentionally in order to differentiate the type of work in which Fisher and Child are engaged. Also, “activate” and “activation” connote more *active* or proactive work, reflecting the dynamic behavior of the system (culinary practice) on which they focus. I want to emphasize their concentrated effort towards fundamental change and a *deliberate* choice of materials and method.

*French Cooking*, provides the methods and the materials for such a drastic shift.<sup>50</sup> Fisher's discourse pairs exquisitely with Child's methodology and materials, complementing each other like a red Burgandy and Stilton. Though neither woman directly articulates her desire to liberate the American housewife, they suggest this goal in their individual and collective work. The activation of culinary-practice-as-art highlights how the creativity and freedom of the material and methods of this system could liberate the American housewife from the stagnation and limitations of American cuisine and culinary practice in the 1960s.

The register shift from labor to art serves as the perturbation to the gender and labor systems, primarily. Beginning with Fisher's discourse, we see a revision—or reorganization—of these systems, which forces a reconsideration of how we think about American cuisine and culinary practice. Fisher's work, along with Child's, operates in direct conversation with Friedan's ideas and *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* (all of which are working within the subsystem of domestic literacies), thus situating their work in the broader conversation about gender. Further, the connection to Friedan's work also brings Fisher and Child to the fore of the progressive movements occurring at the time. More pointedly, though, Fisher and Child's collaborative efforts at this revolutionary moment alter American cuisine and culinary practice in ways that are still evidenced today.

### **Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique***

Scholars in a range of disciplines, from women's studies to anthropology, have explored Betty Friedan's influential sociological study *The Feminine Mystique*. Scholars, such as Karen Foss, Daniel Horowitz, Stephanie Coontz, and Sandra Dijkstra, have investigated the historical

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<sup>50</sup> With Child, in particular, we see an emphasis on materialism. Yet, this brand of materialism avoids any Marxist association because, rather than focusing on class, Child speaks directly of the literal materials of culinary practice—chef's tools and food items. Moving the concept of materialism away from Marxism and anthropology and into the realm of everyday life allows for a more comprehensive examination of Child's work.

significance of her work, the sociological methodologies that she employs, and the larger concepts put forth that contribute to the inception of the Second Wave feminist movement. While these avenues of examination are, of course, valid and useful, I would like to emphasize the broader impact and scope of Friedan's ideas rather than her sociological work. Friedan and this text frequently receive credit for igniting the fire of change for American women during this period. More than anything, she articulated the problems that she saw facing American women, which included economical and political hegemonies used to oppress women—or more specifically, the patriarchal, conservative ideas promulgated by the gender, labor, and economics systems. Friedan's methods appear familiar: a sociological study featuring interviews with a range of women and the use of statistical data. While Friedan did not single-handedly trigger the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S., she does delineate, rather clearly, why she believed women desired change. It is for this reason that I wish to use her text, as a representation of the scope of ideas informing the Second Wave feminist movement.

Her emphasis on “American women's discontent” and the “problem that has no name” helps us to understand the network of gender, labor, and economics systems at work during the time that Fisher and Child are in France and writing (Friedan 69, 66). Also, in Friedan's discussion about Freud, she argues women's “inferiority [...] was caused by their lack of education, their confinement to the home” (186). This brief comment synthesizes her overall approach to American domesticity. And, to a large degree, Friedan responds directly to prescriptive, patriarchal texts such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. She establishes clear binaries in *The Feminine Mystique*: public/private space, higher education/uneducated, paid or traditional labor/invalid labor. These binaries, when considering domesticity, culinary practice, and gender, are problematic because they, of course, disallow culinary practice entirely. Further,

for Fisher and Child, Friedan's conceptualization of American women and their relationship to or place within the home (the kitchen, specifically) is simultaneously familiar and foreign.

Friedan's call to end the oppression of women rings of an "all or nothing" binary. In order for women to achieve political and socioeconomic equality according to Friedan, they need to be liberated from the monotonous, unpaid labor of domesticity—cooking in particular—and receive a formal higher education. To support her argument, for example, she cites how American corporations, particularly those that manufacture home goods, fear the very liberation about which Friedan speaks. Notably, she quotes a "thinking vice-president" who believes that the growing number of women pursuing an education is "unhealthy" (300). In order to sell their products, corporations need the primary shopper to stay at home and to be the target of the companies' focused marketing efforts. The solution that this "new executive with horn-rimmed glasses and the Ph.D in psychology" suggests is to "make home-making creative" (301). Friedan challenges the manipulation of the American housewife and argues that this is simply another reason why American women need their own brand of liberation. While these corporate marketing strategies are certainly not foreign to the American marketplace (see *Big Red*, for example), Friedan's emphasis on the notion of creativity raises some significant questions when considered within the framework of culinary practice and with Child and Fisher in particular.

Friedan maintains her discussion of creativity in the domestic realm within the bounds of business and marketing, and she uses a marketing strategy for cake mix as an example. While her focus is on how corporate America manipulates the housewife, her argument suggests that creativity cannot exist in the domestic space, in the kitchen in particular. When discussing the advertiser of "X Mix", she notes that, because of the feminine mystique, the advertiser must manipulate the housewife's "need for a 'feeling of creativeness' into the buying of his product"

(307). Friedan contends that, although surveys in the mid-1950s indicated that women considered themselves man's equal, they still felt "lazy, neglectful, haunted by guilt feelings" (307). Higher education, then, becomes Friedan's answer—a complete detachment from the domestic space and its associated labor. Furthermore, Friedan argues that American women need "to see housework for what it is—not a career, but something that must be done as quickly and efficiently as possible" (469). Here, she concurs with the prevalent perspectives on housework of the time, as articulated in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, for example. But, Friedan follows this suggestion with how the American housewife should achieve this revised perception of housework: "Once woman stops trying to make cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing 'something more', [...] she can say 'no' to those mass daydreams of the women's magazines and television" (469). From here, Friedan argues that the American housewife "can use the vacuum cleaner and the dishwasher and all the automatic appliances, and even the instant mashed potatoes for what they are truly worth—to save time that can be used in more creative ways" (469). Her positioning of creativity here, like earlier, emerges once again as problematic. Friedan's emphasis in this passage seems to be more of a rejection of the media's and corporate America's manipulation of American women rather than a crafted plan to achieve the dismantling of the feminine mystique.

Moreover, by suggesting that creativity cannot exist in the domestic space, she ignores culinary-practice-as-art, which lives both inside and outside of the home kitchen. When we turn to Julia Child and M.F.K. Fisher, we can see their move to shift cooking as craft or labor to culinary practice-as-art, a shift that not only acknowledges the creativity involved but also embraces and foregrounds it. It is at this convergence that we locate the perturbation—Child and Fisher activating the shift in discourse and practice of linear cooking to culinary-practice-as-art



as a system, which addresses the concerns that Friedan believes oppress and debilitate women.

All three women desire similar progressive change, whether clearly articulated or simply suggested, yet the perturbation of the network of gender, labor, and economics systems comes at the level of discourse—how this change occurs in a manner that encompasses multiplicity.

### **A National Culinary Identity Crisis**

We frequently view the 1960s—1963 to 1969 more specifically—as a time of great social and political upheaval in America, a widely examined and discussed moment in the nation’s history. The culinary revolution, which occurs simultaneously, remains often overlooked. At the center of this change, of this activation of culinary-practice-as-art, we find Child and Fisher who illuminate shifts in American food culture and gender roles (as they connect to culinary practice) at the time. James Beard and Craig Claiborne sit with the two women at the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable, and this group initiates the Good Food Revolution, which renovates how Americans perceive culinary practice and food.<sup>51</sup> Though my focus is on Child and Fisher, Beard and Claiborne certainly play a significant role in this change, in how culinary practice is viewed, and in the dramatic shift in direction of American cuisine.

Fisher and Child attend to concerns of American national cuisine because of their own experiences with French food and culinary practice. France as a locale and a nation with a rich culinary history plays a vital role in how Child and Fisher individually and collectively activate this register shift. Both women maintain an intimate relationship with France, its people, and, most significantly, its cuisine. Each woman wrote a “memoir” about her time in the country, and each experienced a profound impact on her approach to culinary practice and food. Fisher spent a

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<sup>51</sup> We see the clash between two factions in American culinary culture, one lead by the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable and the other headed by those who advocated for convenience cooking, emerge during the mid- to late 1960’s. I will discuss this in the concluding chapter as it (somewhat) centers on the release of Fisher and Child’s collaborative project.

number of years in different areas of France, including Dijon and towns throughout Provence, and she wrote routinely about her everyday life as a foreigner in these regions, with culinary practice and food always already at the fore of these essays and reflections. In addition to *Map of Another Town* (1964) and *A Considerable Town* (1978) (later collected into one volume entitled *Two Towns in Provence*), she composed a number of essays, letters, and journals about her time in France. In fact, the influential *Gastronomical Me* finds its roots in these French travels. Child produced one of the best selling and most influential cookbooks in American history following her time in Paris and in the French countryside. She followed the release of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* with a PBS television program devoted to French cooking instruction geared towards a mainstream American audience, who simultaneously feared and was fascinated by the foreign. Child, in effect, devoted her life's work to teaching French cuisine—culinary practice-as-art more specifically—to generations of American home cooks.

While each woman individually discovered the opportunities afforded by French culinary practice in relationship to American cuisine, they did eventually communicate and collaborate. With Fisher doing the bulk of the writing and Child serving as consultant, they produced the Time-Life cookbook *The Cooking of Provincial France*. The text solidifies a partnership nearly destined to occur. Their love of France, its culture, and cuisine made these women kindred spirits. They saw the transformative power of French culinary practice—because it exemplifies culinary-practice-as-art—for not only shaping a fledgling American cuisine but also for American housewives. In their writings, one can sense how Child and Fisher feel about the freedom provided by culinary-practice-as-art and by French cuisine in general; both offer liberation from linear cooking, or labor. Friedan (and later, activists in the feminist movement) finds the tethering of cooking with labor to be damaging and problematic.

Child and Fisher work to disentangle the two: by utilizing their individual strategies—Fisher proffering the discourse and Child putting forth the practice—and collaboratively offering one solution to not only the problems that Friedan articulates but also for American cuisine and its struggle to find an identity in the post-World War II era, the post-immigration boom, and the contemporaneous moment of the reconsideration of American identity triggered by the Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to this moment of dramatic change in the definition of American identity and in the sociopolitical landscape, American cuisine also experienced an identity crisis. The agricultural and immigrant components of America's national composition greatly influenced and shaped the nation's cuisine. Thus, America's cuisine evolved as a fusion of different foods and practices. The available food products and the known methods of preparation defined the nation's cuisine, and those culinary practices developed as the technology of the time would allow it.<sup>52</sup> Of course, this is how national cuisines emerge; however, early English dishes greatly influenced this American 'cuisine.' More significantly, the food and its preparation seem more utilitarian—it was about sustenance rather than the “pleasures of the table.” As a result, we see culinary practice become entrenched as work, decidedly rooted in gendered delineations of labor. Fisher and Child work to shift perceptions of American cuisine and the relationship between gender and culinary practice via the activation of culinary-practice-as-art.

We can examine two early American cookbooks to gather a quick snapshot of American cuisine and culinary practice—or more accurately cooking—that reflect the ideas mentioned above. Amelia Simmons' 1798 cookbook entitled *American Cookery* is considered to be the first American culinary text. Prior to her cookbook, American women, as the households' primary

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<sup>52</sup> See Levenstein's *Paradox of Plenty* and *How America Eats: A Social History of U.S. Food and Culture* by Jennifer Jensen Wallach, for example.

cooks, used foreign texts, largely from England. In fact, Simmons appears to have drawn greatly on these English cookbooks, most evident in the form of her text.

Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife*, published first in 1829, also offers a glimpse into early American cuisine and provides an example of a traditional domestic handbook. Besides the insight that this text provides into the evolving role of women in a changing economic and political landscape, Child's handbook reveals common culinary practices for the emerging urban or working class in the antebellum period. Child devotes much attention to strategies that women as household managers can employ to save money or live on a budget, and she also acknowledges the difference between urban and rural living. With this latter area of focus, Child alters or qualifies some of her recipes, and as such, we have a window into how women used the ingredients available to them and how they adjusted to shifts in food access and availability. By acknowledging the differences in urban and rural living, Child also recognizes the different cooking methods among the women living and working in different parts of the growing country. An example of which can be found in her recipe for "flour or batter pudding." She provides the recipe first for those "who live in the country" and who have ready access to eggs, milk, and flour (61). She then offers an amended recipe for "those who live in the city, and are obliged to buy eggs," which were probably more expensive than flour (61). Rather than the "five or six eggs" in the original recipe, Child suggests that the city dwellers "can do with three eggs to a quart of milk" (61). Additionally, in the 1832 edition, Child's recipes include gruel (and egg gruel), calf's foot jelly, beef tea, stewed prunes, meat corned or salted, roast pig, fricasseed chicken, puddings, and pies.

These recipes not only reveal the type of ingredients used in American cuisine but also the common cooking methods. The recipe for stewed prunes, for example, shows both a common

ingredient and a method of preparing the fruit. Roast pig serves as a similar example; the large number of jelly and pudding recipes that Child includes also indicates the pervasive uses of these methods and the use of seasonal ingredients.

By the turn of the twentieth century and on the verge of the immigration boom, meat-focused dishes, breads, and locally grown produce mostly defined our nation's cuisine. Though culinary practices were primarily European-influenced, the move of African-Americans from the south to the north during the Great Migration caused Southern cuisine to emerge from its regional standing to become a player at the national level. Also, American cookbooks, such as *Joy of Cooking* and *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* integrated new European immigrant cuisine, such as Italian, after the immigration explosion (albeit, "Americanized" adaptations of such dishes). However, we do witness a type of discrimination in mainstream American cuisine prior to 1950, as reflected in cookbooks of the era. Some cuisines appear to be considered "too ethnic" or "too Other" for mainstream America, such as Jewish, Asian, and even some Southern cuisine. Versions of Italian food, like spaghetti and meatballs, found their way into mainstream American cookbooks, but religious, ethnic, and racial biases extended into food as well.<sup>53</sup> The first culinary exploration into the "other" cuisines was Chinese food, particularly in San Francisco's Chinatown. White residents began to venture into the nation's oldest and largest Chinatown to sample the culture and cuisine of this large immigrant population. At the same time, however, the Chinese Exclusion Act was still in effect.

Jumping ahead to the post-World War II era, America finds itself in precarious cultural and political relationships with its own immigrant communities and with the home nations of some of these immigrant groups. Perhaps one of the most noted examples is the tumultuous

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<sup>53</sup> See Sherrie Inness' *Kitchen Culture in America* and *Secret Ingredients* and Harvey Levenstein's *Revolution at the Table* and *Paradox of Plenty*, for example.

relationship with Japan and Japanese-Americans. And, following the Holocaust, the U.S. had to rethink its relationship with its Jewish citizens. After fighting alongside racially integrated armies, the U.S. found itself reconsidering its domestic racial policies, and the Civil Rights Movement pushed the issues to the foreground of national debate for decades to come. In 1960, then, the situation of America's cuisine was facing a similar identity crisis. Do we even have a national cuisine? Is cuisine defined by our ethnic and racial diversity? Can our cuisine be more equitable than our social and political policies? What is our cuisine supposed to look like given who we are as a nation? Who and what will define it? These and other questions seem to be at the heart of the debate during the 1960s. Child and Fisher embarked upon a quest to answer these questions and believed activating culinary-practice-as-art, specifically with Fisher's discourse and Child's materials and practice, could serve as the path to achieving a national cuisine in addition to tackling Friedan's concerns and enlightening a new perspective for how gender, labor, and economics systems could operate in the context of American food culture.

### CHAPTER 3

#### MAPPING PROVENCE: M.F.K. FISHER'S DISCOURSE AND CULINARY PRACTICE

Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher began her intellectual and creative exploration of cuisine in France. In the lauded Parisian restaurants, small cafés in Dijon, and artisan shops of Aix-en-Provence, Fisher discovers the art of culinary practice. Though food and cooking had always been at the forefront of Fisher's life and work, it is not until she crossed the Atlantic that she witnessed the ways cooking shifts to culinary practice and the ways that culinary practice drastically altered not only an individual's relationship to food but also created a nation's cuisine. While travelling throughout France (though settling primarily in Dijon and Aix), Fisher observed the ways culinary practice—not cooking—privileged process over product, valued and encouraged creativity, insisted on quality ingredients (often local), and aligned in vastly different forms with its network of gender, labor, and economics systems. She delineates these elements, specifically in *Map of Another Town* (1964), and ultimately constructs a discourse that serves as one half of the culinary practice-as-art system. In doing so, Fisher reveals how the form of her text mirrors the mapping project in which she engages to build her discourse; she privileges process—how she constructs both the text and discourse—with the system-building that is evident in the form of *Map of Another Town* and the culinary practice-as-art discourse. In this sense, she mimics the multilayered, interdependent nature of culinary practice-as-art in the structure of the text and in the development of the discourse.

In *Map of Another Town*, Fisher engages in a dual system-building process, in the structure of the text and in the project that creates the discourse of culinary practice-as-art. She also embarks upon an archaeological mapping project, which functions more as a process of

system building than a cartographic sketching of a landscape.<sup>54</sup> She constructs a figurative map by networking together multiple, interdependent elements, including history, literature, architecture, geography, and cuisine. From this map, Fisher produces a discourse of culinary practice-as-art that advances notions of creative adaptation, use of fresh and local ingredients, the pleasures of the table, and an emphasis on process.<sup>55</sup> The process of constructing this map mirrors how culinary practice-as-art functions as a system: multiple elements operating interdependently and simultaneously (or in-progress) that comprise a hybrid whole—whether that is a discourse or a meal.

Her system-building process and mapping project begin with the form, or organization, of the narrative. Fisher's text, though traditionally classified as a memoir, challenges the expected form of memoir. As a work within the domestic literacies system, *Map of Another Town* functions simultaneously as a memoir and more than this familiar form; its structure mimics Fisher's mapping project. If read as a memoir, the narrative appears to be a series of vignettes about Fisher's experiences in Aix. However, when read through the lens of a hybrid system model, the multiple elements (or narratives) that seemingly have no connection, in fact, comprise a comprehensive system—in this case, a system that produces a discourse for culinary practice-as-art. Also, the elision of linearity (or clear chronology of the experiences and events) in Fisher's narrative advances a parallel between the form of the text and mapping project.

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<sup>54</sup> Mapping here does not assume a cartographic function; though, one could certainly approach Fisher's work in *Map of Another Town* from that angle. Serge Lange's broad definition of mapping, from a mathematical context, may be useful here: "Let  $S$ ,  $S'$  be two sets. A mapping from  $S$  to  $S'$  is an association which to every element of  $S$  associates an element of  $S'$ " (159). The relationship among elements that Lange expresses proves useful when considering Fisher's project, particularly the notion of "association" that he foregrounds. Yet, Fisher does not merely "associate" the elements involved in her map. Instead, Fisher builds upon Lange's idea because she networks these elements and variables in a systemic and complex manner, eventually constructing a three-dimensional and dynamic discourse.

<sup>55</sup> For Fisher, culinary practice and cuisine hold privileged positions within her body of work, and even when they are not directly mentioned, they are always already present.



Fisher's discourse and form of her writing influenced American food culture and literary culture, particularly food writing, while also enlightening a shift in gender roles centered around culinary practice. Through her system-building, Fisher maps how a nation's cuisine develops and operates as part of a larger network of systems, such as politics and national identity. The networked elements of her map, such as history, art, and cuisine, reveal the process of how French cuisine emerged. She shows how, in order for this cuisine to assert successfully such a position, it must change from a designation of labor to one of art. This shift in register from linear cooking to culinary-practice-as-art as a system rests at the crux of her discourse. With her mapping project and discourse, Fisher also showed American food culture, especially those advocates for the Good Food Movement and even those who favored the convenience food trend (such as Poppy Cannon), how culinary practice and cuisine could be considered from a philosophical perspective and how they functioned in a networked and interdependent fashion with other systems, including history and art. Though this type of philosophical investigation had a long history in France, post-World War II America did not have much familiarity with it. Fisher's discourse and process of developing this discourse provided a level of depth to American culinary practice and cuisine that both she and Child believed necessary for America to emendate effectively the nation's culinary identity crisis.

In addition, Fisher showed her process of constructing this discourse in the narrative of *Map of Another Town* and in a form that would significantly shape American literary culture. By most accounts, academic and culinary circles consider Fisher the founder of contemporary American food writing. In addition to infusing American culinary practice and cuisine with a much-needed philosophical perspective through her writing, she blended a complex system of discourses that included history, architecture, and sensory experiences with the familiar memoir

form to create a style that privileged culinary practice and demonstrated how it operated interdependently with other elements of everyday life and culture. She legitimized writing about food beyond restaurant and cookbook reviews. The form of Fisher's writing, from longer works such as *Map of Another Town* to her short meditations such as "P Is for Peas," greatly influenced what would become a large subsystem of literature—food writing—and the growing area of food blogging that we see today.

Finally, Fisher contributes, along with Child, to illuminating a shift in gender roles and bringing the labor system to the fore alongside gender. By mapping the ways that French women, including home cooks and small business owners, engage in culinary practice, Fisher turns the spotlight on the American homemaker to reveal the need to liberate women out from under the suffocating labor of cooking and to resituate her as an artist through the creativity and process-oriented culinary practice-as-art. She also demonstrates the immensely different networking of the gender, labor, and economics systems with culinary practice in France, and by doing so, Fisher points to the more prescriptive and stifling network of these three systems with cooking in the U.S.<sup>56</sup> Her discourse serves as a response to this latter network. For example, she reveals in her mapping project the ways that the interdependence of creativity and quality ingredients change how French women interact with culinary practice. Fisher's discourse draws attention to the gender role shift in America and how culinary practice-as-art can free the American homemaker from cooking-as-labor.

### **The Mapping Project: Aix-en-Provence and a *Map of Another Town***

In her mapping project that she undertakes in *Map of Another Town*, Fisher draws together her culinary knowledge and archaeological methodology to construct a figurative map

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<sup>56</sup> Recalling Foucault momentarily, discursive practice systems develop within and reflect a particular historical and sociopolitical context. Thus, cooking and its network of systems operate within the American 1950's and 1960's and are governed by the historical and cultural rules of that era, for example.

of Aix, which ultimately produces a discourse of culinary practice-as-art. Fisher employs an essential history, literature, architecture, geography, and, of course, cuisine to build this map successfully. She also assumes the in-between position of “The Stranger,” which allows her to be simultaneously foreign and local, immersed in Provençal culture while almost entirely disconnected from it. From this point of view, she generates a hybrid method for creating her discourse, much like culinary practice-as-art itself. The Stranger functions as both an observer and a participant; she also operates as a navigator of the map while assuming the role of the narrator at moments throughout *Map of Another Town*. Because of The Stranger’s hybrid composition and function in the text, Fisher employs a tool that mimics the discourse. By doing so, the notion of hybridity remains at the fore throughout her project, allowing for pliable boundaries and interdependency. Fisher shows that such an approach is necessary in order to create an entirely new way of perceiving American culinary practice and cuisine—a reconsideration of the network of the gender, labor, and economics systems under the influence of culinary practice-as-art must occur.

At the same time, Fisher’s narrative structure mirrors this strategy and discourse in form. In constructing this system qua system, she networks the various elements, or vignettes, in *Map of Another Town* to form a cohesive system with these elements operating interdependently and cooperatively. Because this text does not adhere to the familiar chronological structure of memoir, the chapters, or elements, function similarly to points on a map that are all connected by roadways, which function simultaneously as independent places and collectively as a town. In Fisher’s map, multiple threads (or roads), including sensory experiences, the notion of process, and The Stranger, network these narrative elements. Individually, these vignettes (or elements) produce a snapshot of Aix and add a layer to Fisher’s discourse; collectively, they comprise an

entire three-dimensional picture of Aix and a comprehensive discourse of culinary practice-as-art. In this way, Fisher foregrounds process, or “how,” across all three—method, discourse, and narrative—which reflects the privileged position that this aspect of culinary practice holds in her writing and her culinary philosophy.

Fisher’s exploration of mapping as a way to structure narrative and as a way to capture the frequently elusive facets of culinary practice, such as sensory experiences, began early in her writing career. She shows her process of developing mapping-as-strategy in these early texts, which points to the privileged place that process itself has within her culinary philosophy. The process of developing this mapping-as-strategy mirrors the mapping project in *Map of Another Town* because the focus is on process: the former as a narrative strategy and the latter as system-building. By looking at some of her early mapping work, we gain a greater understanding of Fisher’s approach to culinary practice-as-art and the importance that mapping has for her discourse.

In the early narrative “The Measure of My Powers,” Fisher fondly recalls her significant time in Dijon, but later, in *Map of Another Town*, Fisher notes that she “lived for some time in Dijon in [her] twenties, compulsively [...] return[s] to it when [she] can, never with real gratification” (*Map* 6). Her tone and diction about Dijon have clearly shifted with her maturity as both a writer and gastronome. In this later text, Fisher details *how* she sees and feels while visiting Aix. She investigates its architecture, history, cuisine, and everyday life as seen from her position as “an invader of what was already [hers]” (*Map* 5). Fisher *did* map Dijon, though, and “it is intrinsic to [her] being,” but she never felt “as easy there as in Aix” (*Map* 6). Fisher’s ‘at-homeness’ in Aix allows her to observe and absorb multiple facets of this particular area of France. As a result, her map of Aix develops with more detail and multi-dimensionality than the

map of Dijon; the map of Aix is “a refuge from any sound but its own, a harbor from any streets but its own: great upheavals and riots and pillages and invasions and liberations and all the ageless turmoil of an old place” (*Map 6*). Her map embodies the history of Aix, but this very personal map also allows Fisher to “make [her] own history” (*Map 6*). This personal history combined with the regional and national histories greatly contribute to her complex and dynamic discourse as they reveal the multiple elements at work in this type of system. Also, the personal history accounts for her unique point of view, embodied in *The Stranger*. And, the way that she weaves these historical threads throughout the multiple narratives in the text illustrates the layered narrative form of *Map of Another Town* and the discourse that she produces.

Fisher further differentiates the two maps: “one interesting and perhaps dangerous thing about the manufacture of inner maps is that sometimes they became two” (*Map 146*). Her real map of Dijon “is there as plain as any ink, with all the streets named correctly and existent because they exist for *me* but still conforming to the maps sold in bookstores” (*Map 146*). The other map of Dijon is “printed only in [her] dream life” and “is immediately recognizable, so that even when [she] is awake [she] can remember its various aspects and when [she sleeps], and by chance go into it, [she knows] immediately and always where [she is]” (*Map 146*). One can imagine Fisher’s personal map of Dijon as a transparent layer over the “bookstore map” with both the correctly named streets and dream-like visions of Dijon evident together.

In contrast, in *Map of Another Town*, Fisher asserts that her “map of Aix is completely conscious,” unlike her map of Dijon (*Map 141*). She further claims that she has not “used it or a facsimile of it for dream wandering or visitations” (*Map 146*). This “recurring familiarity” frames how Fisher relays her moments, experiences, and meditations about Aix (*Map 146*). The “completely conscious” distinction proves significant when considering the complex culinary

project that she undertakes here and how she structures the text—a conscious layering of narratives, which mimics the layering in a hybrid systems theory approach for example. While Dijon remains more like a dream than a conscious series of memories, the map of Aix functions as evidence of a deliberate process to network the complex aspects of life in the region, which centers on food and culinary practice. While *Map of Another Town* certainly explores the role of memory—an archaeological dig of memory—the narrative also serves as an archaeological investigation of language, regional cuisine, and everyday life—all of which significantly inform Fisher’s discourse and demonstrate the interdependency and multiplicity of the map as a system. Furthermore, two significant threads extend through Fisher’s mapping project: food, culinary practice, and dining alongside an awareness of national identity. The culinary thread integrates with the thread of national identity, and both factor into her discourse and undergird each element of her network. These, too, reveal the complex and multifarious nature of the map and discourse that Fisher constructs.

Fisher creates her map via system-building with a few key elements, all of which are informed by the network of gender, labor, and economic systems, particular to the time in which Fisher was living in Aix (late 1950s and into the following decade). These elements, which include sensory experiences, the significance of two restaurants (Deux Garçons and The Glacier), and the blend of literature and history, are reflected in her education, through her relationship with Madame Lanes, about French domesticity and gender roles, for example. The network also intersects with issues of national identity, which serves as another thread woven through her map. Further, she specifically positions herself to successfully develop this type of map, differentiated from the Dijon map; she takes the position of The Stranger, which allows her to operate simultaneously from within and without Aix’s culinary practice, everyday life, and the

neighboring systems. Fisher copies the system-building method that she deploys to construct her map, which creates the discourse of culinary practice-as-art, to structure the narrative of *Map of Another Town*. The Stranger, then, performs a hybrid role: simultaneous observer and participant (in the events that Fisher explores and in the construction of the map), navigator of the map, and sporadic narrator.

### **The Sights, Sounds, and Smells of Provence**

Before moving into Fisher's complex discussion of and use of The Stranger, briefly exploring one of the more fundamental elements of her discourse—sensual experiences—proves useful in understanding how she assumes this in-between position. Fisher's sensory experiences in the region ground her discourse and serve as a significant thread throughout *Map of Another Town*, which networks the seemingly disparate narratives. She appears to have acquired an awareness of how she responds sensually to her spaces and places, and attention to such visceral reactions, especially for Fisher, connects directly to food. In this way, she demonstrates how process, in the context of culinary practice, occurs or evolves. While she becomes more attune to sound, for example, she simultaneously expands her sensory (smell and taste particularly) knowledge of food and various beverages (e.g. wine, vermouth, and gin). These sensory experiences hold a significant place in her discourse; they represent a central component of the art of culinary practice. Through attention to combined smell, sound, and taste, one can experience the transformative power of cuisine, or the *art* of culinary practice. Fisher shows that this trifecta of sensory understanding serves as one of the crucial entry points to culinary practice-as-art and to writing about food in a multi-layered fashion. By triangulating them throughout the narrative, she also reveals the complexity and interdependency among the elements of this system, even at the most familiar and basic level. Fisher shows how multiple

senses must operate interdependently to create the necessary foundation for a culinary experience, whether dining or practice. The sensory mapping and the complexity also serve as signature elements in Fisher's writing, features that would significantly influence generations of culinary writers.

In the Cathedral in St. Sauveur, for example, Fisher experiences "one of the most impressive darkneses of [her] life" (*Map* 17). The lack of light and silence creates this darkness. Fisher's attention to the absence of sound, "except for the muted shuffling of [her family's] feet and the mouselike whisperings of people telling their beads," advances her understanding of sensory experiences. The differentiation among these sounds—the shuffling, whispering, and even the silence itself—demonstrates that Fisher can distinguish among such subtleties, a necessary skill in culinary practice. She adds that the darkness "was as palpable as flesh [...] [and] was oppressive," but "it was not frightening" (*Map* 17). Her meditation on the darkness here reveals her ability to unpack a seemingly simple and one-dimensional concept and reveal its complexity and multi-dimensionality—distinguishing this darkness from one that produces fear, for example. Much like she develops the ability to discriminate among various sources of the sounds, Fisher also demonstrates the skill to dissect the effects of this sound, a talent that would be invaluable when assessing the effect of integrating various ingredients on one's palate, for example. Also, this instance of sound and Fisher's skill do not simply remain within this one sensory area; instead, Fisher sets the stage for how multiple senses blend to create a complex experience—or a hybrid sensory experience.

Similarly, Fisher indicates that her map has a smell. There are places on her map that "no printer could indicate, for they are clear only as a smell or a sound, or a moment of light or dark" (*Map* 206). Her personal map of Aix has an "Aix smell, made up of the best air [she] has ever



breathed, purified by all the fountains and the tall trees and the stalls piled with sweet fresh vegetables in the open markets” (*Map* 206-7). Like the “music” of the fountains, Fisher feels confident in her sense of smell to transport her seamlessly to Aix, and she adds the smell of Aix “would be the truest one to [her] inner nose” (*Map* 207).<sup>57</sup> Sound and smell link Fisher to specific places, but sound seems to connect her to Aix as a network of places while smell provides her with a general sense of place and space as well as localized places—“the firm delicate fishiness on Fridays as [she] walked past the open-fronted stalls piled with seaweed and all the animals of the Mediterranean [...] or the [smell] in the olive oil shop” (*Map* 206). This type of specificity demands a developed awareness of one’s senses, an awareness that goes beyond grounding oneself in a specific place or time but further gives one the skills to create an entire discourse—one that relies greatly on honed sensory knowledge. These personal experiences operate as a thread that links different locales and moments in the map and the text. They serve as a way for Fisher to understand the significance of the senses in everyday experiences, which she then reads and understands through her always already present lens of culinary practice. From this refined perspective, Fisher shows how these honed sensory skills inform and are necessary components of culinary practice-as-art as a system.<sup>58</sup>

This expansion of knowledge parallels her growth in the area of gastronomy, which informs her map and discourse. Understanding these sounds, smells, and darkness mirrors how Fisher comes to distinguish among various Burgundy wines or different regional fish. This growing comprehension greatly informs her writing about food and culinary practice. Thus, Fisher employs these networked sensory experiences as literal moments that show how the

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<sup>57</sup> The description of her “inner nose” gestures to the consciousness with which she writes her map of Aix. This inner nose, which provides her with a depth of sensory experience that distinguishes it from a typical sensory understanding, assists her in constructing this map and its multiple, networked layers.

<sup>58</sup> Simply, the experiential informs the theoretical.

senses function cooperatively and as a metaphor for how the senses function in culinary practice—as-art—multiple, in-progress, and interdependent. She also uses these sensory experiences as a thread that connects the layered narratives in *Map of Another Town*; they often serve as entry points to a particular time or place and, in this way, operate as a structural tool for the text, such as the vignette about Cathedral in St. Sauveur.

In addition to her developing sensory knowledge base, Fisher's self-prescribed role as The Stranger provides her with a unique position from which she can have these sensory experiences and network them with the other elements of the system that she believes are integral to developing a comprehensive discourse. Fisher's position as The Stranger, which takes on multiple meanings depending on the context, affords her the opportunity to assess and evaluate French cuisine and culinary practice and to consider how both could be integrated into a burgeoning, definitive American national cuisine. Further, The Stranger provides Fisher with the distinctive position from which her mapping project generates, and without it, her mapping project could not occur. And, The Stranger draws attention to Fisher's writing process—how and what she sees and how she creatively documents these culinary moments. This point of view also serves as a model for other culinary writers who must (and many do) recognize the significance of one's own position in relationship to culinary practice and cuisine. By naming her in-between position, Fisher draws direct attention to the importance of this perspective and its role in her text, thus providing a blueprint for how other writers can navigate point of view and food in narrative and pointing to how she deeply influenced American food and literary cultures.

### **The Stranger: At Home in a Foreign Land**

Fisher's role as "The Stranger" becomes essential to her mapping project overall but is also critical for her understanding of French culinary practice and of her own (and generally)

“Americanness.” Initially, Fisher finds herself to be a stranger to the language, cuisine, culinary practice, spaces/places, customs, traditions, and everyday life in Aix. On the surface, one would assume that Fisher would be at a disadvantage in her attempts to immerse herself in the Provençal culture. Yet, Fisher begins *Map of Another Town* by delineating how and why “strangers” hold an advantageous position. She confesses, “Over the years, I have taught myself, and have been taught, to be a stranger” (*Map* 3). This would indicate that she has honed this role of stranger—or, in other words, has made it an ongoing project in order to achieve a particular set of goals. The stranger “usually has the normal five senses [...] ready to protect and nourish him,” Fisher describes (*Map* 3). But, the stranger also has “the extra senses that function only in sub-consciousness. These are perhaps a stranger’s best allies, the ones that stay on and grow stronger as time passes and immediacy dwindles” (*Map* 3-4). Thus, these “extra senses,” which are both tangible and initially elusive for Fisher, provide her with the ability to observe and experience Aix from a position unlike any other visitor, tourist, gastronome, or American.

Her role as The Stranger gives her the opportunity to create a distinct, unique, and personal map: “It is with the invisible ink distilled from all these senses, then, that I have drawn this map of a town, a place real in stone and water, and in spirit, which may also be realer” (*Map* 4). Those sensory experiences, then, function as the tool with which Fisher draws her map, and this “ink” allows her to capture perhaps the most critical and abstract component of this map (or system), where culinary practice finds its soul—the spirit of Aix. In order for Fisher to successfully comprehend and eventually create her map and discourse, she requires these “extra senses” that are only available from a particular point of view—“The Stranger.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The way that The Stranger functions for Fisher in the creation of the map parallels, in some ways, a hybrid of first and third person omniscient narrators, encompassing aspects of both to effectively tell this complex story. A hybrid narrator exists in the in-between, never wholly embodying one or the other point of view.

Upon arrival in Aix, Fisher feels at home, though she is in a foreign land, which immediately establishes her in the role of The Stranger, as she defines it. She acknowledges that she “was as brash as a newcomer to it, “ but after experiencing Aix on an intimate, sensual level—“the rhythm of its streets and [...] its ancient smells and [...] the music of its many fountains”—she “was once more in [her] own place, an invader of what was already” hers (*Map* 5). The simultaneity of familiarity and foreignness serves as one of “The Stranger’s” advantages, and the simultaneity also gestures to how systems function. Fisher immediately claims ownership of Aix, but she takes possession of it not as a native or a foreigner but as both—a hybrid. By viewing herself as an owner and an invader of her “own place,” Fisher gestures to the complex nature of her project—her discourse takes into account multiple perspectives and systems as well as provides a new way of seeing culinary practice, much like her position as The Stranger allows her to see Aix in a new way. She also points to the hybrid structure of the narrative, which mirrors the complexity of the mapping project, and The Stranger serves as the navigator of the map and the narrative.

Within this hybrid role of stranger rests the notion of invisibility, a skill that required training on Fisher’s part. She notes, “There are myriad facets to invisibility, and not all of them reflect comfort or security” (*Map* 59). By distinguishing the multiple “facets” to invisibility, Fisher once again highlights the complexity of her project—even invisibility, which on the surface seems like a simple concept to comprehend, is multi-dimensional. Further, she presumes that invisibility provides some sense of safety, which may be foreign to some readers who may perceive invisibility as a shroud that hides us. Fisher suggests, then, that invisibility can offer other advantages, perhaps a partially cloaked visibility that allows for a particular point of view.

While she leaves the potential characteristics ambiguous, Fisher later shows how invisibility contains multiple elements that *The Stranger* deploys in unique ways through Aix.

During the time when she is a single mother of two living in Aix (1959), the routine of everyday life in Aix contributes to her invisibility, including what she labels as “slow roamings” (*Map* 60). These “slow roamings” include “drifting along the streets to listen to the fountains [...] and the open markets in three squares and occasionally along the narrow streets,” and “all these accustomed [her] to [her] invisibility” (*Map* 60). Though she describes this time as painful and often lonely, the time that she dedicates to those routine “slow roamings” allows her to experience and learn about everyday life in Aix, including gaining knowledge about the produce and products available at the markets. Her invisibility assists her in coping with the strain of being a single parent while also providing her the “cover” to wander and learn about French culture, specifically culinary practice. The multifariousness of invisibility, then, serves Fisher in numerous ways, beyond comfort and safety as she notes. Most significantly, though, invisibility gives her the freedom to be mobile in a way that a traditional tourist or even a native Aix citizen could move about the town.

The “slow roamings” perform two additional functions: a strategy that Fisher uses to layer her narrative and a demonstration of process; both of which are essential to her discourse and, in a broad sense, to culinary practice-as-art. She compiles these moments, or snapshots, that she spends weaving in and out of Aix’s corner cafés, markets, and shops into narrative layers, like stacks of phyllo dough in a crispy baklava—individual and distinct but merging together to form a specific taste and texture. Also, Fisher uses these “roamings” to show process, in this case the process of *The Stranger* observing, absorbing, and documenting (or narrating) the sensory and cognitive experience of Aix. The adjective “slow” indicates the investment of time that is

necessary for such a thorough and complex process. With this attention to process, Fisher, once again, privileges it, demonstrating that process directs both her writing and, eventually, her culinary philosophy and culinary practice-as-art.

The Stranger position, defined by its hybridity and multiplicity, allows Fisher to remain inextricably linked to her national identity, which affords her the opportunity to consider the state of American cuisine; she is often made aware of her “Americanness.” This awareness also informs how she perceives both French and American cuisines as well as how they are in conversation with each other. Throughout *Map of Another Town*, Fisher details how she comes to this awareness. For example, she notes that she “was very conscious for quite a time of being hopelessly and irrevocably an outlander and more especially an American outlander” (*Map* 63). At the same time, this “outlander-ness” serves as critical component of The Stranger’s position and functionality. Fisher then adds that she never feels the need to apologize for her mannerisms, beliefs, or accent. In Aix, she encounters that “old patronizing surprise”: that she did not have an “American accent,” which she did and that she knew “how to bone a trout on [her] plate and drink a good wine (or even how to drink at all), which [she] did” (*Map* 63). The assumptions about Americans, which Fisher frequently encountered, challenged not only the French citizens who made such judgments about Fisher but also her own self-awareness. Those French individuals who claimed that Fisher did not have an American accent clearly had narrow knowledge of what constituted such an accent, or had very little exposure to it.

While this particular belief gives insight into how Fisher viewed others viewing her, the culinary example reveals two factors that would prove significant for Fisher’s mapping project and discourse: the French perception about an American’s knowledge of two French staples, fish and wine, and Fisher’s awareness of this perception. Both would inform Fisher’s strategy for

reconfiguring American culinary practice and cuisine. She realized, through these brief exchanges with French citizens, that she would need to work diligently to educate her American audience about such crucial elements of culinary practice, in this case fish and wine, while also articulating the necessity of retaining the “Americanness” of the cuisine. With *The Stranger*, Fisher engages in activating such a balance.

Fisher “accepted all this without a quiver; it was based on both curiosity and envy” (*Map* 63). This awareness, not derived from snobbishness or a sense of cultural superiority, affords Fisher a more solidified position as *The Stranger*. She can see how the French view her, those in Aix in particular. Fisher acknowledges that she “was forever in their eyes the product of a naïve, underdeveloped, and indeed infantile civilization, and therefore [she] was incapable of appreciating all the things that had shaped them into the complicated and deeply aware supermen of European culture that they finally felt themselves to be” (*Map* 63). These perceptions of Americans and of her as an American crystallize clearly for her around the subjects of food and cuisine. At the same time, this French view recognizes the absence of America’s extensive history, one that could greatly shape a national cuisine. Thus, the disparaging remarks actually lend insight into a significant component of Fisher’s discourse—the question of history in culinary practice, one of many layers in her map (or system). The *Stranger* position gives Fisher the opportunity to address this question as she constructs her discourse from the map of Aix.

Her relationship with Madame Lanes, the landlady of the boarding house where Fisher and her daughters stay, serves as a useful example of how such perceptions are revealed to Fisher, how she challenges them, and how they inform her understanding of a national cuisine—whether French or American. Madame Lanes routinely educates Fisher about meals and various dishes that she prepares. Because Madame hosts boarders from across Europe, she often entertains

requests for particular dishes, and Fisher recalls that Madame would frequently ask if she “objected to some delicious dish which she had ordered to please one of the other boarders” (*Map* 64). Madame’s questioning stems from her prejudices and assumptions about Americans, those that Fisher believes emerge from her curiosity and envy. Madame, Fisher shares, would say, “I know you Americans don’t care what you eat. [...] It always amazes me about how little you notice flavor and seasoning. You seem to have no definite tastes...only prejudices” (*Map* 64). Though Fisher eventually learns that this was simply teasing from Madame, her comments and critique prove insightful because there is some truth in Madame’s friendly ribbing. A quick glance through popular American cookbooks at the time, such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, reveals little seasoning in dishes, a large reliance on canned or packaged products, a limited selection of proteins, and little use of fresh herbs. Madame’s observations suggest that the French do know how to season food and have more mature and developed palates. Perhaps, she is noting, without even consciously knowing so, that the American palate is simply a reflection of the nation’s youth and its lack of a clearly defined national cuisine. By sharing this observation from her landlady and never vocalizing any disagreement with her (though she “[rages] silently”), Fisher implies that perhaps there is a great deal of truth to Madame Lanes’ words; therefore, America requires a reconfiguration of its relationship to and understanding of culinary practice and cuisine (*Map* 65). This shift begins by turning our attention to the French model.

Madame Lanes further hints at America’s culinary underdevelopment when describing to Fisher “the gastronomical requirements of her other more demanding and therefore sensitive and worldly boarders” (*Map* 64). Madame Lanes’ description of these dishes “was in exciting and glamorous contrast to the sterile monotony of American tastes” (*Map* 64). The Swiss, Madame



Lanes observes, “must have cream sauces with their meat; the Swedes would not tolerate garlic, olive oil, or even tomatoes; the English wanted mustard always with meat; the Corsicans loathed cream sauce as well as mustard, but could not subsist without garlic, olive oil, and tomatoes” (*Map* 64). In a succinct delineation, Madame Lanes pinpoints national gastronomical traditions rooted in regional product availability and culinary practice. The French from different regions, Madame adds, “must eat their native dishes and follow their set table-habits” (*Map* 64). The absence of this same gastronomical overview for Fisher’s native land suggests that America simply does not possess a national cuisine and a set of “table-habits.” What Fisher knows is that America has rich regional cuisines but a cohesive national tradition remains elusive. As far as standard or traditional culinary practices and “table-habits,” those remain difficult to coalesce as well, but she also recognizes that much of the American tradition is a hasty blend of practices from other cultures that were brought to the United States (and, Madame Lanes broadly outlines those other cultures’ gastronomic traditions that have shaped American cuisine, as disconnected as it may seem). Fisher translates her understanding of America’s short history, its culinary influences, its regional cuisines, and a non-American’s perspective on its food (such as Madame Lanes’) into a strategy for addressing the gaps and divisions (those unseen spaces) in American cuisine and uses these various facets as advantageous elements for the development of a cohesive system of culinary practice.

Fisher gestures to America’s regional culinary specialties when “[raging] silently” about Madame Lanes’ prejudices towards Americans and their palate (*Map* 65). Fisher affirms, “How, we crude Yanks are too polite, too well taught to demand Boston baked beans or tamales from a French hostess” (*Map* 65). Her comments, dripping with sarcasm, suggest that her French hostess would not comply, not because the request was inappropriate but because these two

American regional specialties were more than likely unknown to Madame Lanes, unlike the more familiar gastronomical traditions of France's European neighbors. Notably, Fisher selects two dishes that are not native to the majority white European population of her day. While the beans used in the Boston baked beans recipe are native to the Americas, the practice, or the cooking method, finds its roots within Native American cooking. The tamale certainly does not extend from U.S. cooking as it can be traced to Central and South American native populations, including the Aztecs, Incans, and Mayans. Also, Fisher's choice of the tamale reveals her own gastronomical knowledge as the tamale, along with other ethnic dishes, was only beginning to find its way into American cookbooks. Fisher, unlike many of her fellow Americans including the majority of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* readers, is more familiar with non-traditional and ethnic dishes simply because of her culinary curiosity. By revealing this culinary knowledge here, Fisher shows that dishes such as tamales do hold a place in American cuisine—somewhere, but the absence of a cohesive culinary practice pushes non-traditional practices and non-European cuisines to the margins. A system of culinary practice with pliable boundaries and with a privileging of interdependency and multiplicity, however, could integrate both successfully. Through her mapping project, Fisher demonstrates how such a practice can be developed.

The interactions with Madame Lanes, whose views could represent an average French citizen at the time (at least how Fisher presents her), reaffirms Fisher's desire to remain as The Stranger. She knows, for example, "with an increasing awareness that there were many areas of perception where [she] would always remain innocent[;]" however, Fisher also gains satisfaction from "so many things [she] could and did appreciate, for which people like Madame would never credit" her (*Map* 65). The ability to negotiate these varying levels of awareness only enhances her mapping project and discourse because they reveal the type of complexity that is a critical

characteristic of both. In fact, she confesses, “All this was good for me. It made me accustom myself to acceptance of my slow evolution as an invisible thing, a ghost” (*Map* 67-8). The Stranger—the ghost—would also prevent her from becoming arrogant, she adds (*Map* 68). It also affords her a unique degree of self-awareness, insofar as it did not solely focus on Fisher’s emotional development but takes into account her knowledge of how she, as an American, viewed herself in a cultural and culinary context. This self-awareness provides her with the ability to assess, on a large scale, the culinary practice and cuisine of France and the U.S. And, the acceptance and even embrace of how she is perceived by the Aixois inform how she views the French and their relationship to food and, perhaps more significantly, how she understands America’s relationship to food—it furthers the evolution of this self-awareness. The Stranger, then, serves multiple purposes in Fisher’s map and discourse: historian, archaeologist, explorer, narrator, and cultural scholar; therefore, this position embodies the hybridity and multifariousness of the systems operating here—the map, the text itself, and the culinary practice-as-art discourse.

The position of The Stranger also provides her with the chance to aid fellow Americans abroad and to critique the network of gender, labor, and economics systems that stifled American women and cuisine. Fisher comes to associate, in one way or another, with the American University School during her many visits to Aix. Her connection to the school stems from the number of friends who work there, and as a result, she befriends some of the students. Her fellow Americans, she notices or is told, often encounter difficulty adjusting to life in Aix, especially the food. The male students “would languish, away from Mother’s Cooking,” but the female students “seemed to adapt themselves quickly and with real enthusiasm to the lives they led with French families” (*Map* 135). This is one of the few times that Fisher *directly* addresses issues of

gender in *Map of Another Town*, specifically with regards to American women and food; though, these concerns certainly inform the text overall. Here, Fisher articulates one of the strengths that American women possess—adaptability; this ability, as Fisher has discussed elsewhere, requires creativity. Given this observation, Fisher suggests that American women are more than capable of a dramatic change in culinary practice and cuisine. Also, she recognizes a shift in power within the context of food and gender; the male students were under the influence of their mothers’ (linear) cooking, which precluded them from adapting successfully. Because women were the culinary practitioners, they possessed the power and creativity to adapt. Adding this layer to the map and discourse proves vital to how Fisher understands the changes required for American cuisine and culinary practice; she navigates gender here in a way that creates a thread in her discourse—the intimate and often problematic connection between women and culinary practice, which brings the networked relationship between the gender and labor systems to the fore.

The “much softer and more spoiled” male students often turned their difficulties on to their wives, which is how Fisher learns of such problems (*Map* 135). A “Fulbright wife,” whom Fisher comes to know, “grew openly depressed when her husband, after several months of eating in Aix restaurants and at the student cafeteria, requested that she learn how to make a decent soup without packaged ‘mixes’” (*Map* 135). This request touches on a series of issues affecting American women at the time and perhaps an additional, larger conflict for women who traveled abroad, and the character of the Fulbright wife plays a critical role in Fisher’s text—she represents the typical American woman. Young American women of the late 1950s and early 1960s learned to cook with packaged products because cookbooks and magazines instructed

them to do so.<sup>60</sup> This direction, of course, did not simply emerge from cookbooks and women's magazines but corporations that sold these products. Many women did not have the culinary knowledge to make soup from scratch, for example, because numerous media outlets told them that they simply did not need to have that knowledge or skill anymore—let the mix do the work.

For women who traveled and even lived abroad, they faced additional culinary challenges. The Fulbright wife and her husband routinely dined on traditional French food, which altered their perception of food in both taste and aesthetics, and these dining experiences influenced her husband's request for a soup made without mixes. However, his wife did not acquire the skill to make a soup from scratch by dining out like he acquired a palate for it; she needed to *learn* this skill. She complains to Fisher, “I can't ever do it at home, so why learn here?” (*Map* 135). The “can't” in her complaint stemmed from a lack of knowledge in how to make such a soup—she must learn this aspect of culinary practice and was told before leaving for France that she did not need to know this skill. Fisher explains, “Oh yes, you can. There are bones at home, and carrots and cabbage...things like that” (*Map* 135). Fisher quickly showed her friend that she possessed the ingredients to make a soup, in effect challenging the assumption that making a soup from scratch was impossible because of the availability of ingredients and demonstrating that her friend had the adaptability and creativity to engage in this culinary practice. Further, Fisher's brief response gestures to the unspoken explanation as to why her friend should learn the skill and to avoid dependence on soup mixes: the ability to control the ingredients, whether for health, financial, or local economic reasons. This conflict also highlights the problematic network of the gender and labor systems. Fisher's friend articulates some of the key dilemmas facing American

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<sup>60</sup> Another significant reason that these young women lacked culinary knowledge stems from the disruption of the experiential education in the kitchen that mothers and grandmothers provided; World War II forced women to turn their attention to other responsibilities.

homemakers, specifically the paradox that is quite prevalent in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*.

The Fulbright wife's concern seems indicative of many American women's thoughts at the time: "But nobody does it, and I haven't the time, and anyway he wouldn't eat it..." (*Map* 136). Those words mirror comments that could more than likely be found in letters to women's magazines and indicate how cooking had been subsumed by routine as a task of labor—housewives do not have the time to make any dish from scratch, and family members would not respond favorably to such change because they had grown accustomed to packaged and processed foods.<sup>61</sup> Instead of the response from the magazines' "experts" offering instruction about how to create a soup from scratch, the typical response frequently suggested a particular soup mix or perhaps a new product on the market. Fisher, however, sees this statement from the Fulbright wife as characteristic of a "cultural quarrel" or simply a "gastronomical impasse" (*Map* 136). Either way, it points to a larger problem that Fisher views as one that ails American cuisine and even American domesticity—and by extension, American women: the way linear cooking and labor have become problematically entangled. Her observation, though only briefly discussed in this layer of *Map of Another Town*, will soundly inform how she develops her discourse, specifically in terms of how she perceives the way her discourse illuminates shifts in the neighboring systems of gender, labor, and economics. Moreover, it will help her to understand outside of her own experience—how Americans, particularly women, comprehend culinary practice.

Finally, Fisher's awareness of her hybrid position as demonstrated by the interaction with the Fulbright wife remains at the forefront of *Map of Another Town* and of her discourse. In the

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<sup>61</sup> Also, the claim that "no one does it" serves as the efficacy of the messaging by corporations such as General Mills; these companies rely on this perspective in order to sell their array of domestic products.

text, this hybridity becomes rather clear when Fisher decides to leave Aix. She begins the chapter entitled “Correction to the Map” with a confession: “The second time we left Aix was at once easier and more prolonged: I knew what I was doing, at least somewhat more clearly, and I could salve myself with the knowledge that I had returned once, and therefore might again” (*Map* 241). The simultaneity of easier and prolonged mirrors her role as The Stranger (and more broadly how systems function)—seeing and being seen, blind and invisible all at once. By the second leave-taking, Fisher learns “how to be a good ghost,” and she “remained in pain and bewilderment for a long time before [they] first left Aix” (*Map* 241). Again, the multiple, simultaneous feelings arise for The Stranger because, as she reveals, she “wanted the girls to stay American” (*Map* 241). This desire for her girls to retain their “Americanness” pairs with her want for them to gain cultural and historical knowledge and experiences particular to Provence. It also reflects her desire for America’s culinary practice to retain its unique personality while evolving into a more sophisticated and comprehensive practice. In many ways, Fisher wanted to pass on her hybridity to her daughters, and she introduces and ends her daughters’ hybrid experiences in the same way—dining at The Glacier.

### **Dining Out in Aix: 2Gs and The Glacier**

In Aix, Fisher frequents two restaurants, and in *Map of Another Town*, she maps their significance for the town and her gastronomical knowledge. These two restaurants provide invaluable culinary knowledge for Fisher and show how the culinary must—and does—blend with other elements; in other words, culinary practice must be networked with other systems and subsystems. In “The Two Havens,” which nicely signals how Fisher perceives the restaurants, she weaves together the restaurants’ history with personal experiences and uses both to show the role of restaurants in French culture and in their local communities. With these examples, Fisher

maps the multiple functions that restaurants serve, from development of culinary practice to providing a home-away-from-home for area residents. These two restaurants serve as critical markers on and layers in the map and in the narrative. In many ways, Fisher structures the narrative around these places, mirroring how they would appear visually on her map with larger indicators than other cafés or bistros.

At the opposite end of the Cours from Deux Garçons sits the Glacier—the dining establishment that becomes significant for Fisher *and* her daughters. Their first lunch at the Glacier, which was “long and lovely,” is memorable, and “for about a third of the time [they] lived in Aix [...], [they] ate in [their] own home, they dined out more than they “would have in California” (*Map* 38). And, “there was always a good excuse” to eat at the Glacier—often “the weather was too beautiful to eat anywhere but at the Glacier” (*Map* 38). After that first lunch, the Glacier becomes their “main meeting place after school,” and they quickly establish a pattern, which rings of a quintessential French café: “ham sandwiches for the girls, a Cinzano and soda” for Fisher (*Map* 39). Though seemingly simple to American eyes, the ham sandwich, as a unique and traditional French dish, earns the brush of Fisher’s apt description: “the sandwich was perhaps ten inches long, a slender slit loaf of bread spread with sweet butter and curtained limply with ham” (*Map* 39).

A selection of mustards accompanies the sandwiches, which Anne and Mary do not enjoy, but, without fail, would “lift all the lids and choose what one might eat if one wanted to” (*Map* 39). This dish serves as a significant entry point for Fisher’s daughters regarding French cuisine. Their interaction with the mustards—an in-between response—represents their hybridity, or their adaptation of their mother’s role as *The Stranger*: they do not reject the condiments outright. Instead, they recognize their use and even speculate on one’s preferences. In this way, they



challenge the assumption, articulated by Madame Lanes, that Americans only have culinary prejudices rather than taste or a palate. Fisher's daughters demonstrate a subtle discerning choice here. Further, Anne and Mary quickly take to the French comfort food—the ham sandwich. The three women discover security in this dining pattern, with the food and its simplicity creating this foundation. And, combined with the wait staff, a waiter named Ange in particular, the cuisine and atmosphere at the Glacier provide a safe space for the three of them—almost a home-away-from-home, a haven.

Fisher and her daughters find similar comfort at a near-by restaurant; Deux Garçons, or 2Gs as the local students named it, sat at the corner of the Rue Frédéric-Mistral across from the historical Clément. Fisher notes that it was a place where she “was to spend many of the pleasantest waking hours” of her life, and it was “the first and last café of [her] visible and invisible life in that town” (*Map* 30, 34). With this latter assertion, the size of the 2Gs marker on Fisher's map would be slightly larger than the Glacier's because it holds such importance for Fisher and for The Stranger, the philosopher, the narrator, and writer. In fact, on her first day in Aix, she “seemed to go there like a homing pigeon” (*Map* 34). She knew that she and her daughters “were in the right place at the right moment, and [they] knew it would last” (*Map* 34). On that first night, while her girls sipped lemonade and Fisher savored a beer, she recognized that she found “a solace and refuge from everything”—a home (*Map* 34).

While the Glacier provided comfort, 2Gs emerged as one of the most significant places on Fisher's map and within the text; it came to embody all of the critical elements of her discourse: interdependency and flexibility among creativity, community, history, and the pleasures of the table. In the text, 2Gs functions as a hub, or node, at which these various narrative threads meet; the form of *Map of Another Town* and the map that Fisher creates mirror

one another in this way, demonstrating how Fisher constructs both by deploying a system-building strategy. And, Fisher describes 2Gs with a palpable intimacy throughout her recounting of the space, the people, and the food. For her and her children, 2Gs becomes not simply a café where the waiters are attentive and the food is delicious, but, more significantly, Deux Garçons “[nurtures] various phases of [their] varied souls” (*Map* 34).

She begins her discussion of Deux Garçons by outlining how French cafés function: “Cafés are known by the company they keep, and in one way or another the towns are known by their cafés” (*Map* 30). Cafés, she suggests, embody a town’s personality and serve as its heart, where people gather as a community. With such significance placed on the café, Fisher also notes that food serves a central and critical function for French towns and by extension the nation. Here, Fisher shows how the French privilege Brillat-Savarin’s pleasures of the table philosophy, the aspect of community in particular, and how doing so, in connection with the centralization of the café, contributes to a more robust and multi-dimensional culinary practice. The central idea from Brillat-Savarin that Fisher gestures towards is about the “reflective sensation” that he contends characterizes the pleasures of the table, and this sensation “is born from the various circumstance of place, time, things, and people who make up the surroundings of the meal” (182). In her mapping of the café, Fisher shows how 2Gs embodies each element of this concept. Her explanation of the café and the connection to the pleasures of the table also provide the reason for why 2Gs holds a central place on her map and in her narrative.

She follows with a quick overview of the café’s history before explaining the space of the café. The exploration of how each room of the café is organized mirrors Fisher’s project in *Map of Another Town*—she maps 2Gs with beautiful diction, creates an inviting atmosphere, and reveals why she cherished this particular dining establishment. The attention to the space that

Fisher gives shows how greatly she valued 2Gs and, perhaps more significantly, how history and architecture operate interdependently while also networked with culinary practice to create a central place for regional cuisine. It also shows her process and, more broadly, the process that is critical for culinary practice-as-art. Also, the sensory experiences, besides taste and smell, emerge as significant as the space itself, which gestures to her discussions about sensory experiences throughout the text. The people, for example, who patronize 2Gs create an atmosphere of sound as Fisher describes, “Talk is as steady as the fountains themselves [...]. It goes on everywhere, sometimes noisy but seldom harsh” (*Map* 33).<sup>62</sup> For Fisher, the town’s fountains hold an aesthetic and aural significance, and with the comparison here, she locates the cafés in this same principal position. And, like the flowing water of the fountains that fills the air in town, the talk that occurs in the cafés—the signal of community and evidence of the pleasures of the table—operates just as prolifically. Fisher also demonstrates the interdependency among the various elements that comprise the 2Gs’ central locale on her map. While Fisher identifies sound and space as critical components of Deux Garçons, her emphasis throughout *Map of Another Town* rests on the waiters, which is another layer of or element in her map. She believes that 2Gs protects her and her daughters, and much of this sentiment seems rooted in how they are routinely received by the wait staff (*Map* 34).

For Fisher and her daughters, the wait staff at Deux Garçons allows them to find refuge there; the servers are attentive and protective. Her daughters Anne and Mary often visit for “hot chocolate or a cool silver cup of lemon ice” when they had to wait for Fisher or could not find her; “the waiters welcomed them gently” (*Map* 34). Though Fisher speaks of the servers in personal terms as far as she and her daughters are treated, the wait staff also holds a significant

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<sup>62</sup> In fact, Fisher calls the sound “one of the mysterious reasons” why 2Gs had survived “Invasions and Occupations and Liberations and even Insurrections [to be] the focal point of public life in Aix” (*Map* 33-34).

place on her map and in her narrative as characters. The waiters and waitresses represent (part of) the communal facet of the pleasures of the table as well as the specific community of 2Gs. And, as a constant presence at the restaurant since its opening (regardless of the individuals working), the staff also embodies the history of the place because of 2Gs' centrality on Fisher's map of Aix and in the town. Further, the 2Gs wait staff also incorporates the tradition of service in French culinary practice (finding its roots with Escoffier, for example). The safety and cordiality of the staff provide Fisher and her daughters with a sense of home, as it does for Aix. By recognizing the critical function of the wait staff, Fisher demonstrates the complexity and multiplicity of French culinary practice, and by mapping the staff, she suggests that the service component of culinary practice cannot be left on the margins but must be prioritized because it performs an interdependent function that is equal in importance to other facets. By pulling service from the edges, Fisher mimics how she detaches culinary practice from its labor designation: the wait staff does not simply "do work;" the waiters and waitresses hold an essential position at 2Gs by integrating culinary practice, history, sense of place, and the pleasures of the table.

In a similar way to how Fisher develops an intimacy with the wait staff, she also finds that Deux Garçons offers a space in which she can cultivate fleeting and eternal relationships, whether with a passersby who darts in and out of her life or with strangers who become dear friends. They function much like one's experiences with food—those meals that serve a purpose and pass from memory and those meals that transform one's philosophy or outlook and remain at the forefront of memory. Once again, Fisher brings the pleasures of the table to the fore with an emphasis on the importance of those with whom one dines, and she adds another layer to her map and narrative. These relationships connect Fisher to a place and to a cuisine, which shows

how closely and intimately networked these three elements (food, fellow diners, and cuisine) are integrated.

For Fisher, this type of intimacy extends to how she connects with Aix and in a way that she may not have had otherwise. Because of the central position of 2Gs on her map, Fisher could develop this simultaneous and interdependent relationship—with the restaurant and with Aix. The terrace at 2Gs served as a significant place for this dual intimacy as it operated in an in-between space—part of the restaurant and part of the town (in effect, mimicking *The Stranger*). She would visit 2Gs “before and during and after market” and would “talk with whoever stopped beside” her at the terrace (*Map 35*). The time around the market and the location of the terrace provide Fisher with the opportunity to enjoy the 2Gs cuisine while engaging with the Aixois; those who visit the market would share common interests with and provide culinary insight to Fisher. The terrace serves as an ideal locale for *The Stranger*, an in-between place from which Fisher creates her map.

Deux Garçons seduces Fisher and by extension so does Aix; she would “usually stay longer than [she] meant to, in a kind of daze of well-being and satisfaction about the rhythm and beauty of the town, the people [...]” (*Map 35*). While this short description focuses on 2Gs, Fisher articulates some of the elusive elements that she captures in her map and in her discourse. Here, she reflects the process and creativity of culinary practice-as-art; the “daze of well-being” blended with rhythm and beauty function as essential components of how one experiences the creative process along with the independence of other elements in culinary practice-as-art. In other words, Fisher’s brief description here, when read as part of her discourse, encapsulates the often intangible yet critical elements of the *art* of her culinary practice. Also, Fisher does not

mention the outcome, or product, of this seduction; instead, she focuses on the in-progress nature of it, which mirrors how one becomes immersed in culinary practice-as-art.

Finally, Fisher reveals that one of the most effective ways to gain knowledge and familiarity with a place is through its dining establishments, a local café in particular. By immersing oneself in the culture of the café and acquainting oneself with the wait staff and regular patrons, one can know a town better than if one takes the tours and reads the locale's history. The relationship between a town's residents and local dining establishments defines the personality of that town—and contributes to the definition its cuisine. The influence on cuisine extends beyond the restaurant's walls and reaches into the individual homes to shape how home cooks or practitioners approach their own practice and shopping. Also, the social networking that occurs at the local cafés overflows into these homes, creating opportunities to gather at neighbors' houses and further engage in the pleasures of the table. Fisher's network of experiences at 2Gs and knowledge of the central role that cafés play in French towns significantly inform how she views the potential of this successful French model for her native country's cuisine. From her vantage point of *The Stranger*, Fisher can map this network and adapt this model for American culinary practice: restaurants, cafés, home kitchens, and the in-between culinary places can work collaboratively and interdependently with their neighboring systems to solidify and disseminate a reconfigured American culinary practice and cuisine. In each of these different kitchens, service, rhythm, beauty, comfort, safety, and intimacy—all essential components of Fisher's discourse—can manifest differently but still retain the essence of culinary practice-as-art, which is the *art*.

### **Unwritten Books, Man's Need for Food, and Near-Misses**

To supplement the education that she gains in the cafés, Fisher turns to literature—the book about Provence that she desires to read and the narratives about the region that she desires

to produce. The literature serves as another way that *The Stranger* maps Aix and develops the discourse. Multiplicity serves as one of the defining characteristics of this discourse, and thus, literature, like history in its various forms, must blend with the other elements. Not only is literature an art form but it also carries these histories and serves as a lens into everyday life. And, of course, for Fisher, literature holds a significant place in her professional and personal lives; the rhythm and beauty of literature affect her with a comparable intimacy and depth as culinary practice and cuisine. With her attention to literature, Fisher self-consciously points to her own writing and the place of *Map of Another Town* within the larger category of “literature.” In the system of domestic literacies, Fisher’s narrative plays a specific role in relationship to the other texts and systems, but she also gestures to the potential influence that her narrative could have on literary and historical understandings of Aix and its cuisine—and even on literary culture itself.

In the chapter entitled “The Unwritten Books,” Fisher delineates the professional dilemmas that she encountered while living in Aix. In part, one challenge was that she “wanted to read everything anyone had written about [Aix] and Provence,” but, of course, “time [is] against [her], some two thousand years of it” (*Map* 163). The other—more immediate and prevalent—dilemma is her desire to write about Aix and Provence but to not replicate preceding texts. Fisher’s friend George reminds her that such romantic literature about Aix and Provence has, by this time, become rather cliché: “Not you too! Not another tiny poetical masterpiece on the trees, the flowing waters, the many-hued effluvia of Aix!” (*Map* 163). Her map provides her with the great inspiration to “produce several books about [Aix] that [she] would like to put into proper form” (*Map* 167). The map, then, becomes the literature that she wants to write, and she avoids the clichés about Aix that have become all too familiar because the form of her narrative and the map itself resist these clichés.

Further, the map operates in an in-between position regarding this long literary history about Aix and Provence: it will become part of this canon while remaining decidedly outside of it as a distinctive approach to literarily capturing this region—through a lens of culinary practice and cuisine. Similarly, the map-as-literature draws attention to the form of *Map of Another Town*; the strategies that Fisher uses to construct the map appear familiar and are presented in a seemingly familiar form. However, by positioning the map as literature, Fisher shifts how we read her narrative, not as memoir or a strict historical account of Aix but as a system.

In addition to books about “Balzac’s view of Aix,” for example, Fisher wants to write with “cautious languor,” a “minor ‘item’ for art collectors and gallery hounds” about the works in the Musée Granet (*Map* 164). She confesses that she “felt better qualified to attempt it than one about the fat novelist for it would be a kind of gastronomical tour of the fine town museum” (*Map* 164).<sup>63</sup> She even goes so far as to create a list of canvasses about which she would write. Thus, even her written tour of a museum keeps food at the foreground and demonstrates one way that Fisher’s writing, in both form and content, resists those clichés. But, Fisher, a “self-styled culinary *raconteuse*,” primarily longs to delve into the gastronomical history of the town and region, to profile some of the local chefs, and to investigate the famous pastry shops of Aix (*Map* 164). Fisher describes these unwritten books as “beautiful chance[s], forever gone[,]” yet in *Map of Another Town*, she actually does write about these subjects, in effect fulfilling, in some way, those long-lost professional opportunities and does so utilizing a strategy that perhaps better captures these facets of Aix in ways that she could not have imagined. Through this mapping project—her literature about Aix—Fisher demonstrates how seemingly loosely linked subjects,

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<sup>63</sup> Fisher articulates the vision for all of her work here—a gastronomical tour. She sees through the lens of food and believes that this approach can best capture, in this case, the town’s museum. Her mapping project progresses as a gastronomical tour, privileging food and culinary practice in each moment, and as an archaeological undertaking.



such as art and pastry shops, are, in fact, inextricably connected when networked interdependently with culinary practice as the central node.

In this chapter, Fisher sketches the possible content for this “whole history of man’s need for food,” which begins with “the exquisite little virgin suckling her child” (*Map* 164-65). From there, she says, “It would wind through the simplicity of county feasts to fatuous wanton *soupers en ville*, and it would pick up the crumbs of poverty and lonely old age” (*Map* 165). This “amusing” project, though never tackled, reveals Fisher’s gastronomical preoccupations—how civilizations and societies have prepared and eaten food. This anthropological interest certainly informs how she views her everyday relationship food as well as how she studies the town of Aix. Fisher often focuses her anthropological lens on how the Aixois dine in the home as opposed to a restaurant or café is one area, for example. Though she never completes this particular historical project, the construction of the discourse of culinary-practice-as-art, via her mapping project, mirrors the anthropological goals of that historical work; therefore, Fisher *does* complete a gastronomical project that is derived from these initial aspirations, which captures the complexities that a different literary form may elide.

Her second “beautiful chance” comes from a magazine’s request for her to write a series of “portraits,” and the time of the potential assignment coincided with the annual dinner series at the Vendôme (the local casino), which attracted some of the country’s most well-known chefs. This particular year, “the Vendôme had ensnared an impressive list of *mères* to prepare their most famous dishes for their respective seven days behind the pots and pipkins, and then produce one gastronomical blast in culmination,” and several *mères* from Lyon and “*the* one from Mont-Saint-Michel” appear on this impressive list (*Map* 166). Her outline “on invisible paper [of] a series of interviews with all the famous *mères*” finds its roots in previous meetings with these

women (*Map* 166). Fisher seems surprised by what she finds because these “brisk poised business women” were not what she expected, “with decidedly less poundage and fewer grey hairs” (*Map* 166). These women, to Fisher, “could more possibly be well-tutored granddaughters than the old omelet queen or fish-dumpling dowager” (*Map* 166).<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, this promising project “turned to ash” in Fisher’s hand when she fell ill just as the dinners commenced (*Map* 167). However, the invisible pages do not disappear entirely, for the *mères* find purchase in *Map of Another Town* as characters, such as Madame Lanes. While the detail of their culinary practice and the dining experience of those dinners may remain on those invisible pages, their significance is not lost. The communal time Fisher spends with these women, in their homes, in the market, and in cafés, informs how she further understands French cuisine and the art of dining.

Moreover, she gains further insight into how French women navigated culinary practice in both their home kitchens and in a professional setting and how labor shifted as a result—these women did not engage in work but in a creative and active process. Combined with other examples such as Madame Lanes, this investigation of gender and culinary practice invites Fisher to consider issues of labor and its intersection with these other systems. Specifically, she can further assess how French culinary practice produces a different alignment with gender and labor systems insofar as culinary practice is not solely perceived as “woman’s work” that is to be conducted in the home and in service to the family. Fisher weaves this knowledge into her map, enhancing her understanding of how gender and labor systems network with culinary practice

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<sup>64</sup> This example brings the network of gender and labor systems to the surface as these women were professional culinary practitioners rather than home cooks. With this brief example, Fisher shows the prevalence of women in the French professional culinary realm and suggests that a comparable presence of women in America’s restaurants and cafés would only benefit the nation’s cuisine. It could also illuminate a shift in gender roles with regards to labor and culinary practice.

and providing an additional example of how culinary practice-as-art can be a liberating force while also creating another layer in her narrative.

Fisher's exploration of the town's pastry shops, a project "impelled less by [her] professional curiosity than by an aesthetic one" serves as Fisher's third "near-miss in [her] literary approach to Aix" and continues her consideration of the intersection between the system of gender and culinary practice (*Map* 167). Fisher interviews two women who owned "one of the great pastry shops of the town," and in a town with "at least three other pastry shops as good as [theirs]," Fisher finds her task both a challenge and an enlightening endeavor (*Map* 167). Notably, though, Fisher chooses the shop with women owners, and she highlights the role that pastries have in Aix's identity as a town in a country that values such confections and artistry in its culinary practice, all coming at the hands of these two female proprietors. In a country "dedicated to the gastric hazards of almond paste, chestnuts soaked in sweet liquers and chocolate in all its richest and most redolent forms," the pastry shop (in a town famous for these establishments) that Fisher frequents complimented her in the same manner as Deux Garçons and the Glacier and serves as another key marker on her map (*Map* 167). This particular shop attracts Fisher because, for among other reasons, it "always smelled right;" she describes the smell as "not confused and stuffy but delicately layered: fresh eggs, fresh sweet butter, grated nutmeg, vanilla beans, old kirsch, ground almonds" (*Map* 168). The layered description of the smell here reflects Fisher's honed senses and recalls how she aptly dissected the sounds of Aix as well as how those sounds blended into her map. Similarly, "the taste and smell of [the calissons] crept into [her] private map" (*Map* 170). Though she mentions her private map here, the taste and smell also incorporate into her larger mapping project, to become part of her discourse, much like the sounds of Aix.

The “delicately layered” characterization also defines the pastries themselves, aesthetically and gastronomically—the layered taste of the almonds and apricots (or peaches) and the layered appearance of the Royal Glaze on top of the oval shaped pastry. The form of the pastry (a calisson) serves as an apt metaphor for how Fisher’s map is constructed and how her narrative develops—multiple layers intimately connected to form a complex and comprehensive whole. Fisher also demonstrates her own culinary knowledge by parsing out the individual ingredients; she knows the general composition of French pastries, most notably the old kirsch and ground almonds. Further, she gestures to non-Aixoise or even non-French pastries with “confused” and “stuffy.” As an American, Fisher could, in some fashion, be hinting at baked goods (or even boxed cake mixes, for example) in her native country, with “confused” perhaps being the more prominent of the two adjectives; it also could easily characterize American cuisine and culinary practice generally at the time.

Also, the owner’s response to Fisher’s question about “the beautiful rhythm of the cakes and fruits and bonbons that flowed through the one generous window” of the store proves telling (*Map* 169). Fisher’s perspective as *The Stranger* draws an added philosophical answer from the owner: “If the right things did not appear in the good shopwindows at their proper time, where would Aix be? Where would life be?” (*Map* 169). This insight reveals the importance of the pastry shop to the town of Aix, as a small business, as a symbol of pride, as a place of culinary creativity, and as an entry point for foreigners like Fisher, to begin to know this French town. The “right things” in the “good” shops reveal this pride but pride in not only their business acumen but, more significantly, in their art. The shop owners speak as artists here and reflect the artisanal philosophy: “right things” are those that embody an attention to quality ingredients, a beauty and rhythm in the process, creativity, and passion—in other words, art.

Furthermore, she points to those intangible yet essential elements of culinary practice-as-art with “beautiful rhythm.”<sup>65</sup> In this example, the rhythm and beauty of culinary practice-as-art assume an aesthetic quality in addition to the creativity involved in the process and to the pleasure of taste; she suggests that the aesthetic aspect of the pastries possesses a flow comparable to that of the process, produced by this “beautiful rhythm.” These “flows,” along with the smells that Fisher discusses earlier, network together to produce a robust sensual experience (or those elements of a system that are not always readily visible). “Flows” also recall the “slow meanderings” that gave Fisher the chance to explore the sensual experiences of Aix. Further, the visual appeal of the pastries seduces customers and draws them into the shop; it works alongside the olfactory sensations that Fisher articulates. And, because of her refined senses, The Stranger is first drawn to the shop by smell then attends to the visual elements of the pastries, unlike a typical customer. With her attention on the sensual experience, Fisher also continues her mapping of the sensory elements that are critical to her discourse, demonstrating how elements of a system network interdependently and fluidly.

This pastry shop further narrows the symbolic value of pastry to one confection: the calissons. The owner offers to show Fisher how they are produced because Fisher was “a foreign writer” (*Map* 169). Their relationship rests on gestures that were belied by their shared knowledge: “I waved [the calisson] aside, for we both knew that I had sent dozens of them, boxes of them, to unnumbered friends every where in the world. We both know they always arrived. We knew too that they were delicious” (*Map* 169-70). This familiarity and the recognition of the offering of the calissons represent more about acceptance on the part of the owner than an attempt at a sale, which further informs how Fisher reads and maps Aix. The truth

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<sup>65</sup> “Beautiful rhythm” also serves as an apt description of Fisher’s narrative in both form and language.

behind the gesture is made possible because Fisher assures her “that the little pointed ovals of artfully blended almond were a superb confection, part pastry, part candy, light but rich, not cloying, haunting and delicate” (*Map* 170). This reassurance affords the two women the opportunity to move beyond the proprietor-customer relationship and into one of culinary colleagues of sorts. Also, Fisher’s description of this “superb confection” brings forth the notion of hybridity (“ part pastry, part candy, light but rich, not cloying, haunting and delicate”), in effect pointing to the systemic and layered nature of culinary practice-as-art and creativity in the process necessary to achieve the calisson’s complexity (*Map* 170).

Fisher’s inquiry to know the pastry shop’s calendar perhaps best demonstrates this complexity; the calendar was “the set days for producing all these other specialties for the town” (*Map* 170). Fisher’s interest in the process—how to schedule the *process* (not production) of making the pastries in this instance—rather than the product reflects her gastronomical point of view; she understands the art in the process of making these pastries. With this perspective, the significance of her desire “to study the art of making the famous calissons of Aix” cannot be overlooked because it represents how she sees cuisine—the privileging of process (*Map* 171). Fisher also brings to the surface how artists approached their food items—the detailed attention, the sole focus on one material, and the passion, to which she gestures with her use of “study.” This notion of “study” also reflects how she approaches her mapping project in broad terms—she views Aix through a culinary scholar’s eyes in her role as The Stranger. Fisher further suggests here that in order to fully grasp the art of culinary practice that it must be studied; culinary practice-as-art cannot be learned through a simple linear recipe—or cooking. Instead, it requires trial-and-error, improvisation, and a recognition and acceptance (even an embrace) of its pliable

boundaries. She translates these ideas, which coalesced during her study of the calissons, into crucial elements of her discourse.

In concluding her reflection on the pastry shop, Fisher includes the recipe for the “Calissons of Aix”; this, again, indicates her predilection for the process (*Map* 173). She did not obtain the recipe from the pastry shop owner but compiled it herself based on her extensive knowledge. The recipe’s structure attracts the reader’s attention immediately; rather than the familiar linear form evident in cookbooks such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, Fisher’s calisson recipe contains four short paragraphs. The ingredients and techniques blend together in each paragraph, mirroring the process of making the pastry. In this form—one that reads more like a literary narrative—Fisher’s recipe challenges assumptions about recipe structure and invites the reader to rethink how recipes should be presented. Further, by stirring together techniques and ingredients, she demonstrates how these aspects of culinary practice function interdependently and in-progress. By constructing the recipe in a more narrative form thereby linking it (even loosely) to literature along with the privileging of process, Fisher brings the *art* of culinary practice to the fore.

Also, Fisher introduces the recipe with a note that suggests that there is a value for the traditional process but one that retains the art of culinary practice: the recipe “is apparently as irrevocable as the passage of time itself, and which does not deviate one day, one hour, for generations and even centuries, nor for war, pestilence, invasion, nor even peace” (*Map* 173). This brief observation signifies, once again, her gastronomical point of view—culinary practice, when viewed as art, will survive the test of time and man but is also flexible and interdependent, as Fisher notes. This perspective pairs with Fisher’s focus on the process over the product—the recipe is “ageless” (but always in-progress) while the product is ephemeral (*Map* 174).

Moreover, Fisher points to the role of history, once again, in her map; the history of the calissons in Aix dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the second wedding of King René (“Calissons”). Here, she points to how multiple systems layer together to form the art of culinary practice. Though the recipe possesses a rich history, Fisher also acknowledges how artists have adapted it and infused the calissons with their own creativity: “This basic recipe [...] is varied by the pastry cooks of Aix to have a distinguishing taste of orange in one kitchen [...], and hints of anise in another” (*Map* 173). The creative play within the recipe’s pliable boundaries demonstrates how culinary practice-as-art functions successfully; these artists still retain the tradition of the calisson while imparting the confection with their own signatures.

Each of the “missed opportunities,” while briefly sketched in *Map of Another Town*, collectively influences how Fisher’s gastronomical philosophy and point of view evolve. And, her role as The Stranger locates her in an advantageous in-between position—invisible but with a honed ability to see between the words and behind the kitchen door, American and foreign while also possessing knowledge of Aix (and Dijon) more than the many tourists whom she often observed exiting busses outside of the Glacier or Deux Garçons. The Stranger position gives Fisher a mobility that would not be possible if she was “visible.” She also embraces her ‘Americanness,’ or foreignness, while simultaneously blending the foreignness of France into her personal and professional lives. More precisely, Fisher merges her ‘Americanness’ and the foreign into a hybrid gastronomical vision—she translates the in-between into an encompassing point of view that marries what she believes to be the most artful and pragmatic culinary practices of both.<sup>66</sup> Of course, as the merging crystallizes, we begin to see the privileging of the French simply because American culinary practice remains disjointed. The hybridity that Fisher

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<sup>66</sup> In this way, her vision mimics the way that the systems that inform her point of view are structured and networked.



performs as *The Stranger* and in the form of *Map of Another Town* is precisely how she envisions American cuisine and culinary practice.

Fisher's mapping project of Provence and her discourse find their roots in her early days in Dijon. By looking at some of Fisher's initial culinary moments in France, we gain a broader understanding of how she initially perceives French cuisine, specifically cafés, private luncheons, and a dining club, which will eventually shape her map. During these experiences, Fisher also begins to reveal her burgeoning comprehension of how a national cuisine develops, a factor that will later significantly influence how she constructs her discourse. Though these experiences, once again, seem only loosely connected via food (in a broad sense), when we read Fisher's work within the domestic literacies system and with a hybrid system theory approach, they emerge as significantly linked in multiple ways that greatly influence her personally and eventually inform her discourse. Fisher also immediately observes the importance of history and time in relation to how an acclaimed cuisine evolves along with honed practice and use of materials. The multidimensionality that she begins to discern in those early culinary moments reveals a level of complexity in culinary practice that, Fisher conveys, was quite new to her. The networked elements that comprise her discourse and the narratives that structure her text reflect such complexity. Fisher's early experiences provide a basis for her gastronomical growth and the development of self-awareness regarding a relationship to and understanding of French cuisine and culinary practice as well as her in-between position as a foreigner who possesses some culinary knowledge—*The Stranger*.

### **The Philosopher Goes Abroad: Fisher's Early Days in France**

Though rather recent (the last five or six hundred years), French cuisine serves as one of the reasons on the ever-growing list of why and how France continues to lure people from all

over the globe. Modern French cuisine finds its roots in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the emergence of Grande Cuisine (CIA 110).<sup>67</sup> The marriage of Italy's Catherine de Medici to King Henri II in 1533 saw the merging of two cuisines and the introduction of such dishes and practices as the crepe, béchamel sauce, pastry making, and frying to French cuisine (CIA 110). Grande Cuisine, developed by Marie-Antoine Carême in the eighteenth century, emerged as the food often associated with France—sauces, foie gras, and truffles; however, because of their financial means, the French bourgeois dined on these foods while the workers and lower classes cooked regional dishes based on local ingredients (CIA 110). At the time of the French Revolution, for example, farmers comprised two-thirds of the population, and Grande Cuisine was not found on their tables.

Restaurants also emerged during this time of upheaval; chefs who had worked for the bourgeois left France in fear of the guillotine, and many opened restaurants in other European countries (CIA 110). Following M. Boulanger's groundbreaking decision to serve food in a Parisian tavern in 1765, restaurants, as we know them today, entered French culture (CIA 110). César Ritz and Georges-Auguste Escoffier next changed how hotels served their customers, beginning with the Hotel Savoy in 1892. In the nineteenth century, French hotels provided table d'hôte (set complete meal), which offered very little choice, if any at all (CIA 110). Ritz and Escoffier sought to serve excellent cuisine but knew Grande Cuisine would be a challenge to produce successfully on a routine basis in hotel kitchens. As a result, they simplified this cuisine, which became known as Cuisine Classique (CIA 110). Escoffier also refined Carême's family of

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<sup>67</sup> Grande Cuisine was a cooking style that featured carefully planned and detailed dishes paired with sauces (later to be known as the "mother" sauces). Carême's strict code for sauces included a classification of four families, each defined by a basic sauce. The basic, or leading, sauces were espagnolé, velouté, allémande, and béchamael. From these four, Carême contended that a number of different, smaller sauces could be produced (McGee 332). Chefs for the royal and noble households had the equipment and access to the necessary ingredients to prepare this cuisine for their employers (CIA 110).

sauces, which proved significant for French cuisine heading into the twentieth century. His redefinition of the leading sauces included five— espagnolé, velouté, béchamel, tomate, and hollandaise (McGee 332). Moreover, in his 1902 *Guide Culinarie*, Escoffier noted approximately 200 different sauces that extended from those root five sauces (McGee 332). Finally, Escoffier revolutionized kitchen organization and restaurant service, which contemporary restaurants still follow today.<sup>68</sup>

This French cuisine fundamentally catalyzed both Fisher and Child. Fisher's love affair with France began early in life, and these initial forays into French cuisine and culture set the stage for her detailed mapping project that would ultimately shift American culinary practice. How did Fisher first view French food and culture? Her time in France spanned decades, and she grew immensely fond of a handful of French locales in addition to Paris and Dijon, such as Vevey and the Provence region. She first visited Dijon with her husband Al Fisher. In September 1929, she and Al took a boat train from Cherbourg to Paris, and it was on this brief trip that Fisher dined on the “most memorable meal” she ever had, thus beginning French cuisine's seduction of M.F.K. Fisher (Reardon *Appetites* 45). She frequently wrote to family members from Dijon about her travels and gastronomical experiences. In a letter to her younger brother David, for example, in October 1929, we receive an immediate sense of how Fisher views place and space—a focus on history and architecture, in particular, a factor that would prove essential in her understanding of Provence and French cuisine that she delineates in *Map of Another Town*.

Fisher also demonstrates a youthful enthusiasm for French wines and the culture of wine. She details the “great ceremony” of wine service and drinking in a “good restaurant [where] you order a fine wine” (*Life* 4-5). Fisher follows the description, which is filled with wonder, with a

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<sup>68</sup> For additional information on the history of French cuisine, see Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson's *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*, for example.

confession: “Of course Al and I don’t know anything about such persnickety-ness—probably never will” (*Life* 5). This brief insight into the naïve and youthful Fisher allows us to see the great depth to which her experiences in France shifted her view of the world, her relationship to foreign countries and her native land, her writing and career, and her relationship to food and culinary practice. A letter to her younger sister Anne during these early days in Dijon perhaps best reveals her evolving connection with France and its cuisine: “It’s thrilling, fascinating, marvelous—and it grows better and better” (*Life* 5). Here, Fisher lacks the detail to describe fully and convey the cuisine itself, but the manner in which she changes is significant as she experiences a *process* much like the cuisine and practice that she explores. And, she documents many of these early experiences in *The Gastronomical Me*, which is a precursor to her more mature and investigative work in *Map of Another Town*.

While Fisher spent much of her early time in Dijon, she explored Paris and became enamored with the City of Lights immediately. In “The Measure of My Powers,” Fisher recounts these first days in Paris with great fondness and warmth—setting the stage for a passionate relationship with this city that would outlast all of her marriages. When she and Al stayed at the Quai Voltaire, she recalls how “the hot chocolate and rich *croissants* were the most delicious things [...] that [she] had ever eaten” and how “they were really the first thing [she had] tasted to remember” (“Measure” 393). In this brief example, Fisher’s naiveté and underdeveloped perspective on cuisine are obvious, but she gestures to her potential to discern among various incarnations of common and popular French food items, such as croissants. The process that she hints at here—the process of developing and shaping one’s palate and culinary knowledge—requires attention to detail and subtleties as well as an awareness of how memory operates in

conjunction with food. With such a process, Fisher later successfully maps Aix and constructs a multidimensional discourse centered on culinary practice.

Later, Fisher narrates a meditation (a familiar narrative form in her writing that she blends into the form of *Map of Another Town*) on the potato. While she and Al were eating in a courtyard with “two kind silly women,” she only remembers eating “a kind of soufflé of potatoes,” which was “hot, light, with a brown crust, and probably chives and grated parmesan cheese” (“Measure” 394). Though seemingly innocuous, Fisher was impressed because “it was served alone, in a course all by itself” (“Measure” 394). Using her trademark wit, she notes that she “had been wondering rebelliously about potatoes” for all of her life, and upon eating this soufflé, she “felt a secret justification swell” in her (“Measure” 394-95). This justification stems from her experience in America with potatoes—the fact that she “almost resented them [...] or rather, the monotonous disinterest with which they were always treated” (“Measure” 395). Besides the occasional hankering for mashed potatoes as a child, Fisher had the “meat-and-potatoes” relationship with potatoes, when “a potentially important food [was reduced] to such a menial position” (“Measure” 395). Because of this troublesome relationship, Fisher knows that if she “ever had [her] way” that she would “make such delicious things of potatoes that they would be a whole meal, and never would [she] think about of them as the last part of the word meat-and-” (“Measure” 395). In that courtyard in “the first really French restaurant [she] had ever been in,” Fisher feels vindicated and validated, and as such, her immersion in the cuisine of France begins in an unanticipated way. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, before Fisher sets out on a deliberate mission to map French culinary practice and to assess the state of American cuisine, she arrives at a small epiphany that would inform both. In her reflection on a simple vegetable and its preparation in French culinary practice, Fisher critiques American cuisine and

shows that her country's culinary relationship to the potato is indicative of its cuisine overall—a monotony that fuels resentment. This realization plants a seed that would propel the development of her discourse and further her evaluation of American cuisine.<sup>69</sup>

In “The Measures of My Powers,” Fisher reflects on her early moments in France and demonstrates an understanding of her naïveté and youth, thus enabling her to see how her formative years in France shape her culinary and professional worlds. In the recounting of her first month wedding anniversary, for example, Fisher simultaneously provides a critical reflection while still capturing the youthful exuberance that she felt when dining out at a “nice restaurant” with her husband. Before arriving at, what she thought was, the Three Pheasants at Ducal Palace (instead, it is Ribaudot's) for what would be their “first meal alone together in a restaurant in France,” Fisher and her husband, in their “best clothes,” stop by the Café de Paris for a drink (“Measure” 398). Fisher notes that they “were very ignorant about French apéritifs,” and Al ordered a Cocktail Montana, which was advertised on a sign behind the front desk (“Measure” 398-99). Not knowing what to expect, the Fishers receive “a large tumbler, rimmed with white sugar, and filled with a golden-pink liquid,” with two straws floating in the frosted glass (“Measure” 399). Despite Al's embarrassment that he unknowingly ordered for the two of them, Fisher could not have been more pleased, for it was “one of the biggest, strongest, loudest drinks” that she ever drank (“Measure” 399).

In addition to tasting this delicious cocktail, the couple also learns the story behind its arrival at the Café de Paris—an American with a circus promised to teach the owner the secret recipe in exchange for free beer (“Measure” 399). The American promised the café owner that

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<sup>69</sup> Fisher's future friend and collaborator Julia Child focuses on the use of the potato in French culinary practice in both *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and on her PBS program *The French Chef*. In the influential cookbook, Child and her co-authors note that they selected a series of potato recipes from the “vast store of French potato dishes,” suggesting the prominent use of the vegetable in the nation's cuisine (520). By including this array, the three authors challenge the monotony in American cuisine that Fisher articulates in those early days in France.

his fellow Yankees would flock to buy it, but of course, as Fisher observes, Americans did not frequent the Café de Paris. Instead, “the few who stopped in Dijon sipped reverently of rare wines,” and they “would have shuddered with esthetic and academic horror at such a concoction as we took turns drinking that night” (“Measure” 399). Notably, this picture of Americans in Dijon operates alongside and against the characterization of the American drink as the “biggest, strongest, loudest,” which could often aptly describe a French perspective of American tourists. The dichotomous image presented here would emerge in some fashion when Fisher interrogates her own in-between position as “The Stranger,” later in *Map of Another Town*.

This seemingly simple observation of her fellow Americans proves significant in Fisher’s relationship with France and its cuisine. Unlike these few Americans who stopped in Dijon, Fisher sheds any pretention and allows herself to be subsumed into the French culinary culture. By doing so, she gains a deeper understanding of the French way of life overall and, perhaps more significantly, acquires the critical eye that she turns on American cuisine. With her new perspective, she will be able to consider the state of American cuisine and how the rich tradition and innovation in French culinary practice could help a young nation find its culinary footing and develop its own cuisine.

Her experiences at French restaurants also provide her with the opportunity to examine critically American restaurant culture. This anniversary evening and dining at Riboudot’s proves to be one of the greatest culinary lessons that Fisher would receive and one that she could apply in her mapping project. Though the first meal they had “was a shy stupid one,” Fisher acknowledges that even if they “had never gone back and never learned gradually how to order food and wine,” it still would have ranked as “among the important ones” of her life (“Measure” 399). Riboudot’s becomes a classroom of sorts for Fisher; she even recalls that she comes to

know the kitchens, dining room, and the hallways as well as she knew her own home (“Measure” 400). This acknowledgement is also reminiscent of Julia Child’s experience at the Le Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris, yet Fisher’s educational environment at Riboudot’s is less formalized or structured and more akin to an apprenticeship. But, the significance for Fisher is just as great as it was for Child—the educational *process* for both women signals a key component to culinary practice: these are skills that must be learned and developed. Culinary practice, as both women demonstrate, is not an inherent talent or ability. Rather, an individual acquires and hones the knowledge and skills of culinary practice, and often, as with these two icons, this occurs over a lifetime, suggesting that there is always new knowledge or a new strategy or method to learn for a technique, dish, or food item. This particular lesson points to a two-fold factor that is critical to culinary practice-as-art: process and the interdependent and in-progress nature of this system. Fisher and Child show how the art of culinary practice is a process and always developing, or always in-progress, through education and hands-on trial and error. In contrast, for example, linearity and emphases on product and efficiency over process and creativity elide these crucial elements, as evidenced in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*.

Fisher’s education at Ribaudot’s comes not only from Ribaudot himself but also from the patrons, a man named Charles in particular. On that first night at Ribaudot’s when she meets Charles, he is “more than kind” to the couple, and as Fisher recalls, there “was little he could do except see that [they] were fed without feeling too ignorant” (“Measure” 400). Charles recommends two dining options, which Fisher files away in her culinary knowledge that is quickly beginning to amass, and the Fishers select the “diner de luxe au prix fixe” (“Measure” 400). She notes, however, that the first and less expensive plan “[is] fantastic enough” and contains a “series of blurred legendary words: *pâte truffée Charles le Téméraire, poulet en cocotte*



*aux Trois Faisans, civet à la mode bourguignonne*” (“Measure” 400-01). Despite being “lost,” Fisher’s detailing of these specific menu items signals her knowledge that she acquired while immersed at Ribaudot’s—she knows the status (legendary) of these various dishes (“Measure” 401). Further, she points to the *process* in which she is engaged—a culinary, linguistic, and historical educational journey, which will prove significant as she constructs her map of Aix that functions as a culinary expedition in its own way.

Fisher and her husband also dine on what she calls the “the biggest, as well as the most exciting meal, that either of [them] had ever had” (“Measure” 401). It seems that the significance of this meal, at least in part, stems from the “newness” of each dish that they sample. Fisher notes that her “steady avid curiosity” paired with her “fresh ignorance” afford her the chance to fully enjoy this “gluttonous orgy” (“Measure” 401). Despite now shuddering at the idea of *prix-fixe* meal, “in France or anywhere,” Fisher relishes that moment where she feels the presence of the “kind ghosts of Lucullus and Brillat-Savarin as well as Rabelais and a hundred others [who] stepped in to ease [their] adventurous bellies, and soothe [their] tongues” (“Measure” 401). Besides the beautiful gluttony that she experiences, Fisher also feels comforted and welcomed by her culinary predecessors with whom she started to feel worthy of dining, if only in spirit. She describes this comfort and the communal experience as being safe with the “charmed gastronomical circle,” in effect, her own culinary Algonquin Roundtable (“Measure” 401).

At the same time, Fisher also demonstrates how she begins to recognize and articulate the ways that the pleasures of the table manifest as a result of French cuisine and culinary practice. The “gluttonous orgy” of French food couples with the spiritual community to generate one of Brillat-Savarin’s central ideas of pleasures of the table, specifically the notion that “pleasure can be savored almost to the full whenever the four following conditions are met with: food at least

passable, good wine, agreeable companions, and enough time,” and Fisher identifies how these nearly intangible components are, in fact, essential to the complexity of culinary practice (184).<sup>70</sup>

Further, the “gastronomical circle” that Fisher mentions gestures to the lengthy history of French culinary practice and cuisine. This history, whether in the form of practice, philosophy (e.g. Brillat-Savarin), or literature (e.g. Rabelais), creates the multidimensionality that distinguishes French culinary practice from others, specifically from American culinary practice and cuisine. French cuisine has had the benefit of history (of time) for these various elements to function cooperatively and inform the nation’s cuisine while American cuisine simply does not have the centuries of history, literature, and philosophy upon which to draw. Fisher understands and foregrounds these factors in order to show the need for multidimensionality in a national cuisine and culinary practice and to provide a strategy for the development of American cuisine: look to our history, philosophy, and literature even in their youthful stages. The recognition of the pleasures of the table and the rich history informs how Fisher will later perceive Provence and engage in her mapping project: her lens will be wide to include these many elements rather than narrowly focus on what is on the plate. By broadening her perspective, Fisher can wholly account for the many interdependent and diverse elements that construct French culinary practice and cuisine, which will then shape her discourse.

Fisher’s recollection of this meal serves as a humorous anecdote but is also revealing because she cannot recall what they ate with much specificity. She asserts, however, “it was the sort of rich winy special cuisine that is typical of Burgundy, with many dark sauces and gamy meats and ending, I can guess, with a soufflé of kirsch and glacé fruits, and some such airy trifle” (“Measure” 402). It seems that Fisher fills in her lost memories with knowledge that she acquires

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<sup>70</sup> Notably, Fisher translated Brillat-Savarin’s *The Physiology of Taste*, and this translation is the most widely known. Thus, Fisher’s knowledge of his philosophy and its integration into her work, whether consciously or not, only seems fitting.

during her lifelong experiences with French regional cuisine; she *assumes* that this was the meal that she enjoyed based upon her understanding of Burgundy cuisine. And, she also mentions the after glow from the meal, not only the intoxication caused by the variety of alcohol consumed but also being “drunk” with the “sure knowledge that it lay waiting for [her]” (“Measure” 402). Fisher recognizes the significance (its multiplicity) of this evening in France; she knows that it would provide her entrance into an elite gastronomical circle as she continues to acquire experiential knowledge (and intellectual circles as she was an avid student of French culture as well as food) of French cuisine and culinary practice. Upon reflection, she sees, in glimpses perhaps, how this education would inform her professional success as well as her undeniable influence on her homeland’s cuisine.

While Fisher is greatly fond of Ribaudot’s, she also grows enamored with a few other area restaurants, including Crespin’s, which is located “on one of the oldest streets,” a fact that certainly appealed to the history-loving Fisher (“Noble” 428). Her recounting of the restaurants prefigures the focus on 2Gs and Deux Garçons in *Map of Another Town*; she establishes the foundation for her love of French cafés and restaurants with Dijon establishments such as Ribaudot’s and Crespin’s. She pays particular attention to the oysters served at Crespin’s, which may be an early glimpse into Fisher’s affection for the oyster that she fully explores in memorable narratives such as “Consider the Oyster” (1941). It begins with “the old oysterman [who] stood outside always by his fish, stamping his feet like a horse and blowing on his huge bloody mottled hands” (“Noble” 428). The vivid picture of this local fisherman provides color and detail to Fisher’s early portrait of Dijon, and we receive a hint of reverence for him in her description. He also symbolizes those artisans who specialize in one food item with passion and creativity that not only distinguishes it from other food items in the same culinary category but

also foregrounds the artisan as an artist. Her narrow focus on this one food item serves as a microcosm of the role that local food plays in the region's cuisine; the oyster embodies the farm-to-table ideology of local cuisine and also gestures to the idea of art in culinary practice.

Fisher also acknowledges, "He was the best one [she had] ever seen for opening those devilish twisted shells" ("Noble" 428). She gestures to the *art* of preparing oysters, a skill developed through practice; he is not a laborer as seen through Fisher's eyes but an artisan supplying his community with a valuable local food. And, his display of oysters offers a window into the Dijon marketplace, a picture perhaps quite foreign to her American audience: "He had baskets of dark brown woven twigs, with the oysters lying impotently on seaweed within...Portugaises, Marennes, Vertes of different qualities, so fresh that their delicate flanges drew back at your breath upon them" ("Noble" 428).<sup>71</sup> The fresh and local food that Fisher details, in this and many other narratives, and her extensive knowledge on the subject that she gains over her years in France, as exemplified with the oyster meditation here, will shape her discourse; she knows the economic value of such goods as well as their culinary—and artistic—value. Fisher also recognizes the networked systems here: culinary practice, economics, and labor. The oyster and the oysterman provide economic and labor value to the local community and to the cuisine.

Moreover, from visiting Crespin's, Fisher learned how restaurants could succeed by perfecting a few dishes, and *tripes à la mode de Caen*, a mainstay on Crespin's menu, serves as an example. The chef serves it "in little casseroles in which it could keep indefinitely," and a "salad and a piece or two of cheese" accompany the dish ("Noble" 428). The consistency and

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<sup>71</sup> While local and fresh are words du jour in early 21<sup>st</sup> century America, at the time in which Fisher is writing and through the 1960s, they were not. Packaged goods that promised fast and easy cooking, along with the latest kitchen technology, were being heavily marketed to the primary household consumer—women.

simplicity of this menu item proves Fisher's "firm belief that if a restaurant will be honest about a few things, it can outlive any rival with a long pretentious menu" ("Noble" 428). This belief functions as a thread throughout Fisher's writing and becomes embedded in her gastronomic philosophy; the focus on a "few things" reflects the artisan ideology—perfecting a few dishes privileges the art in culinary practice. By also integrating this thread into her discourse of culinary practice-as-art, Fisher addresses those misconceptions that *good* restaurant dining can only occur at places with elaborate, expensive, and changing menus. In a country and in an era when size and growth were valued—economically and materially—Fisher's emphasis on simplicity and consistency serves to ground American cuisine and culinary practice in a network of standards that could shape a nation's relationship to food and cooking. And, the privileging of art here will also greatly inform this grounding of American culinary practice—art is the way to achieve such simplicity and consistency.

Fisher shows how these critical elements (simplicity and consistency) of culinary practice could be found elsewhere, beyond the restaurant doors, and reveals that the revered French cuisine finds its roots in the home kitchen. She positions restaurant and home culinary practice not in opposition but as equally influential on the nation's cuisine and culinary identity. Furthermore, she discusses the places located between the home and restaurant kitchens, those often forgotten places where innovative cuisine exists and where iconic national dishes or food items develop.<sup>72</sup> After wandering the different Parisian and Provençal streets, Fisher observes, "There were places like the stand out in the park that made wonderful sandwiches of crisp rolls with loops and dollops of sweet home-cured ham in them" ("Noble" 429). Her exploration of

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<sup>72</sup> These in-between places serve an important function that Fisher grows to recognize. This position—the in-between—recalls Hayles' notion of what is not seen and how such a "third space" can help us to understand how systems develop. In this case, the in-between can provide a way to comprehend how French culinary practice evolves and to dismantle the binary of professional/home kitchen. These in-between places mirror Fisher's own position as "The Stranger" in *Map of Another Town*.

local eateries outside the traditional restaurant setting, such as these food stands, provides her with insight into how a regional cuisine (and by extension, a national cuisine) develops. “The houses along the canal that sold hot minnows, cooked whole and piled unblinking in a bowl” represent repositories of culinary knowledge into which Fisher delves (“Noble” 429). These houses and the “little cafés that because their proprietors liked hot cheese cakes made hot cheese cakes once a week” allow Fisher to experience French cuisine in a different setting with different adaptations of a broad and multidimensional culinary practice, in the company of a different class of citizens, but all featuring a regional Burgundy cuisine (“Noble” 429). The variety that Fisher observes here gives her the knowledge to embrace the in-between places in the future. As such, she integrates them into her mapping project of Aix and into her discourse. In order for America to develop a comprehensive national cuisine and culinary practice, Fisher suggests, these in-between establishments must be included.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Emerging Foodie**

Though much of her education of this regional cuisine manifested through dining out and feasting on home cooked meals at the boarding house, Fisher details a luncheon that she attended with her husband, which serves as an example of the in-between but one that Fisher did not expect. The luncheon experience reveals a specific method that Fisher employs when she writes about food; the way that she structures this element of her larger narrative system shows how she privileges process philosophically and in her writing as well as how the details of food hold a primary position in her writing (e.g. always already present). In other words, process and food details dictate the structure of this narrative.

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<sup>73</sup> Notably, Fisher’s attention to these in-between places prefigures the rise of artisan shops, food trucks, and even farmers markets that we see today. These examples certainly represent the dismantling function that Hayles articulates regarding the in-between—we no longer need to visit a traditional restaurant for quality food, for example.

She is “the wife of an almost-faculty member” and, in addition to requisite “tea with [her] almost-colleagues must too often,” Fisher attended a “formal luncheon at the Rector’s” (“Noble” 429). A catered affair such as this luncheon provides Fisher with an opportunity to witness food service in this country and to experience French cuisine in a new setting, outside of the restaurant environment, home kitchen, and even the smaller, often forgotten places. Her extensive attention to the event in “Noble and Enough” signals the value Fisher placed on this dining experience. She begins her account of the luncheon by noting, “It was the most impressive private meal [she had] ever gone to” (“Noble” 430).<sup>74</sup> Fisher quickly adds that the “chef had been helped by Ribaudot, and several of the *restaurateur’s* best men were in the dining room” (“Noble” 430). With this knowledge, Fisher knows that she would be in capable gastronomical hands but still was unsure of what to expect. The brief description offers significant insight into how she viewed, through still rather naïve eyes, the world of French dining: “There were ranks of wine glasses, and the butler murmured the name and year of each wine as he poured it. Each one was beautiful” (“Noble” 430). Once again, Fisher perceives simplicity—and detail—where others may overlook it. She pays great attention to wine and wine service here, yet Fisher revels in the beauty and simplicity of the wine itself. By doing so, she can transfer this experience, insight, and knowledge to American cuisine and how wine can find a significant place at the American table.

At the same time, we witness the absence of Fisher’s knowledge about wine here; the butler’s “murmur” of the wine and year reveal that Fisher still does not possess the education

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<sup>74</sup> Fisher adds a parenthetical note following this telling description: “Thank God, I add. I sometimes feel that I am almost miraculously fortunate, to have lived this long and never sat through one of the ‘state banquets’ I have read about” (“Noble” 430). Fisher distinguishes the private luncheon for Al’s department and the state banquets, which, from her witty sidebar, seem predictable and formal with regards to the food served and manner in which it is served. She also gestures to the ways in which economics influence culinary practice; in this example, the financial ability to fund an expensive state dinner actually turns the affair and food into an uninviting experience, in effect downgrading the pleasures of the table to “predictable and formal.” This characterization belies the assumption that greater affluence produces a richer dining experience.

about this particular aspect of French cuisine to speak expertly about it. And, this position in which she finds herself mirrors that of her readers—the American home cook or burgeoning “foodie” who is still learning about wine. In this sense, Fisher finds herself in the in-between position as she does through many of her early experiences in France. This position affords her opportunities to observe, learn, and incorporate such knowledge in her understanding of French culinary practice. Though she does not recognize the benefits of the in-between here, she will later fully embrace it when she adopts “The Stranger” position for her mapping project.

Much of her account of this private luncheon centers, of course, on the cuisine. She begins by isolating a brief description of one dish and its service in its own paragraph, and this paragraph rests between discussions about the women in attendance and the guest of honor. The rather odd location of the paragraph—the interruption of a flowing account of the guests at the luncheon—shows a stream of consciousness style while also serving as an acute example of Fisher’s privileging of culinary practice, process, and the details of food in her writing. It also demonstrates how Fisher cognitively engages with food—the presence that it held in her everyday thought process. Food functions not only as an functional interruption but also as a navigational tool through memory, as signals of moments, events, and experiences that would otherwise be lost to time as well as a method for structuring her narrative. The intrinsic connection between food and memory for Fisher informs her discourse; this union between food and memory echoes Brillat-Savarin’s notion of the pleasures of the table—a philosophy by which Fisher lives and believes others should as well, if only to enjoy this marriage of food and memory.

Moreover, Fisher demonstrates the productivity that can result from such an interruption—or perturbation. Much like her discourse perturbs American cuisine and culinary



practice, this perturbation of her narration of the luncheon with the description of the food reveals how Fisher views the ways that French culinary practice networks with other systems, points to her in-between position, and foreshadows how she will pursue her mapping project, with attention to French culinary practice's multifaceted nature. Also, this perturbation functions as a structural device for the entire narrative; it draws attention to how Fisher writes—to her process. In this way, the notion of process continues to hold its privileged position not only in Fisher's writing but also eventually in her discourse.

Though Fisher disrupts her flow with this paragraph, she reveals rich details as well as cultural and culinary insight: "One of the courses was whole *écrevisses* in a rich sauce, served of course with the correct silver pliers, claw-crackers, gouges, and forceps" ("Noble" 430). From this short account, Fisher seems simultaneously impressed and blasé about the food and its service. The correct accompaniments to the *écrevisses* do not surprise her, but she feels compelled to delineate each item in attendance. She has come to expect the "correct" culinary practice in France, which includes service, and she quickly provides us with a history lesson in the development of French cuisine (a gesture to Escoffier perhaps). As an American digesting this information, Fisher holds a unique position compared to her fellow countrymen who visit France because she is cognizant of America's short and often fractured culinary history. Her awareness of France's history and its essential role in French culinary practice provides her with the opportunity to engage in a great archaeological undertaking later. Fisher's mapping project, the foundation of which is created in these early days and travelogues, accounts for this history in a variety of ways (e.g. architecture and specific historical events), and by attending to this inextricable link between history and culinary practice, she can then incorporate that networked relationship into her discourse. Despite its fragmented culinary history, America cannot ignore or

dismiss it; rather, it must embrace its diverse and often problematic history in order to develop a comprehensive national cuisine.

We further witness Fisher's growing body of knowledge at this luncheon with her schooling of a fellow American, a visiting scholar. Upon seeing the "hard big coral fish lying in their Lucullan baths," the "guest of honor" turns to Fisher for help ("Noble" 430). Because she "had struggled before with the same somewhat overrated delicacy" (and because she did not want to be "tactless" and suggest he simply watch the hostess), Fisher demonstrates the proper technique for eating whole *écrevisses* ("Noble" 430). Rather than using the tools (she "[has] no patience with manmade tools in such emergencies"), she "[picks] up a shrimp between [her] left thumb and forefinger, [cracks] both its claws with the silver crackers, [eats] what meat [she] could with the little fork, and then [dunks] the rest out of the sauce with a crust of bread" ("Noble" 430). The guest of honor followed suit, as did the entire dinner party.

By sharing her knowledge, Fisher not only endows these "almost-colleagues" with valuable culinary know-how but also gives them permission to bypass French tradition and the "proper" manner of eating ("Noble" 429). This dismissal of manmade tools may appear very "American" to some French gastronomes; however, it signals a merging of the formal and informal—tradition and the new—to achieve pleasure at the table, or, in other words, a perturbation of these binaries. Fisher's demonstration of this technique serves as a moment of educating her countrymen and women, a moment that she later fleshes out in her extensive accounts of her time in France. Both acts—the actual demonstration and the recording of it—hint at how Fisher will develop her discourse; it will not derive solely from an intellectual exercise but hands-on, experiential processes. Also, the technique that Fisher presents to the luncheon table could have originated not from her experiences in the Dijon cafes and restaurants but from

the lively, cozy dining experiences at the boarding houses. Bringing those casual moments to a more formal setting could, in fact, be what Fisher may be striving for as she continually meditates about the state of American cuisine and culinary practice.<sup>75</sup>

While the luncheon represents a moment, in her early days in France, in which Fisher imparts information, she spent much of her time acquiring knowledge during those first few years. For example, Fisher learned a great deal from Madame Biarnet, the landlady of the house where Al and Mary Frances resided while in Dijon. Fisher characterizes Madame as a fierce bargainer at the market, a boisterous, no nonsense woman who ran a tight ship but is also accommodating to guests (“Measure” 403-04). She observes how Madame runs her kitchen, for she does all of the cooking herself, and she could not keep a cook because “they found it impossible to work with her” (“Measure” 405). As Fisher recalls, Madame “was quite unable to trust anyone else’s intelligence” (“Measure” 405). In this regard, Fisher witnessed how a temperamental artist worked; Madame was “a kind of avaricious genius that could have made boiled shoe taste like milk-fed lamb *à la mode printanière*” (“Measure” 406-07). Fisher jokes, “Maybe it was boiled shoe...but by the time Madame got through with it, it was nourishing and full of heavenly flavor,” and her observation of Madame’s culinary practice does not end with her ability to make “good food” that was “well-cooked.” (“Measure” 407, 406).

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<sup>75</sup> Fisher conveys another revealing moment during this dining experience not in the main body of the narrative but within a parenthetical note following the brief story about her fellow Americans. She seems adamant about the fact that the host serve these shrimp whole, and Fisher “still [does not] believe that a host should serve anything that cannot be eaten with ease and finesse by all his guests who are reasonably able-bodied” (“Noble” 431). Her indictment of her luncheon host also functions as a critique of class and assumptions made about gourmet dining. Fisher adds that she had “yet to see the most adept gourmet succeed even one such crustacean with the prescribed tools” (“Noble” 431). In the fine dining establishments that she supped in during her stay in France, she said it was routine to witness “cuffs rolled back, napkin under chin, an inevitable splash or two and more than that number of loud sucking noises” (“Noble” 431). While she notes that some may see her instruction at the table as an act typical of these “delightful American savages,” Fisher is sure to provide sufficient evidence to rebut the service put forth by her host (“Noble” 431). The notion of eating with “ease and finesse” will certainly inform her transformative discourse and how she views the potential for change in American cuisine and culinary practice.

She foregrounds Madame's creativity, her ability to transform food items that others may overlook into art (e.g. "a handful of bruised oranges, a coconut with a crack in it, perhaps even some sprouting potatoes") ("Measure" 404). Each dish that Madame served Fisher and her husband was "full of heavenly flavor;" Fisher notes that Madame possessed the artistic ability to "[wring] daily" these courses, "in a kind of maniacal game, from the third-rate shops in Dijon and her own ingenuity" ("Measure" 407). And, she narrates how Madame developed these culinary skills through this brief narrative in *The Gastronomical Me*, from her shrewd negotiating skills to her ability to pick through various produce and meats to find what would work for her and her budget. Thus, Fisher reveals how this art of culinary practice evolves over time through dedication to the process, through attention to detail, and through passion.

By observing Madame, Fisher also witnesses how women navigated and operated a hybrid professional/home kitchen and ran a business. Though Fisher does not frame Madame as a small business owner, her description of Madame Biarnet certainly adheres to our contemporary definition of one. Madame's combination of business acumen and strict control of her kitchen suggest to Fisher that women like Madame greatly valued the historical and cultural significance of French culinary practice; Madame establishes high standards not only for herself but also for those in her employ. As such, Fisher learns that to sustain a robust national culinary practice such standards are necessary and that the relationship between gender and culinary practice, in the French context, looked vastly different than it did in her homeland. Madame provided Fisher with an example of a woman who existed outside the familiar American gendered binary of public/private space and operated in the in-between space—a lesson that Fisher could apply to American cuisine and culinary practice.

Furthermore, part of Madame's charm was her personality at the dining table, to which Fisher repeatedly refers. Fisher's attention to Madame's behavior here provides insight into how the average French middle class individual viewed the art of dining. It was a relaxed moment, one of community and cordiality, and Madame's "wonderful honest vulgarity" and "her own lusty laughter" following a joke made all guests, including Fisher and her husband, feel welcome ("Measure" 403). The picture, which Fisher paints, gestures to Brillat-Savarin's notion of the pleasures of the table quite vividly, and this portrait of Madame and her dining room would influence Fisher's perception of French dining practices. Fisher would later translate the dining experiences at Madame's, which were rich and well-rounded to include the jovial community as well as regional French cuisine, as part of her transformative discourse in order to demonstrate to an American audience that the pleasures of dining and culinary practice did not solely derive from one facet or another, such as what was on the plate, but from an entire network of factors, including fellow diners and setting.

Fisher's time with Madame generated a two-fold result that would influence her discourse: first, the way that the interdependent network of gender, labor, economics, and culinary practice systems shift when considered within the framework of art and second, the essential place of the pleasures of the table within culinary practice regardless of economic position, or class. With Madame, Fisher witnessed a middle class woman (a similar demographic to a large portion of American homemakers) who engaged in culinary practice—one with a lengthy history and a cemented set of traditions—as art, rather than as strict labor; Madame privileged process and created an atmosphere of community around her food. While her culinary practice was part of her business (thus *appearing* like traditional labor), she does not allow it to be solely defined by labor, or by the product. Instead, Madame pulls culinary practice towards art

and shows how it operates as a liberating creative process (on its own but especially for women, or homemakers) and as a way out of the isolation that American homemakers experienced while seated with their families at their own kitchen tables.

### **Learning a Hundred Things, All the Hard Way**

In 1931, following a summer spent with her family in the United States, Fisher and her husband returned to Dijon with the realization that they needed to live by themselves (i.e. not in a boarding house) (“Measure” 435). In terms of her French culinary education, this time in Fisher’s early adulthood would prove significant once again. Living in an apartment rather than a boarding house now required Fisher to cook on her own. The new housing arrangement forced Fisher to experiment with the foods and practices that she had sampled and observed during her first years in Dijon. Their first apartment was located above a pastry shop, and it was the smell that “made [her] to decide to take it” (“Measure” 436). At least for her first home in her adopted country, Fisher is close in both location and sensory experience to a quintessential French local staple.

The kitchen in the apartment was small by contemporary standards (5’ x 3’), but Fisher equates it with the New York apartment kitchens “where people cook on stoves hidden in their bureau drawers,” or so she heard (“Measure” 437). Despite the compact space in which she would have to cook, Fisher adapted and quickly began the new phase of her French culinary education, starting with “the big market, *les Halles*” (“Measure” 437). Her initiation into the market experience began with “a kind of whispering of pattering rush of women’s feet” every Wednesday and Saturday (“Measure” 437). Fisher finally identified the source of the sound when she and Al were having breakfast at a corner café. As the women passed the couple for a second time, returning from their destination, “their bags and carts were heavy” with “the

crooked curls of green beans and squashes, the bruised outer leaves of lettuces, [and] stiff yellow chicken legs” busting out of them (“Measure” 437-38). It was not so much the array of food that Fisher observes in the bags and the carts that inspired her the most to make the pilgrimage to the market but the fact that she saw “that the women were tired but full of a kind of peace, too” (“Measure” 438). Fisher, at that moment, decides to pursue that peace in her small kitchen and comprehends the potential overwhelming satisfaction (for her, it would be both emotional and intellectual) from shopping for local foods then using a set of learned skills to create a fulfilling meal that she and her husband could share and enjoy. Further, Fisher must shift how she writes, from attention focused on others and their relationship to food to her own process and practice.

In one page, deploying her signature wit and self-deprecating humor, Fisher delineates her various “lessons learned” in that first week of visiting the market and utilizing her small apartment kitchen. She begins by acknowledging the difficulty that she faced in that first week; she “learned a hundred things, all the hard way” (“Measure” 438). The trial-and-error experiences that she details provide her with the opportunity to further understand French culinary practice, to include shopping at the market and more importantly how to find basic foodstuffs. For example, Fisher learns “how to buy milk and eggs and cheeses and when and where” and “that *les Hells* were literally the only place to get fresh vegetables” (“Measure” 438). Though only a brief mention, the breadth of what she learns here cannot be understated; she privileges the “how” of her marketing over the “when” and “where,” which emphasizes process over simple product. One cannot discover, in one visit, the variety of practices involved in selecting a cheese, and the selection process is also governed by what the cheese artisan has available, which is often based upon to what other materials s/he has access. And, because the market only carries seasonal materials, one culinary component that Fisher learns is that she

must plan based on what is available (and also what she can afford), and this factor fuels creativity, which Fisher experiences in her new kitchen.

With a bit of humor, Fisher adds that she also learned about the physical demands of shopping at the market (which offers insight into how she sees the ‘tough’ French women like Madame): “two heads of cauliflower and a kilo of potatoes and some endives weighed about forty pounds after I’d spent half an hour walking to market and an hour there and missed three crowded trams home again” (“Measure” 438). In addition to the weight, the “walking endless cobbled miles from one shop to another, butter here, sausage there, bananas someplace again, and rice and sugar and coffee in still another place” teaches Fisher a key component to everyday life in Dijon (“Measure” 438). The skill that one develops along these “endless cobbled miles” cannot be learned in a textbook or in a formal educational setting; rather, French women learn how to shop over a period of time and through hands-on experiences. At home in America, the supermarket was approximately 20 years in the future, so this defining shopping experience proves more significant for Fisher in the 1960s when convenience foods and shopping had become commonplace. In the face of these trends, Fisher grounds her culinary discourse in a practice with a long and proven history of success. The adventure of the Dijonnais shopping style and the numerous benefits of buying local food products serve as such a foundation.

In addition, the shift from dining out in this foreign country to cooking for oneself in the same place provides Fisher with immense and indispensable insight into how the everyday French person—most likely a woman—cooks in and navigates a small kitchen within a particular set of economic and logistic circumstances. Food storage exemplifies the fusion of the two because Fisher must problem solve basic storage issues like “how to keep butter without ice [and] how to have good salads every day when they could only be bought twice a week and there



was no place to keep them cool (no place to keep them at all really)” (“Noble” 430). The situation demands that Fisher not only creatively solve her storage problems but also—and perhaps more significantly—develop meals to utilize particular ingredients within a designated timeframe and to vary the dishes to avoid monotony. With this initial investigation of food storage, Fisher creates one of many layers in the networked texts (“Noble and Enough,” “The Measure of My Powers,” and *Map of Another Town*, in this case) and for her discourse; the narrative layering showcases the interdependent and complex nature of Fisher’s writing while also mirroring the structure of culinary practice as a system.

It is the “first real day-to-day meal-after-meal cooking [she’d] ever done,” and it takes adaptation and trial-and-error to reach the “fun” stage—similar to many home cooks (“Measure” 438-39). Her adaptation includes navigating the restricted space in which she had to work. Fisher humorously reflects that doing this every day “[is] only a little less complicated than performing an appendectomy on a life-raft,” but after she “got used to hauling water and putting together three courses on a table the size of a bandana and lighting the portable oven without blowing [herself] clean into the living room instead of only halfway,” she finds the experience rewarding (“Measure” 438-39). The ability to adapt—an example of creativity and process—to such special limitations provides Fisher with the skills and confidence to do so again in different spaces, whether in her Napa Valley home or at another small French apartment. And, she *shows* how one engages in such adaptation in contrast to the linear and brief directions in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, for example. In other words, through her humorous and detailed style, Fisher shows process.

More significantly, though, Fisher’s ability to adapt informs her later work in a way that allows her to understand more thoroughly the various obstacles facing an individual’s (read:

woman's) culinary practice, such as food storage. She also applies what she learned during those early days in France to the development of her discourse that could account for and value (via creativity) the adaptation of a daily menu and practice, which occurs routinely in the home cook's kitchen. Fisher's spatial and storage restrictions forced her to improvise; this improvisation grants Fisher the opportunity to reconsider cooking versus culinary practice, based on a variety of factors, including economics, access to particular ingredients, kitchen technology, space and design, and culinary knowledge. Fisher suggests here that cooking may be viewed, or believed to be, a routine—a simple and one dimensional task that is repeated in the same form each time—but, as she demonstrates, the systems that influence an individual's *culinary practice* are networked differently in each kitchen. Thus, she points to a fundamental difference between cooking and culinary practice—the function of routine. Culinary practice, based on its systemic nature, allows for the creative improvisation that leads to successful adaptation. Further, she identifies the multifarious nature of culinary practice: multiple elements networked together to form a cohesive, complex, and in-progress system. As she continues to explore these initial layers in her writing, Fisher also begins to demonstrate how such layering occurs in narrative—she continues to add pieces to the narrative that will eventually form a picture of her experiences in France.

Notably, Fisher shifted away from the French dining tradition to which she had become accustomed—the six or eight course meal—and moved to three courses. This transition signals a wholesale change in her approach—both in practice and philosophy—to culinary practice and food. For instance, Fisher notes that during these early days in Dijon—as she continues to amass culinary knowledge—she “was already beginning to have theories about what and how [she] would serve in [her] home” (“Measure” 439). Her identification of “theories” suggests that she is

contemplating multiple ways to approach her own culinary practice but with roots in French culinary practice and cuisine, while, at the same time, recognizing that she is the developmental phase of these ideas. Fisher also does not solely focus on the “what”—or the product—but, perhaps more significantly, on the “how”—or the process. Though she is focusing specifically on the courses that she would possibly serve, the attention to process and product, in general, would greatly inform her personal culinary practice as well as her broader philosophy and her discourse. And, Fisher, once again, shows process—she writes about how she contemplated this philosophical and practical shift and what it would mean for her culinary practice.

As she gains confidence derived from her growing body of knowledge, she reveals part of this emerging philosophy: she claims the space of her kitchen as her own, without adhering strictly to a particular set of culinary rules, influenced significantly by French culinary practice. Fisher believes that she has a right “to indulge in [her] own [gastronomic prejudice]” in her kitchen while respecting those of her friends (“Measure” 439). This includes her choice to serve three courses rather than six or eight. Fisher realizes that it is “foolish and perhaps pretentious and often boring as well as damnably expensive to make a meal of six or eight courses just because the guests who are to eat it have always been used to that many” (“Measure” 439). Fisher provides some of the foundation for her “theories” here, which reflect pragmatic concerns regarding the “how” and “what” of her personal culinary practice and inform a discourse centered on a national culinary practice. Simply serving the expected dishes in a traditional manner may not be the most creative or practical strategy for every dining situation, Fisher offers. The predictable may not correspond well with the various guests sitting at her table, some who may find a traditional six-course meal to “pretentious” or “boring”—or both. Fisher recognizes here that she can creatively adapt what she has learned about French culinary practice into a

hybrid practice that addresses her gastronomical, social, and economic needs and later will serve as a model for her discourse. She shows how culinary practice can be altered to ensure that the pleasures of the table are included. In this way, Fisher layers together a personal culinary practice while this portion of “The Measure of My Powers” serves as another layer in her narrative about French culinary practice.

She trusts that she could change the gastronomical practices of her dinner guests by serving “two or three things [...] so plentiful and so interesting and so well cooked that they will be satisfied” (“Measure” 439). This break from the French dining tradition does not signal a split with many of the other culinary lessons learned, such as eating fresh and local foods. Instead, Fisher knows that the food itself—and the “leisurely comfortable friendship at [the] table”—would please her guests and herself much more than a particular tradition (for the sake of tradition), which may not compliment the changing culture and technological times of the mid-twentieth century (“Measure” 439). Moreover, Fisher clearly merges the art of culinary practice (even the artisanal philosophy)—the focus on “two or three things”—with the pleasures of the table to create this hybrid culinary practice. These two tenets, layered into her practice and the narrative, serve as critical elements to her personal culinary practice and her discourse.

By providing her guests with this new dining experience, Fisher asserts that she is doing her guests a service: “One of the best things I could do for nine tenths of the people I knew was to give them something that would make them forget Home and all it stood for, for a few blessed moments at least” (“Measure” 439). This moment of realization—the birth of a culinary philosophy—functions as a key component of Fisher’s discourse. For her guests at home in America, Fisher believes that getting them to forget, at least temporarily, everything that “Home” represented, in this case an ill-defined national cuisine and packaged foods for example, could be

a liberating and transforming experience. Through food, Fisher believes that she could change them for the better, change their relationship to food but perhaps inspire greater change—change beyond the table.

From Fisher's perspective, food and culinary practice can change, reinvigorate, transform, stimulate, and profoundly influence each of us. In this way, she views culinary practice in the same way that art has been perceived, and through her writing, Fisher crafts art about art. Culinary practice is "exciting and amusing," but, more significantly, it is "often astonishingly stimulating" for her guests ("Measure" 439). Fisher's meals do more than stimulate, however. They "shake [her guests] from their routines, not only of meat-potatoes-gravy, but of thought, of behavior" ("Measure" 439). She seems focused on disrupting "their safe tidy lives" through food in order to change them for the better and in a profound way, which is comparable to the function of art ("Measure" 440). And, many diners do not expect to be changed by food, which makes this culinary ambush all the more effective. Fisher's clandestine gastronomical lesson might include such 'weapons' as "a big tureen of hot borscht and some garlic-toast and salad" ("Measure" 440). Such a meal could challenge her guests' palates as well as expectations about what Fisher would serve ("Measure" 440). It would also accomplish another goal of this culinary mission: to drastically get her guests away from "the 'fruit cocktail,' fish, meat, vegetable, salad, dessert, and coffee they tuck daintily away seven times a week" ("Measure" 440).<sup>76</sup> The routine of a meal, articulated here both in detail and the abstract, rings of monotony, void of the

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<sup>76</sup> In fact, in a 1963 letter to friend and Southern California rare book dealer Marion Gore, Fisher discusses her plans to serve dinner to people in the Genoa, Nevada, area (where her extended family often gathered), and these meal plans stem directly from this philosophy generated nearly 30 years prior. She affirms that she "would not serve 'gourmet' meals nor meat-potatoes-gravy but simple dinners of two or three courses, 'family-style', well-balanced based on American and European regional cooking" (*LL* 184). Her hybrid dinner reflects a further focalization of her earlier philosophy while still retaining its core tenets and shows the process of layering in which Fisher engaged. Moreover, Fisher's plans suggest not simply a way to earn a little money (she needed extra income for bills while in Nevada) and enjoy the company of local residents but also a potential delineation of where American cuisine could go.

pleasures of the table and the culinary complexities that she experiences consistently in France. Fisher adds, “They *should* feel this safe sand blow away so that their heads are uncovered for a time,” and this dislodging from such safety is not to simply taste her borscht but “the new flavor of the changing world” (emphasis in the original) (“Measure” 440).<sup>77</sup>

Through a blend of her culinary experiences of dining in a variety of French establishments—from the finest restaurants to humble homes—and her own adaptation of French cuisine and culinary practice, Fisher discovers a strategy to profoundly change how not only her friends and family eat and think about food but also how her nation’s home cooks could approach culinary practice. Though she speaks specifically about her own guests and her own cooking, Fisher articulates the core ideas of reshaping American culinary practice and cuisine, or the discourse of culinary practice-as-art—adaptation, use of local and seasonal ingredients, embrace of the philosophical idea of the pleasures of the table, and the disruption of culinary monotony. She brushes these ideas with broad strokes here, and as such, they require further development; Fisher accomplishes this with her mapping project of Aix-en-Provence.

### **Privileging the Process**

Through her mapping project and study of Aix, Fisher constructs a discourse, one in form that mirrors the project itself and the narrative—a system of complex and layered elements networked together interdependently and with flexible boundaries. In her discourse of culinary practice-as-art, she blends seemingly disparate elements and networks them in a productive system, and at the forefront of this system sit elements such as privileging of process over product, creativity (with beauty, rhythm, improvisation, and trial-and-error as key characteristics), the pleasures of the table, use of local materials, and histories. Fisher uses this system to

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<sup>77</sup>By doing so, she also adheres to Brillat-Savarin’s overall philosophy of gastronomy, part of which includes the tenet that “to invite people to dine with us is to make ourselves responsible for their well-being for as long as they are under our roofs” (4).

reconsider timely issues in the 1960s: gender, the space of the kitchen, culinary practice, the importance of tradition blended with modernity, the quality and origin of ingredients and food products, and the question of a national cuisine. It also functions as the strategy for Fisher to interrogate the network of systems that have shaped American cooking and cuisine. She deploys her discourse to illuminate a shift in the alignment of this network and to significantly alter American cuisine, ultimately liberating the American homemaker from debilitating labor and addressing the nation's culinary identity crisis. Yet, her hybrid discourse works most effectively when paired with fellow Culinary Algonquin Roundtable member Julia Child's materials and practice. In addition to influencing American food culture and enlightening the shift of gender roles, Fisher's project also shapes American literary culture, specifically writing about food, through the multidimensionality and hybridity of the text's form and content.

As a useful mode of emancipation for the American homemaker, Fisher's discourse also challenges Friedan's approach to women's liberation. It proves productive in the face of Friedan's perspective because it does not operate as a veil disguising a nefarious corporate agenda, as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* does, for example. Instead, culinary practice-as-art sheds light on the network of gender, labor, and economics systems to address Friedan's concerns and the debilitating effects of the labor of cooking and its subsumed position within domestic labor and routine. Fisher's time in Aix afforded her a variety of gastronomically-inclined experiences, many of which allowed her to consider the relationship between women and culinary practice. Fisher as *The Stranger* observes the manner in which French women approach cuisine and culinary practice. They embrace the process—the creation of the dish—and not simply the product. With such attention on process rather than product, we see the *art* of culinary practice being privileged. From Fisher's observations, she notes that French women

detach culinary practice from labor and activate it as art. Her attention to the women in French kitchens allows for a return to the American kitchen.

In these American kitchens, cooking prevailed rather than culinary practice, as seen in *Big Red*. Cooking insists on strict boundaries or rules, in some ways resembling a closed system. The primary responsibility for the laborer in the kitchen within this system is to produce a meal—the *product* of her labor; this represents a linear process—step-by-step work with the goal of making a product. Fisher’s discourse, derived from her extensive mapping project, reflects a hybrid system instead. Culinary practice-as-art possesses elastic boundaries, allowing for flexibility in the form of privileging process over product. Thus, the practitioner is no longer simply a laborer who must churn out a product night after night but is rather an artist whose focus shifts to the process of creating a new dish each evening with creativity. This newly networked system also accounts for the improvisational nature of culinary practice, which Fisher witnesses in French kitchens throughout her time in that country. The artists whom she observes adjusted their practice based on the availability of ingredients, financial limitations, space of the kitchen, and size of the dining party, among other factors. The elasticity inherent in culinary practice-as-art allows for these necessary adjustments and, in fact, invites them because they will create new and pleasurable dishes as well as preclude the onset of debilitating routine and monotony. The improvisation provides joy in the process and contributes to the pleasures of the table.<sup>78</sup>

Also, Fisher’s severing of the primary food preparer—the American homemaker—from cooking actually addresses the problematic promises made by food companies and even many

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<sup>78</sup> When culinary practice is situated as labor, it lacks pleasure or joy; simply, work, when viewed as a routine in this case, becomes monotonous and suffocating. Culinary practice-as-art, on the other hand, privileges pleasure, and its flexibility invites change and resists monotony, thereby offering fun and joy rather than tedium and mundane work.



cookbooks in which the parent companies promised that using their products would allow the cook to be creative in the kitchen. What Fisher's discourse shows, in contrast, is that true creativity does not come in a package or in an elementary recipe that relies on processed foods; rather, the practitioner, or artist, finds creativity in the practice or the process itself. By incorporating the blend of tradition and modernity, the use of quality of ingredients, and an emphasis on process, Fisher provides the method to untether cooking from the constricting and rather false classification of labor and activate culinary practice-as-art—a designation that reflects the beauty and rhythm of the process and the use of quality materials in that process.

Rhythm and beauty (some of the intangibles that are necessary elements in culinary practice-as-art), in this culinary context, also define the pleasures of the table. With regards to women and labor, an emphasis on community includes the culinary artist, a break from the American traditional systems that emphasize the homemaker's service of others, a role that further casts cooking as labor. Fisher shifts the way that the American homemaker can view her role as one not in the service of others, which creates a power hierarchy, but as an equal player at the table. By eliminating labor and acknowledging the possibility of shared experiences around meals, Fisher reveals to the American homemaker the actual potential for creativity and quality family time—the promises made by the media and food companies are only veils for mass production and profit.

Fisher's discourse and the reconsideration of the systems provide a reassessment of Friedan's ideas and how Americans were thinking about their own cuisine. Fisher observed and studied the significance of regional and national cuisines while in France and could then reflect on her own country's cuisine. And, she could contemplate the state of American cuisine in light of the growing presence of processed and packaged foods on the market. The use of fresh, local

ingredients in French cuisine serves as a stark juxtaposition with the mainstream emphasis on packaged foods in America. These processed foods preclude creativity and a privileging of process over product as well as the other critical intangibles of culinary practice-as-art. As Fisher consistently discovered during her mapping project, the use of fresh and local ingredients not only invites the aforementioned elements but also creates opportunities to develop and then define regional cuisine, which then contributes to national cuisine. As she learns from the oysterman and the pastry shop owners, the artist's approach to cuisine significantly impacts a town's sense of identity and its pride.<sup>79</sup> The practices or processes used—whether how to prepare an oyster or how to construct an almond paste for example—also merge to shape the national culinary practice. With these elements of culinary practice-as-art, Fisher believes that this approach can transform the “confused” American cuisine into one that embraces all of its local and regional foods. Moreover, the artist and artisanal elements within Fisher's discourse invite and embrace creativity and play, which further contribute to how America's cuisine can be altered productively.

Also, culinary practice-as-art challenges America's capitalist drive towards mass-produced foods, not only packaged foods or convenience foods (e.g. t.v. dinners) but also the slowly emerging business of fast food.<sup>80</sup> With its emphasis on process over product and creativity, culinary practice-as-art demands a change in perspective regarding the nation's cuisine and practice. This change, of course, operates in tandem with the disconnection of labor from cooking, in effect activating the shift to culinary practice. By altering our approach to cuisine and practice through the lens of art, Fisher shows how culinary practice can be a

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<sup>79</sup> This pride is long-lasting as well. Even today, the calissons are still considered an Aix staple and are in international demand. See Roy René, a calisson confectioner in Aix ([www.calisson.com](http://www.calisson.com)).

<sup>80</sup> McDonald's, for example, experienced rapid growth in the early 1960s, and by 1965, the fast food giant had 710 outlets in 44 states (Gross 187). And, in that same vein, “there were already 1,000 Kentucky Fried Chickens, 325 Burger Chefs, and 100 Burger Kings in operation” (Gross 187).

liberating experience not only for the American homemaker but also for the nation. Culinary practice-as-art provides a way for the disparate aspects of American cuisine at the time to coalesce around a multifaceted but shared history of diverse cuisines and practices—no longer would the roux (and its variations), so greatly utilized in Southern and Cajun/Creole cuisine be solely the purview of these culinary practices, for example. Instead, the roux would extend beyond Southern and Cajun/Creole cuisines while still retaining its original culinary identity.<sup>81</sup> Culinary practice-as-art, as a hybrid system, actually compliments America's own growing diversity at the time; in this way and given the sociopolitical context in which Fisher is writing, we can read culinary practice-as-art as a strategy for 'desegregating' American cuisine and practice.

In addition to the larger critiques that Fisher's discourse produces, *Map of Another Town* as a work of literature also functions as way to challenge literary classifications and shape U.S. literary culture. The narrative mimics the structure of the discourse and the form of the map; with elastic boundaries, networked elements or threads, and its own "beautiful rhythm," Fisher's text extends beyond memoir as a genre. It insists on a hybrid categorization, one that is not solely culinary literature, a historical account of a place, or memoir but a blend of all three. By reading *Map of Another Town* through this hybrid lens, the function of the map and the construction of the discourse shifts into clear focus. This narrative reflects the system-like nature of literature and in this way, it provides the reader with a strategy to seeing and comprehending complexity, intimacy, and interdependency. Thus, the project upon which Fisher embarks emerges not simply as the production of the map and discourse but also as a lens on the process of writing the narrative. Fisher's unique mode of writing about food established her as America's foremost

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<sup>81</sup> Fisher's best model for this simultaneity in *Map of Another Town* is the calisson; the basic recipe is adapted and altered while she retaining its essential elements.

culinary writer, but her role was not limited to “writer” because of the hybrid nature of her narrative. Rather, Fisher assumed a hybrid role to mimic her discourse; she was a writer, archaeologist, historian, philosopher, art critic, and gastronome. She showed American writers, specifically those who focused on food, how to write about cuisine and culinary practice that accounted for the hybridity of both. Today, food bloggers and published authors alike follow Fisher’s model, thereby expanding American food culture and connecting it more closely with literary culture. Food writing, as Fisher showed throughout her career, generates dialogue about cuisine and culinary practice, which, in turn, creates change, whether at the local or national level. Fisher’s reach via her expansive body of work and form of narrative continue to deeply influence American literary culture today.

Finally, Fisher’s discourse also falls in line more clearly and seamlessly with the emerging Good Food culture of which Fisher is an important part. Along with James Beard, Julia Child, and Craig Claiborne (and a few others) in the 1960s, Fisher would shape the direction of American cuisine with this emphasis on local and artisan foods. The goal of this Culinary Algonquin Roundtable, though, was to shift their niche movement to the American public-at-large in order to encourage culinary practice-as-art, to support local farmers, to emphasize healthy eating habits, and to reposition the American homemaker as a culinary artist rather than a laborer. Yet, like Fisher in *Map of Another Town*, the Roundtable members never explicitly articulate these goals; rather, they exist inherently in the overall Good Food movement and within Fisher’s discourse. In other words, these objectives function as elements in the system. On its own, Fisher’s discourse proves effective, but when considered in conjunction with Julia Child’s practice and materials, Fisher’s ideas find their method of application. And, Fisher discovers a kindred spirit, lifelong friend, and ideological partner in Child.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **MASTERING THE ART: JULIA CHILD IN PARIS AND CULINARY PRACTICE-AS-ART**

Before Julia Child and M.F.K. Fisher became friends in the mid-1960s, Child, like Fisher, immersed herself in French culture and culinary practice. However, Child's time and experiences in Paris did diverge from Fisher's in purpose. While Fisher primarily settled in Dijon and Aix-en-Provence, Child became engrossed with Parisian life and its food. Child's French culinary apprenticeship emphasized practice, while Fisher took on the role of observer—The Stranger—a scholar of French culinary practice and cuisine. Child's focus on practice would eventually pair beautifully with Fisher's discourse. Together, through timing and circumstance, Child and Fisher would merge their approaches for American cuisine to offer “the homemaker” an exit strategy from the problematic binary critiqued by Betty Friedan, to provide her with a new way to consider culinary practice along with her role in the kitchen, and to remedy America's culinary identity crisis.

As a compliment to Fisher's wide gastronomical lens, Child's focus on practice (process, technique, and materials), derived directly from the French tradition, shapes her own culinary practice and how she translates her successful experiences with French food and culinary practice into a reimagining of American cuisine. While Fisher acquired her knowledge by observing the home kitchens, cafés, restaurants, and markets, Child's education occurred in a more formal setting; though she also explored the Parisian markets and was seduced by its many restaurants and cafés. Child also learned, through trial and error, the art of French culinary practice in the small kitchen of her Paris apartment that she shared with new husband Paul. She would later, along with primary co-author Simone Beck, convert her recently attained breadth of

knowledge and experience into a practice aimed at reshaping American cuisine and the relationship between the “housewife” and the space of the kitchen.

*Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961) achieved acclaim as one of the most iconic “cookbooks” ever published and, perhaps more significantly, is also the text that demanded that a nation rethink its perception of culinary practice and food. Child’s text rests in the unseen, or in-between, space of literature, not solely fitting the genre of cookbook. Instead, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, like Fisher’s work, operates most effectively when considered as one of the elements within the domestic literacies subsystem. By locating it in this subsystem, it includes those overlaps with other systems and subsystems via de-differentiation and even seriation, and its networked and interdependent relationship to its relevant neighboring systems, specifically gender, economics, and labor, enlightens a change to its own subsystem and in those three systems, while also altering culinary practice. These changes occur not simply because of the groundbreaking content of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which is often the focus of scholarly investigation, but also the form of this text.

In the introduction, instructional chapters, and the recipes of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child activates her component of culinary practice-as-art with an emphasis on process (e.g. methods that involve multiple steps such as roasting a whole chicken), technique (e.g. individual skill, such as dicing, sautéing, and deglazing), and materials (e.g. equipment and individual ingredients or foodstuffs) blended with a host of additional elements, such as taste, history, and creativity. In addition to demonstrating how culinary practice-as-art operates, Child also shows how it functions as a complex, hybrid system with interdependent elements that possess elastic boundaries and often works in-progress. She mirrors the systemic form of culinary practice-as-art in the structure of her recipes, specifically the master recipe with

variations form. In this way, Child's text challenges the familiar linear recipe form that cookbooks such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* featured. By altering the recipe form, Child insists that the practitioner change how she engages in culinary practice, shifting from product-oriented linearity to process-focused creativity. Child found the catalyst for each of the complex elements evident in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in her early days in Paris, mirroring in some ways her friend Fisher's process.

Child's journey began with her first meal in France, which then evolved into a love affair with the country and, more importantly, with its food. She chronicles her culinary adventure in *My Life in France* (2006). Unlike *Map of Another Town*, Child's narrative adheres more closely to the typical memoir form; she structures it chronologically around a central theme: how she came to admire French cuisine and culinary practice and the impetus for *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. While the form may be familiar, when located in the domestic literacies subsystem, its function extends beyond the expectations of the memoir. Through her recounting of her intimate relationship with France and its cuisine, Child delineates the philosophical and technical foundation for her culinary practice-as-art. In this way, *My Life in France* works more effectively and critically when read in a networked relationship with Fisher's text and *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and challenges the reader's expectations for a standard memoir—the complexity of ideas that she presents creates an added layer to the chronology of events that shaped Child's everyday life in France.<sup>82</sup> With these fundamental ideas, Child eventually turns her attention to writing a comprehensive text about French culinary practice and cuisine aimed at the American home cook with the goal of reshaping American cuisine and culinary practice.

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<sup>82</sup> Thus, the designation of “memoir” seems only somewhat fitting as *My Life in France* adheres to this category in form but perhaps not entirely in content, given the multiple and interdependent ideas that she introduces throughout the text. For simplicity, however, I will refer to the narrative as “memoir” on occasion.

With *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child greatly influenced American food culture, shaped literary culture specifically the form of the cookbook, and enlightened the network of gender, labor, and economics systems at the time. The multiple elements of culinary practice-as-art that Child networks and layers throughout her text, including process, technique, materials, creativity, and taste among others, force a reconsideration of American cuisine and culinary practice. The success of Child's text reveals the desire on behalf of American home cooks for such a change in American culinary practice. The privileging of process over product, for example, challenges the popularity and advocacy of processed and mass produced packaged foods and shifts the focus to the "love of cooking for its own sake" and creativity.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Child's text and its core ideas serve as central components of the Good Food Movement. Through her discussion of the types of ingredients used in French culinary practice, Child demonstrates the benefits, with regards to taste and process primarily, of favoring fresh and local ingredients in one's practice. This aspect of the text, once again, confronts the broader cultural emphasis on packaged foods. Finally, by making French culinary practice and cuisine more accessible, Child strips both of their intimidating guises and shows her readers that, in fact, they can engage with this renowned cuisine successfully. In turn, she suggests, these home cooks can shape American cuisine and culinary practice.

Also, the form of the recipes in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, specifically the master recipe with its variations, significantly impacted American literary culture. This recipe form privileges process over product and creativity over restrictive linearity. In doing so, it asks the practitioner to rethink how she engages in culinary practice and challenges the form that was prevalent in texts such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. By emphasizing creativity and

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<sup>83</sup> Child embraces the idea of "love of cooking for its own sake" while studying at Le Cordon Bleu; she discusses this experience in *My Life in France*.



clearly articulating that the goal for the reader was to divorce herself from recipes altogether, Child does not seek profit, as companies such as General Mills did, but to better American culinary practice and cuisine. The impact of this recipe form can still be seen today; celebrity chefs such as Rachael Ray adapted the master recipe and its variations for a new audience. Like Child, Ray desires that her readers learn processes and techniques with complete disconnection from recipes as the goal. Through this recipe form, Child overhauled how home cooks practice in the kitchen.

Finally, this change in practice also informed the network of gender, labor, and economics systems. By emphasizing process and creativity, Child showed her audience that culinary practice did not need to be work, or product-oriented labor in service to others. Instead, it could be a creative, artistic endeavor that could free a homemaker from monotony and routine. In doing so, Child confronted the patriarchal prescriptive function of the network of gender, labor, and economics systems that worked to retain women in this service-oriented, subservient, and dependent position. With *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child demonstrated how a culinary text could be emancipatory in function rather than linear and prescriptive, as was the case with *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. By showing how the home cook could shift from laborer to practitioner or artist, Child pointed to the economic effects as well; instead of fulfilling a rather elusive sense of national duty via “unvalued” labor, the creative and process-oriented home cook who used fresh ingredients supported local economies rather than large corporations, which was much more concrete than a vague sense of patriotism. Further, the home cook’s influence within her home, through her purchasing power as the primary household consumer and through her role as culinary practitioner, could shape her family members’ palates away from processed foods and towards simple, fresh ingredients. Child’s reach, then, cannot be

understated. *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and its culinary practice-as-art dramatically sparked change across multiple and interdependent areas of American culture. As an icon, Child's presence continues to be felt throughout the culinary world, inspiring new generations of home cooks and foodies.

### **Julia Masters the Art of French Cooking**

In the late 1950s, Julia Child worked with friends Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle to develop a French cookbook that targeted an American audience. Their painstaking hard work, back and forth arguing, and initial publishing woes did not set the trio back from putting together one of the most influential American cookbooks—*Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Historians such as Joan Reardon, Laura Shapiro, and Betty Fussell along with Child's own editor Judith Jones have effectively documented the writing process for this text. And, Child herself discusses the impetus and writing roller coaster (including Bertholle falling to the back burner midway through the writing of the text) upon which she embarked for this publication in *My Life in France*.

Child's groundbreaking text challenged readers in both form and content, in a way that defies a strict classification as a cookbook. With attention to the multiple networked elements that include history, philosophy, and art, reading *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* solely as a "cookbook" limits our ability to see and comprehend these layers. Instead, locating this text within the subsystem of domestic literacies and reading it through a hybrid systems lens prove more effective because both create the opportunity to unpack and understand the multidimensionality and interdependency that defines this text. Further, Child mirrors the strategy of reading the text in the form of her narrative—the text embodies process, which is a privileged concept in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. She shifts away from linear, product-

oriented recipes with minimal guidance, exemplified in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, towards a more narrative structure that emphasizes process and creativity over the end game, or the dish on the table. Child also provides ample detailed instructions that support the process-oriented recipes in the pages that open the text. With the change in form and the multiple elements at work, Child demands that her readers embark on a journey rather than quickly search for an easy meal to make for one's family, and she recognizes that American home cooks were capable of such complexity and desired a new and creative approach in the kitchen.

The typical American reader of cookbooks, primarily homemakers, would find themselves in new culinary territory with Child's somewhat intimidating text. Yet, Child anticipated such apprehension and works to ease any anxiety in the first words of the text's foreword. In these critical few pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child directly speaks to the target audience and begins to demonstrate how she networks the many facets of French culinary practice to form culinary practice-as-art. This latter system, she suggests throughout the foreword, will be explored in detail in the opening instructional notes and subsequent recipes of the text. Notably, Child clearly articulates some of the components of culinary practice-as-art, which she casually lists in *My Life in France*, in the text's beginning pages while allowing some of the less technical concepts, such as "wonderful people" and "rituals" (that she also explores in her memoir) to flow beneath and between her words.

Child and her co-authors clearly communicate the purpose and audience for *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in the foreword; this text is not for everyone, they suggest.<sup>84</sup> By narrowing both the purpose and audience, Child begins to form the network of culinary practice-

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<sup>84</sup> Despite the co-authorship that Child shares with Beck and Bertholle, the knowledge of the American audience (the homemaker in particular) and cuisine rests with Child. As such, I will refer to her solely throughout the discussion of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Beck and Bertholle, as Child conveys in *My Life in France*, worked with her primarily regarding the link among history, process, and technique within French culinary practice.

as-art with the notion of “creativity”—a necessary skill for art as she notes on the second page of the foreword—undergirding these fundamental functions. The intended audience for Child’s text is “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” (*Mastering* xxiii). This opening line reveals a number of concerns and essential components of Child’s culinary philosophy and approach. First, she recognizes the network of systems that define the life of the “servantless American cook,” which she suggests is the American housewife. Economics, childcare, health, time restraints of everyday life, and the multi-tasking required by the home cook serve as the systems comprising the network that Child perceives as that which may prevent enjoyment—and concerted, creativity. Here, Child articulates that her culinary practice, as shaped by French culinary practice, invites enjoyment in the process as well as pleasure in the taste of the dishes produced; in particular, Child privileges process over product here: “*enjoyment of producing* something wonderful to eat” (my emphasis) (*Mastering* xxiii). This emphasis aligns with the component of “processes” that she mentions in her list as well as discipline, creativity, and variations—a point that she makes clear later in the foreword and throughout the text.

Child further narrows her audience by noting that this text was “written for those who love to cook;” as such, she adds, “[The] recipes are as detailed as we have felt they should be so the reader will know exactly what is involved and how to go about it” (*Mastering* xxiii). Immediately, Child asserts that her book is written for the American homemaker (with caveats) and for those within that demographic who love to cook. She privileges a lesson from her mentor

Chef Bugnard who said that culinary practitioners should “[enjoy] one’s cooking.”<sup>85</sup> Without this component, Child implies that the reader will not desire to follow the detailed recipes nor commit the time (she adds that these details make “them a bit longer than usual”) and energy to the process of this type of culinary practice (*Mastering* xxiii). In this way, she suggests that the target reader for her text is someone like herself prior to arriving on the shores of France over a decade before the publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. But, she also recognizes with the other description of her potential reader earlier that the practitioner might need to be exposed to how one can enjoy culinary practice when the network of gender, labor, and economics systems have instructed that it is just labor to be completed in the service of one’s family. Child seems to acknowledge that she faces an uphill battle with some members of her audience but believes that her culinary practice-as-art can convert those reluctant readers.

With her formal education at the Le Cordon Bleu, apprenticeship with Chef Bugnard, and her own trial-and-error (that she delineates in *My Life in France*), Child now assumes the position of teacher and desires to share the knowledge that she gained with those like her circa 1948. While the purpose of the text may be clear to many readers in the first few lines of the foreword, Child explicitly states the purpose a few paragraphs later, ultimately revealing the value in culinary pedagogy that she discusses thoroughly in her memoir. She moves from student to teacher with this text, with a passion for teaching defined in the manner in which she learned combined with her own style: “Our primary purpose in this book is to teach you how to cook, so that you will understand the fundamental techniques and gradually be able to divorce yourself from a dependence on recipes” (*Mastering* xxv). Though “teach you how to cook” seems like a broad claim—one that could be made by any cookbook author—Child narrows this considerably

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<sup>85</sup> She discusses her relationship with Chef Bugnard and his influence on her culinary practice in *My Life in France*.

with the added two-fold focus. Her purpose can be clearly juxtaposed with that of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. The latter worked to prepare the homemaker to cook with the intent of serving others. Child, however, shifts the traditional focus of American cookbooks of the era, away from a labor-orientation. With an emphasis on technique combined with the gesture to creativity (also hinted at with the notion of divorcing oneself from recipes), Child desires to teach her readers how to be artists, in effect positioning them in opposition to both her classmates at the Le Cordon Bleu and the targeted audience of *Big Red*. It is this notion of art that serves as the central node of her network of culinary practice that she outlines in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Culinary practice, Child asserts, “is not a particularly difficult art” (*Mastering* xxiv). Whereas *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* situates linear cooking as not very difficult but tiresome labor (highlighted by the “Short Cuts” section that focuses on recovery and rest), Child shifts it to art, removing the labor facet and recognizing the creative fulfillment that culinary practice provides through its discipline and necessary “practice and experience” (*Mastering* xxiv). “The more you cook and learn about cooking,” Child argues, “the more it makes sense;” this approach does not position the practitioner as a laborer but as an artist, as someone who is not in service of others but who finds value and pleasure in the process (*Mastering* xxiv). Further, she reveals her own process here—she became an artist through trial and error as well as education. She suggests that her learning process could benefit her audience—this text combined with the practitioner’s trial-and-error would allow her to activate culinary practice-as-art in her own kitchen.

She then adds one more element to the network: “The most important ingredient you can bring to it is love of cooking for its own sake” (*Mastering* xxiv). Here, she not only integrates

Chef Bugnard's central lesson ("the love of cooking for its own sake") but also counters the more prevalent notion, as proffered by *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, that cooking was not for oneself but for others. The "love of cooking for its own sake" is never a prevalent—or even present—concept in *Big Red*, in part because cooking was labor. As art, Child suggests, culinary practice invites a positive emotional investment, which will then provide a return on this investment to the home cook—fulfillment and gratification. This "love of cooking for its own sake" serves as another significant element, or layer, to Child's system, which grows the complexity and interdependency. By blending this fundamental yet abstract component into her culinary philosophy, Child further activates culinary practice-as-art.

She folds in creativity, a broader and similarly subtle notion, with "love cooking for its own sake." When briefly discussing the purpose of the text, Child hints at her definition of creativity in a culinary context. When a practitioner can "divorce [herself] from a dependence on recipes," she acts creatively in the kitchen, in effect demonstrating how culinary practice functions as art (*Mastering* xxv). And, Child gestures to the process involved in reaching this stage in one's practice; to achieve this level of creativity, one must commit time and attention to the development of the practice. But, the payoff, as Child notes, is the ability to function without the guide (or crutch) of a recipe and to creatively engage with ingredients and techniques. In this way, Child desires her readers to eventually reach a point in their own culinary practice where they will not need her text any more; this idea works in stark contrast to *Big Red*, a text driven by corporate bottom lines and republished multiple times with profit in mind.

She adds that, eventually, recipes will not be necessary at all "except as reminders of ingredients you may have forgotten" (*Mastering* xxiv). With this, Child networks the elements of technique, process, history, and taste. For Child, as she conveys in *My Life in France*, technique

holds a primary and privileged position in not only French culinary practice but also in her own. She notes early in the foreword that the “excellence of French cooking, and of good cooking in general, is due more to cooking techniques than to anything else” (*Mastering* xviii). She suggests here that, although this text focuses on French cuisine, the techniques learned can be applied outside the boundaries of French dishes. By clearly articulating this idea, Child once again shifts culinary practice, activating it as art—an emphasis on the “how” over the “what” while also pointing to the pliable boundaries of this system.

To underscore this, she explicitly states, “Although you will perform with different ingredients for different dishes, the same general processes are repeated over and over” (*Mastering* xiii). In stark contrast to *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, Child emphasizes process over the product (“different dishes” seems intentionally vague and indiscriminate).<sup>86</sup> Thus, the practitioner will not focus on individual recipes but on the processes that are used in multiple recipes across cuisines. This element, as a critical component in Child’s text, signals a shift for most American home cooks because they were accustomed to learning a recipe, as *Big Red* suggests. With the change presented in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, American home cooks could now learn an entire repertoire of processes and techniques that provides pleasure and invites creativity.

The strong emphasis on process does not end here; Child makes clear that such process supported by proper technique must not be approached as generalized, loosely constructed steps.

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<sup>86</sup> To further stress her lesson, Child adds that a main reason “that pseudo-French cooking [...] falls far below French cooking is just this matter of elimination of steps, combination of processes, or skimping on ingredients” (*Mastering* xxiv). The notion of shortcuts, then, (as advocated by *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*) operates antithetically to Child’s culinary practice; shortcuts, she suggests, preclude the pleasure that can be found in culinary practice. Furthermore, “pseudo-French cooking with which we are all too familiar” gestures to the state of American cuisine and culinary practice (*Mastering* xxiv). At best, Child hints, American cuisine achieves a bastardized version of various national cuisines. Without being explicit, Child assesses the mediocre state of American cuisine but does so through the lens of her well-developed and well-informed culinary practice. By engaging in such an assessment, she offers her own culinary practice-as-art as a solution to this wide-ranging problem.



Instead, she instructs, culinary practice-as-art adheres to each step in the process, and “though simple to accomplish,” each step “plays a crucial role, and if any is eliminated or combined with another, the texture and taste of the [dish suffers]” (*Mastering* xxiv). If taste suffers then the pleasure of the meal is lost, and if steps are eliminated, the pleasure in the process—the love of cooking for its own sake—cannot be achieved. As a result, the practitioner fails to achieve the purpose of culinary practice-as-art. With this concept established, she can integrate the concept of “endless variations” into her system of culinary practice.

When process comes to the fore of culinary practice and when one expands her “repertoire,” the practitioner will discover that “the seemingly endless babble of recipes begins to fall rather neatly into groups of theme and variations” (*Mastering* xxiii). These themes and variations reiterate the importance of learning good techniques and process while also pointing to the futility in learning a single isolated recipe—by learning proper techniques and process while simultaneously recognizing that recipes cross-reference in these two key areas, the practitioner finds creativity and the love of cooking for its own sake.

Further, these networked components—proper technique, process, and variations—invite another element from Child’s list of elements (from *My Life in France*): taste. She notes, a “Frenchman takes his greatest pleasure from a well-known dish impeccably cooked and served” (*Mastering* xxiv). By merging the specific concept of taste with the other elements, Child offers this as a goal for her American readers—we, as Americans, should desire such pleasure in both taste and process. She also demonstrates the interdependency of some of the elements of culinary practice-as-art. The process and technique used for the dish hold equal importance to taste, and the French have learned over time to take pleasure in the entirety of culinary practice-as-art. Thus, Child suggests, Americans should take a lesson from the French and learn to appreciate

and find pleasure in more than the final product because taste is greatly influenced by the processes and techniques used by the chef or home cook.

None of this can be achieved, Child contends, without rigorous discipline. Notably, though, she never deliberately announces the need for it as such. Instead, Child layers the notion with other elements, such as proper technique. In two instances within the foreword, she emphasizes the need for practice in order to achieve proper technique, which would require dedication and discipline on the part of the practitioner. “Precision in small details,” she instructs, “can make the difference between passable cooking and fine food,” and precision can only be achieved through disciplined practice (*Mastering* xxvi). Likewise, through this particular practice, one may begin “slow and clumsy” but can “pick up speed and style” over time (*Mastering* xxvi). Details, style, and speed require both physical and intellectual discipline, thereby challenging the prevalent idea that culinary practice is nothing but mindless repetition. For Child, culinary practice cannot and should not be routine, which can drain creativity, but it should be a complex and layered practice and art. By networking the element of discipline with the other components of her system of culinary practice, Child shows the complexity of culinary practice-as-art and significantly differentiates it from the cooking promoted by cookbooks such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*.

Finally, Child adds the concept of equipment to the other elements of her culinary practice-as-art system. Equipment, here, must be extended more broadly; the term could limit meaning to only kitchen tools wherein Child also covers ingredients. Using the term “materials” allows for both kitchens tools and ingredients to be discussed, and it also reflects how Child occasionally references both.<sup>87</sup> With an emphasis on materials, it comes as little surprise that

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<sup>87</sup> For example, in the foreword, she contends, “And these techniques can be applied whenever good basic materials are available” (*Mastering* xxiii). Materials, then, must include ingredients and tools. And, Child’s love of kitchen

some of Child's final thoughts in the foreword of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* focus on the subject. Though much of this portion of the text covers the scope of recipes, quantities, and general information about her culinary practice-as-art, the final two short paragraphs, with brief words of advice, address some of the most basic yet significant aspects of culinary practice-as-art. For example, she instructs, "Use all the pans, bowls, and equipment you need, but soak them in water as soon as you are through with them" (*Mastering* xxvi). While many practitioners would overlook this fundamental advice, many of her readers, who lack culinary knowledge, would find this useful and practical information. By heeding Child's advice, they will discover that this simple idea will make their cleaning process much easier and proceed more quickly while also preserving the equipment. Child suggests here that culinary practice-as-art does not end when the dish is completed; instead, it operates beyond the last bite. Caring for one's equipment becomes comparably significant as knowing how to select a tomato at the market or perfecting the frying of an egg.

She continues with this type of advice when she advocates, "Train yourself to use your hands and fingers; they are wonderful instruments" (*Mastering* xxvi). Child reveals that a culinary practitioner's best equipment may not be a copper pan or chef's knife but may, in fact, be one's hands; she encourages the use of one's hands, which, to some readers, may be counterintuitive to the assumptions that many Americans have about French cooking.<sup>88</sup> The sensual experience of working with one's hands in the kitchen, such as kneading dough or filling

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tools becomes evident in *My Life in France*, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, on her television program *The French Chef*, and in her Cambridge kitchen.

<sup>88</sup> Many American readers may be surprised to see Child's advocacy of one's hands just as they are surprised to see Child flip a potato pancake, unsuccessfully, and place the broken pieces back into the pan on *The French Chef*. Child notes that when one is alone in the kitchen, no one else has to know if one drops a few pieces of potato and returns them to the pan ("The Potato Show"). Her love of culinary practice and desire to have fun while engaging in all aspects of the practice come through in both examples here. She challenges American assumptions about French cuisine and even French culture and opens up her American audience to a new and fascinating world of "doing-cooking."

ravioli with a warm porcini mushroom and goat cheese mixture, becomes just as important as the ‘right’ pan or knife. By suggesting the use of one’s hands, Child gestures to her earlier idea of the love of cooking for its own sake and sets up the final line of the foreword: “Above all, have a good time” (*Mastering* xxvi). The notions of love and fun cannot exist in cooking as labor, but they do serve as fundamental components in culinary practice-as-art, as Child suggests. She points to, once again, the pleasure in the process; she never mentions eating the food that one prepares here; instead, the sole emphasis rests on the enjoyment that a home cook can find in the process of culinary practice-as-art.

But, before she ends the foreword with this last bit of meaningful advice, she offers brief but instructive guidance: “Keep your knives sharp” (*Mastering* xxvi). While this serves as a lovely phrase at the end of a dynamic and informative introduction to this text, it also encapsulates, in some ways, how Child perceives culinary-practice-as-art. A sharp knife affords the practitioner precision, aids proper technique, reflects rigorous discipline through attention to one’s materials, and indicates process (e.g. maintaining a sharp knife is one in a series of steps within culinary practice)—all of which come together to generate a love of cooking for its own sake, having a “good time” (e.g. a dull knife can cause frustration and even injury, negating any fun), and overall taste of the cuisine. Though a seemingly simple idea, “keep your knives sharp” belies any simplicity and instead reveals the complex network inherent in culinary practice-as-art as a system, and it functions as a useful metaphor that floats among the words of her text. In this foreword, Child articulates the elements of this system while also demonstrating the multidimensionality and interdependency of the system by writing the foreword in a way that connects these ideas, which sets up how these components will be networked in the recipes that follow and when the practitioner activates culinary practice-as-art in her home kitchen.

### **Laying the Groundwork: The Opening Pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking***

Child organizes *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* around primary ingredients and courses in French cuisine: soups, sauces, eggs, entrees & luncheon dishes, fish, poultry, meat, vegetables, cold buffet, and desserts & cakes. Though this particular form may be familiar to some American readers as it broadly parallels the general contents of the *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, for example, the detail that emphasizes process, technique, and materials signals the changes that Child initiates with this recipe configuration. Many readers may be surprised to see separate chapters devoted to soups, sauces, and eggs, for example, yet Child's choice in structure serves two purposes: first, it initiates her readers into the type of cuisine and process; second, it draws attention to the overall form of the text. The readers discover from the table of contents that Child's text does not fall under the familiar category of "cookbook" in the strict sense, and this new form will then require adjustment on their part.

Further, the nearly thirty pages that preface the recipes, which include kitchen equipment, definitions, ingredients, measures, temperatures, cutting, and wines, may generally seem common to Child's readers (with the exception of wine); however, the differences between these pages of instruction in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and those in the popular cookbooks of the era, such as *Big Red*, are, again, in the emphasis on process, technique, and materials. The details provided in these initial pages also distinguish this text from its contemporaries; Child, once a diligent student and now a dedicated teacher, knows the value of quality instruction. The type of guidance that she offers reflects the purpose of her text and shows the reader why she emphasizes process and technique. The chapters focusing on knives, definition of terms, and ingredients serve as useful examples to show how Child develops the ideas introduced in the

foreword within these opening instructional pages of her text, which will create the foundation for the recipes that follow.

In the section entitled “Kitchen Utensils for Food Preparation” in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, a number of knives are listed (though not in any particular or clear order), including “2 or 3 sharp paring knives,” “vegetable parer with floating blade,” and “several straight-edged knives” (18). Each comes with a brief description of its purpose, except the latter that does not include additional information. The “2 or 3 sharp paring knives,” for example, include the intended purpose as “for paring, cutting vegetables, fruits, etc.” (BCPC 18). Besides the brevity of the use mentioned, often with a short description of the knife’s appearance, the content of the description focuses on product: “for evenly slicing roasts” or “for cutting breads, fruit cake, etc. neatly” (BCPC 18). The knife, in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, serves as a means to an end, or, more precisely, to product. The (over)use of the ellipses and “etc.” indicate a lack of detail in terms of usage, in part because the product or dish is privileged over the process of creating the dish; the detail of the knife—its shape, blade, or how it is held—then, becomes inconsequential to the intended objective.

In dramatic contrast, Child’s discussion in the “Knives and Sharpening Steel” section privileges process, technique, and material all at once without including the type of foods for which these knives are intended, or without focusing on product. Material seems to be the most evident element here, and as Child notes, without quality materials, technique and process falter—they are interdependent elements. She begins the paragraph about knives with an echo of the foreword: “A knife should be as sharp as a razor or it mashes and bruises food rather than chopping or cutting it” (*Mastering* 6). Rather than simply instructing the practitioner to keep her knives sharp, Child expands on this to include a “why”: a dull knife will hinder technique and

damper the love of cooking for its own sake because damaged foods can cause frustration.

Furthermore, Child adds a “how” to instruct her readers on proper knife maintenance: “It can be considered sharp if just the weight of it, drawn across a tomato, slits the skin” (*Mastering* 6).

With the only mention of a food item, Child uses the tomato not as an end, as *Big Red* does, but as a tool or material with which a practitioner can test the readiness of her knife. This method of testing falls under the larger umbrellas of technique and process—culinary practice-as-art does not begin or end with a singular dish or recipe.

Also, rather than “2 or 3 sharp paring knives” or “several straight-edged knives,” Child specifies the type of knives that a practitioner should have in her kitchen as well as how to go about purchasing such knives. The illustration included in this section shows three “French chef’s knives,” and she asserts that these knives “are the most useful general-purpose shapes for chopping, mincing, and paring” (*Mastering* 6).<sup>89</sup> Rather than simply listing a variety of knives with vaguely defined purposes as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* does, Child suggests purchasing a series of knives of a particular type and that the quality of the knife is more significant than a specified purpose. This instruction mirrors one of the key concepts that Child articulates in the foreword: the emphasis on process and technique over learning a recipe. With a set of knives, the practitioner can decide what knife works best for her, does not need to rely on arbitrary designations of use, and can be creative in her selection and application of this tool.

Regarding the set of knives, Child offers a bit of advice to the practitioner who may not know how or where to purchase quality knives: “If you cannot find good find knives, consult

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<sup>89</sup> Notably, with its heavy reliance on illustrations, *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* does not include renderings of the various knives mentioned. Instead, two of the three pages devoted to kitchen utensils feature drawings and photographs of equipment for pans, top-stove cooking, mixing, and measuring. There appears to be an emphasis on baking, most evident in the only visual evidence of a knife that is included in the “For Measuring” photograph. A “straight knife” is pictured, and the suggested use is “for ‘leveling off’” (*BCPC* 16). The knife’s primary purpose has been shifted, and it is now repurposed to aid in the measuring process. This creates a striking contrast to Child’s privileging of the knife as a key material in culinary practice-as-art.

your butcher or a professionally trained chef” (*Mastering* 6). A practitioner may know where to purchase a “vegetable parer” but not a chef’s knife, and Child suggests that the practitioner go directly to the experts, much like she did while studying in Paris.<sup>90</sup> This underscores her emphasis on “good basic materials,” technique, and discipline; a quality knife aides proper technique, and the practitioner must be disciplined in order to practice and care for such a tool. Child further addresses this latter idea by instructing her readers in the cleaning and storage of the knives. Within this brief prefatory section on knives, Child blends process, technique, and materials; the practitioner’s knife functions much like a painter’s brush and paints: quality materials facilitate proper technique that then begets a process fueled by creativity and a love of cooking for its own sake.

In addition, Child’s discussion about knives pairs with another chapter in the opening section of the cookbook: cutting. In this five-page, fully illustrated chapter, Child shows the practitioner how to hold a knife properly, how to chop, julienne, and dice different shapes of foods, such as round, long, or solid objects as well as specific instruction for dicing onions and shallots. Child’s use of illustrations represents a conscious decision with regards to form and content of her text. Unlike *Big Red* with its heavy reliance on illustrations that often do no more than fill space on the page and often function prescriptively (e.g. the “Short Cuts” section), the selective use of illustrations in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* shows the practitioner that, more often than not, she will need to be creative in imagining how certain techniques or processes will function for her in her own kitchen. This process requires discipline and

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<sup>90</sup> Perhaps one of the most well-known and significant examples of Child seeking out the experts occurred during the writing of the second volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Child embarked upon the “Great French Bread Experiment” that began with the question “How were we to create an authentic-tasting French bread in a typical home kitchen?” (*Life* 279). She read about Professor Raymond Calvel, a baker and instructor at École Française de Meunerie, in a newspaper article and after a correspondence with Calvel, she and Paul traveled to Paris. Child learned how to make an authentic French baguette from one of the leading experts (*Life* 280). She eventually translated her education into thoughtful instruction in the second volume of her renowned text.



commitment from the practitioner, a thread that Child carries through each chapter in her text. With great attention to how her information is presented, Child reveals the level of dedication that she has to the individual practitioner who will read her text and to the betterment of American cuisine and culinary practice.

She also privileges, once again, process, technique, and materials. Here, Child also reasserts discipline alongside process and technique: “It takes several weeks of off-and-on practice to master the various knife techniques, but once learned they are never forgotten. You save a tremendous amount of time, and also derive a modest pride, in learning how to use a knife professionally” (*Mastering* 26). To achieve proper knife technique, Child affirms that the practitioner must commit to “rigorous discipline,” but the benefits from this practice are immediate and life-long. With proper knife technique, the practitioner can take pride in the achievement while also finding pleasure in the process of using the knife, in the technique itself—a gesture to “the love of cooking for its own sake.” Further, her use of the word “professionally” aligns the practitioner who follows Child’s culinary practice-as-art with other trained individuals who share in the history—a long and practiced history—of these knife skills. The goal that Child sets for her readers here is not to produce a particular dish or meal but to learn the technique for itself. Much like a painter would master a particular brush stroke (the pressure and angle of the brush, for example), the culinary practitioner should master these knife techniques to simply become a more efficient, skilled, and creative culinary artist.

Another example that demonstrates how Child coalesces these three critical components of culinary practice-as-art comes within the “Definitions” chapter in the opening pages. Child begins the section with a point of clarification: “We have tried, in this book, to use ordinary American cooking terms familiar to anyone who has been around a kitchen, but we list a few

definitions here to avoid possible misunderstanding” (*Mastering* 11). First, Child echoes the foreword here by reminding the reader who the audience for this cookbook is: someone familiar (even vaguely) with “ordinary American cooking terms.”

Second, the inclusion of the additional definitions suggests that they are neither ordinary nor American, but they *should* become both. Unlike *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, which includes two sections of definitions—“Meaning of Terms often found in Recipe Directions” and “A Dictionary of Special and Foreign Terms”—Child’s chapter includes a select group of terms with the corresponding French word(s) along with an explanation. She does not separate her definitions but includes them together, which helps with reading efficiency and avoids confusion. More significantly, the single chapter that blends unfamiliar French terms with recognizable American vocabulary reflects the hybrid system of culinary practice-as-art and how Child envisions American culinary practice and cuisine. Child provides definitions that are comprised of simply a sentence or two while others exceed two or three paragraphs. *Big Red*, on the other hand, includes only a sentence or a fragment for each term. For example, “Betty” defines “boil,” which is listed under the “Meaning of Terms” heading, as “to cook in boiling water or other liquid in which bubbles are breaking on the surface and steam is given off” (12).

In contrast, Child begins her definition of “boil” with a similar brief explanation; however, she immediately adds, “But in practice there are slow, medium, and fast boils” (*Mastering* 11). She continues to describe each, includes French words to indicate particular boil types, and ends the paragraph with the different foods that might require these various boil types (*Mastering* 11). Child, then, shows that boiling water is not a simple one-note procedure; instead, it is a process with variations that have different applications in culinary practice-as-art. Within the definition of “boil” (or *bouillir*), Child shows how process, technique, and materials blend

together (*Mastering* 11). Boiling water shows process—a process within the larger system of culinary practice—along with technique, such as identifying the various boil types and when and how to develop each, and materials, which include what type of foods receive different boil types.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, Child's section that is focused on ingredients further reveals how she articulates the complexity and multiplicity of culinary practice-as-art in this text. *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* does not include a discussion of ingredients with the exception of food storage tips and substitution suggestions.<sup>92</sup> Child, instead, provides discussion about a few key ingredients that are commonly found in French cuisine. By doing so, she offers the practitioner a “how” and “why” regarding each ingredient, and she shows how process, technique, and material merge around an individual ingredient. With this latter idea, Child gestures to how each ingredient can then blend with others, in effect incorporating a set of processes, techniques, and materials with other sets, creating a networked system. Even in a seemingly simple chapter, Child continues the thread of complexity that rests at the core of the form and content of her text.

Butter serves as, perhaps, the best example of how Child demonstrates the aforementioned concepts in the context of ingredients. Like the definitions chapter, Child offers the French terms at the beginning then continues with a detailed explanation. Similar to “boil,” butter, on the surface, appears to be a simple ingredient to understand; however, Child shows the

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<sup>91</sup> Child includes a number of techniques and processes that do not appear in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, such as braise, deglaze, degrease, dice, and reduce. These are now common culinary terms and methods. Also, each of Child's definitions, for degrease in particular, include extensive detail, in which she notes purpose, application, and process.

<sup>92</sup> Notably, the first two substitutions listed are for Gold Medal and Softasilk flour, both General Mills products, which can be interchanged according to the suggestion provided. The corporate product promotion here reflects one of the primary goals of this cookbook: to generate profit for the company that developed Betty Crocker.

complexity and nuances involved in this basic French ingredient.<sup>93</sup> Child begins her discussion of butter (or *beurre*) with a definition: “French butter is made from matured cream rather than from sweet cream, is unsalted, and has a special almost nutty flavor” (*Mastering* 15). First, Child points to French culinary history—the development of French butter has occurred over time and has become a critical part of French culinary practice while also distinguishing itself from other butters. Second, she merges material and taste; this key food item is made from specific materials itself and as such has a particular flavor, which must be known before using it as it could affect the taste of the entire dish. Likewise, this distinct material will affect the practitioner’s process and technique— when, where, and how the butter is used. Following this introduction, Child notes that, “except for cake frostings and certain desserts for which [they] have specified unsalted butter,” the practitioner may use American salted butter interchangeably with French butter (*Mastering* 15). Her words here resonate with the foreword and her encouragement of the practitioner to stay disciplined with culinary practice; in other words, she alleviates some potential anxiety here for readers who may panic because they do not have French butter.

At the same time, Child instructs her reader as to why they are interchangeable: the taste and material are comparable. She then concludes the opening paragraph with a particularly noteworthy parenthetical aside: “Note: It has recently become a habit in America to call unsalted butter, ‘sweet butter’; there is an attractive ring to it. But technically any butter, salted or not, which is made from sweet, unmatured cream is sweet butter” (*Mastering* 15). Once again, Child sets out to not only challenge assumptions or myths, in this case about current perceptions about butter, but also to educate her readers, both of which serve the elements of process, taste, and

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<sup>93</sup> Comparable to the assumption about knives, a typical American reader of Child’s text may assume that butter resides solely under the umbrella of material without taking into account process, technique, taste, or history, for example. Child puts forth a concerted effort to challenge this presumption.

discipline. And, she points to America's shortcomings regarding its culinary history and knowledge. While the French have their own butter that has been developed over time and incorporated significantly into the national cuisine, Americans, at the time, were improperly classifying common butter, which is a sign of underdeveloped culinary knowledge.

Also, Child includes two subsequent paragraphs, devoted to clarified butter (or *beurre clarifié*) and butter temperatures along with butter foam, to further instruct her readers (*Mastering* 15). In both subsections, she provides a definition and application. For the clarified butter, for example, Child defines it ("a clear, yellow liquid" that is produced "when ordinary butter is heated until it liquefies"), offers examples of when it is used, such as "sautéing the rounds of white bread used for canapés, or such delicate items as boned and skinned chicken breasts," and ends with instructions about how to make it (*Mastering* 15-16). In this short paragraph, Child integrates process, technique, and material: the process of transforming one material into a different form that requires a particular technique followed by the process of application. Significantly, Child's attention to detail throughout the text, exemplified here, serves as instructional points and reflects the complexity of culinary practice-as-art—how multiple elements operate interdependently within this system. Clarified butter, for example, is not used for chicken in general but specifically for "boned and skinned chicken breasts." Both applications reflect the nature of the original material (clarified butter) as a delicate ingredient used for comparable materials. With this material and process as part of the practitioner's repertoire, she can employ them creatively in her culinary practice, furthering her role as a culinary artist.

In each of these three examples from the opening instructional pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child further demonstrates how culinary practice-as-art develops and

functions while at the same time setting the stage for the primary narratives that show her system: the recipes. Though she privileges the triangulated network of process, technique, and material throughout the foreword and instructional sections, she integrates such elements as creativity, taste, history, and discipline while also illustrating how they function interdependently and does so by mirroring her writing, or form, with this networking of elements. She continues this in the recipe portion of the text and simultaneously foregrounds “endless variations” with the “master recipe plus variation recipes” structure upon which this text is based. With this recipe configuration, Child crystallizes culinary practice-as-art and shows her reader how she can transform from home cook (read: laborer) to a culinary practitioner or artist. She also proffers a recipe form that would significantly alter future culinary texts.

### **Mastering the Art of Chicken Fricassee and Its Variations**

One of the challenges that Child faces in attempting to clearly communicate these facets of the system is the limits of language in *showing* culinary practice-as-art, insofar as the materials and technique are concerned. Her best available written structure for conveying this system is the recipe; however, Child adjusts the form of the recipe to account for the complexity of culinary practice-as-art. This form, with its detail and particular organization, demonstrates, in part, how culinary practice-as-art operates as a system. More significantly, though, Child’s recipe form—both the individual recipe form and the master recipe with variations form—reveals how she shifts culinary practice from labor to art, with an emphasis on process, proper technique, “good basic materials,” and “the love of cooking for its own sake” concept.

The recipe form and the overall structure of the text greatly influenced later culinary texts to varying degrees. Alice Waters’ groundbreaking *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* riffs on the organization of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* through the menu-as-chapter form.

Decades later, Rachael Ray adopted Child's master recipe with variations (with an emphasis on process) in her most of her cookbooks, beginning with *30-Minute Meals*. Thus, Child's text's significance extends beyond content to include form, thereby demonstrating the complexity of culinary practice-as-art. In addition to its composition of processes, techniques, materials, and philosophy, form must be considered in order to effectively communicate this art. Though historians and foodies, for example, often focus on Child's contribution of content to American cuisine, we cannot overlook the importance of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* as a text and its form.

The master recipe for chicken fricassee and the subsequent three variations serve as a useful example to show how this recipe structure effectively and efficiently demonstrates culinary practice-as-art. Like *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in its entirety, the master recipe and its variations must be read together as process, technique, and material with creativity, discipline, taste, and history underpinning these core ideas. While each recipe can exist independently, Child constructs them to be read and worked with interdependently, echoing ideas from the foreword and from *My Life in France*: understanding fundamental techniques and processes with the goal of "divorcing [oneself] from a dependence on recipes" (*Mastering* xxv).

The section about chicken fricassee begins as most master recipes do within Child's text—with a brief narrative about the dish with a focus on the process, techniques, and materials involved, which functions as layer in this system. In this introductory paragraph, Child, once again, dispels some misperceptions that her American readers may have and educates them by specifically defining and differentiating fricassee from other methods. In particular, she critiques recipes that many of her readers have probably encountered: "One frequently runs into chicken recipes labeled sautés which are actually fricassees, and others labeled fricassees which are

actually stews” (*Mastering* 258). To ensure that her readers have the proper knowledge to engage in the processes and to practice with creativity, Child corrects these fallacies with particular attention to language: a sauté, she notes, does not include any liquid in the cooking process; whereas, “for a stew, the chicken is simmered in liquid from the start of its cooking” (*Mastering* 258). Finally, she defines fricassee but with more detail in order to establish a useful foundation for her readers: “When a chicken is fricasseed, the meat is always cooked first in butter—or butter and oil—until its flesh has swelled and stiffened, then the liquid is added” (*Mastering* 258). Not only does Child help her readers understand the process of fricassee, but she also provides them with information about two other cooking methods that they can add (at least the knowledge of the general method) to their repertoire, which reflects the in-progress nature of culinary practice-as-art. And, with this fricassee method comes technique because the practitioner must learn what “swelled and stiffened” means for a chicken cooked in butter. She also gestures to creativity in the form of variations here; by knowing this method, a practitioner can use different cooking liquids, seasonings, sauces, and additional ingredients, which Child demonstrates in the variations of the master recipe.

Further, Child briefly educates her readers regarding the type of chicken that is best used for the fricassee method; this short paragraph builds on the first paragraphs of “Chapter 6: Poultry” in which Child delineates detailed information about types of chickens, cooking temperatures, stocks, and techniques, such as trussing. By providing information about why one should use frying chickens rather than broilers, Child instructs her readers about materials and process: younger chickens, she asserts, “should never be used; their flesh is so soft and tender that it dries out and becomes stringy” (*Mastering* 258). This knowledge (knowing the types of chickens available), like the process of fricasseeing, can extend to other recipes and eventually



become part of a practitioner's repertoire, again showing that culinary practice-as-art is not limited to a single recipe but is always already in-progress and multiple. In this introductory narrative, Child highlights the complexity of integrated and interdependent elements, such as process, technique, and material, within a singular dish while also revealing the simplicity in the definition of one technique—fricassee in this case. This latter idea might challenge her readers' assumptions that French cuisine must possess a level of incomprehensible complexity. By defining each technique with clarity, Child simultaneously educates and reassures her readers.

In the master recipe for chicken fricassee, "*Fricassée de Poulet à L'Ancienne* (Old-fashioned Chicken Fricassee with Wine-flavored Cream Sauce, Onions, and Mushrooms)," Child demonstrates how process, technique, and material network in multiple ways within one dish; she also integrates other elements to show the beautiful complexity of culinary practice-as-art and to illustrate the different applications for this fricassee process (*Mastering* 258). She begins, as is often with the master recipes, with a brief summary or outline of the process itself before the recipe. She notes that fricassee is "not difficult to execute," which can alleviate some anxiety that new practitioners may feel when beginning with such a recipe (*Mastering* 258). Child's short delineation of the process reflects this lack of difficulty; the summary of the recipe reads as rather simple, belying the widely held American assumption that French culinary practice requires excessive time, material, financial commitment, and a culinary skill level on par with professional chefs. Child ensures to differentiate between "complexity" and "difficulty" in this brief paragraph. Moreover, the introductory comments provide the readers with an overview of what to expect in terms of process and technique; they also give more experienced practitioners hints at how they can improvise or be creative with the dish whether it is a variation that Child includes or one that they discover on their own.

Child summarizes, “[The] chicken pieces are turned in hot butter, sprinkled with flour and seasonings, then simmered in wine and white stock. The sauce is a reduction of the cooking liquid, enriched with cream and egg yolks. Braised onions and mushrooms accompany the chicken” (*Mastering* 258). In this short overview, Child shows process, technique, and material—the art of chicken fricassee. Her deliberate use of “turned,” “sprinkled,” “simmered,” “reduction,” “enriched,” and “braised” all signal active processes and techniques within this system. Immediately, the practitioner knows what techniques will be required of her throughout the recipe, the requisite equipment, and time necessary to engage in the full process of this recipe. Further, Child sketches the materials required (as far as ingredients are concerned); she saves many of the specifics, such as “seasonings,” for the recipe itself, but the practitioner can acquire a sense of what general ingredients will comprise this recipe.<sup>94</sup> Child, in effect, creates a microcosm of the recipe, in process, technique, and material, within this overview and sets up the practitioner for success. The potential for variation, such as seasonings or the accompanying vegetables, indicated in these openings words points to the use of creativity in addition to the already-present creativity that exists in culinary practice-as-art. With a focus on process, technique, and material, the practitioner can savor these elements for what they are without the pressure of the product hovering over her and can enjoy the “love cooking for its own sake.”

In these introductory sentences, Child also demonstrates that this dish, similar to the others in this text, does not exist only independently but rather interdependently by including wine pairing suggestions and possible side dishes. Here, she shows that this “Sunday dinner dish” does not—and should not—be served and enjoyed by itself; she gestures to the notion of taste here as the suggested wine (“a chilled, fairly full-bodied white Burgundy, Côtes du Rhône, or

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<sup>94</sup> The use of a general term such as “seasonings” points to the notion of variations; the seasonings will also vary depending on the process and materials.

Bordeaux-Graves”) will only enhance the flavors of the chicken fricassee, and the recommended side dishes of steamed rice or risotto as well as “other vegetables, buttered peas or asparagus tips” provide complementary taste and texture to the entrée (*Mastering* 258-59). The interdependence, then, extends beyond the materials within the individual recipe; these elements can be networked with the original dish to create a flexible and creative system of taste, texture, flavor, and pleasure—or art.

The structure of the recipes in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* serves multiple purposes, all of which show how culinary practice-as-art operates as a system. Rather than the linear structure of recipes in *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, for example, Child organizes her recipes utilizing two columns, one designated for materials and the other for process and technique. This model allows the practitioner to see the triangulation of process, technique, and material simultaneously while also enabling her to glance ahead in the recipe to see each vital step. The form of the recipe mimics process by emphasizing the steps involved (rather than going back and forth between materials and process and techniques as one must do with a linear recipe), with process, technique, and material grouped in each step. By doing so, Child echoes the introduction and the notion that each moment in the recipe is significant. The master recipe with variations form also illustrates how seriation occurs in a system such as culinary practice-as-art; the processes, techniques, and materials replicate throughout the practice, or system, and create new processes or dishes. Also, Child *shows* culinary practice-as-art in the visual form of the recipe or, in other words, how it is read.

## **Table 2**

### *FRICASSÉE DE POULET À L’ANCIENNE*

*Preliminary cooking in butter*

Table 2 (cont'd)

2 ½ to 3 lbs. of cut-up frying chicken	Dry the chicken thoroughly in a towel.
A heavy, 10-inch fireproof casserole or electric skillet 1 thinly sliced onion, carrot, and celery stalk 4 Tb butter	<hr/> Cook the vegetables slowly in the butter for about 5 minutes, or until they are almost tender but not browned (260 degrees for an electric skillet). Push them to one side. Raise heat slightly (290 degrees), and add the chicken. Turn it every minute for 3 to 4 minutes until the meat has stiffened slightly, without coloring to more than a light golden yellow. <hr/> Lower heat (260 for an electric skillet), cover, and cook very slowly for 10 minutes, turning the chicken once. It should swell slightly, stiffen more, but not deepen in color. <i>(Mastering 259)</i>

The initial header signals the overall process to be conducted in this portion of the recipe, and by glancing through the italicized headers, a practitioner can gather a general sense of the recipe's overall process. Next, each step of this recipe must be read individually, as guided by the headers and the breaks between sections but also collectively with the others to construct an entire process. The left column provides the practitioner with the materials required for this step, but she can also quickly skim through this side of the recipe to create an inventory of ingredients and equipment that she will need. Thus, this structure serves those practitioners who prefer to view the "big picture" of the recipe as well as those who work through each step on its own, building from one to the next.

The division of this section into individual segments not only echoes Child's words from the foreword that steps should not be skipped but also shows the multiplicity of culinary practice-as-art as a system; process, technique, and material all operate simultaneously here and throughout this recipe. In the second segment, for example, the practitioner knows that she will need particular equipment (a casserole or skillet, chef's knife, tongs or spatula, and a stove) and

ingredients and that certain techniques will be required of her, including slicing and sautéing. Though she will follow a particular process—cooking the vegetables first then adding the chicken—the practitioner will be integrating the sautéing of the vegetables with the fricasseeing of the chicken, the latter building upon the former. Further, the cooking process and taste—the vegetable-infused butter imbues its flavor into the chicken—show how culinary practice-as-art as a system functions interdependently via de-differentiation (or the dissolution of boundaries), in this case to produce a flavor hybrid of the three. The form of the recipe reinforces this aspect of culinary practice-as-art by revealing a layer in this step, one that is operating independently from and interdependently with the rest of the system, or the entire dish. The vegetables and chicken here exist in a particular form and with a certain taste that will then be altered in the next step.

Child adds another set (layer) of processes, techniques, and materials in the next section of the recipe, under the header “*Adding the flour*” (*Mastering* 259). Though brief, this step continues the in-progress and interdependent nature of this recipe:

**Table 3**

*ADDING THE FLOUR*

½ tsp salt	Sprinkle, salt, pepper, and flour on all sides of the chicken, turning and rolling each piece to coat the flour with the cooking butter. Cover and continue cooking slowly for 4 minutes, turning it once.
1/8 tsp white pepper	
3 Tb flour	

The materials listed on the left alter the taste and texture of the chicken via the process and technique provided on the right. The blend of the fat (butter) and the flour infused with heat creates a thickening agent and changes how the chicken will look and how it will continue to cook. This individual process integrates with those before it and sets the stage for the subsequent process of simmering the chicken in wine and stock. Further, with this technique, the practitioner

can apply the knowledge to other dishes, echoing Child's words from the foreword regarding dependence on recipes. The multiplicity and simultaneity of process, technique, and material through these series of steps demonstrate the systemic nature of culinary practice and the art that defines Child's practice: with attention paid to these triangulated elements, the practitioner becomes immersed in them without solely focusing on the product or the "work." The alteration of the chicken's flavor and texture, for example, becomes the focal point rather than the service of others or the final dish on the plate. The form of the recipe also augments this focus; Child writes the seasoning process as both an independent step, which insists on the practitioner's attention solely on it, and an interdependent function, which operates as one of many layers in this dish and all requiring the others to comprise a whole system.

The next process again changes the flavor, texture, and appearance of the chicken as the practitioner introduces liquid into the cooking process. At this point in the recipe, as it is with many others in this text, the break between sections serves as a transition for the practitioner. While the chicken is cooking briefly within the flour and butter, the practitioner can look to the next step and gather materials. Cooking time, in this case, creates a bridge between processes. In this final step for cooking the chicken, Child continues the privileging of process, technique, and material and shows the practitioner how a new layer of taste can also be infused at this point in the recipe:

**Table 4**

*SIMMERING IN STOCK AND WINE*

3 cups boiling white chicken stock, white stock, or canned chicken bouillon 1 cup dry white wine or 2/3 cup dry white vermouth A small herb bouquet: 2 parsley sprigs, 1/3 bay leaf and 1/8 tsp thyme tied in washed	Remove from heat and pour in the boiling liquid, shaking casserole to blend the liquid and flour. Add the wine, the herb bouquet, and more stock, or water, so the liquid just covers the chicken. Bring to the simmer. Taste for seasoning, and salt lightly if necessary.
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Table 4 (cont'd)

cheesecloth.

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Cover and maintain at a slow simmer for 25 to 30 minutes (180 to 190 degrees for an electric skillet). The chicken is done when the drumsticks are tender if pinched and the chicken juices run clear yellow when the meat is pricked with a fork. When done, remove the chicken to a side dish.  
(*Mastering* 259-60)

To begin, the materials used in this process have been thoroughly introduced in earlier parts of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*; thus, the practitioner's discipline, with regards to learning the many facets of this culinary practice, finds validation here, and she can now apply her knowledge to this recipe (with the understanding that she can apply it to others as well). It also illustrates that culinary practice-as-art insists upon discipline because the practitioner must carry what she learns in the earlier parts of the text through to each recipe and determine what process, technique, and/or material requires application. Also, she points to the in-progress nature of culinary practice-as-art as a system; the practitioner will continually build her culinary knowledge that she can apply across dishes. At the beginning of Chapter 6, Child provides the recipe for brown and white chicken stock along with a general explanation about how and why these stocks are used in a recipe. In the introductory pages, she discusses cooking with wine, both red and white, and how and why a practitioner would use wine in a recipe. In the subsection of "Wines" entitled "Cooking with Wine," Child demonstrates her awareness that her American audience lacks familiarity with wine in general; therefore, she notes, "A good, dry, white vermouth is an excellent substitute, and much better than the wrong kind of white wine" (*Mastering* 31). With this instructional note, Child gestures to the opportunity to be creative within this culinary practice, but she simultaneously affirms that "good basic materials" are still

necessary—the “wrong kind” of wine can drastically alter a dish, thus the taste of the entire meal, as the dishes operate interdependently.<sup>95</sup>

Additionally, in the introductory section entitled “Ingredients,” Child discusses the use of herbs in both French cooking and her own culinary practice-as-art. She offers reasons for using fresh herbs and provides a brief history lesson about their usage in French culinary practice, in effect dispelling assumptions that many American readers might have. To begin, Child asserts, “Classical French cooking uses far fewer herbs than most Americans would suspect. Parsley, thyme, bay, and tarragon are the stand-bys” (*Mastering* 18). She then includes the definition of *fines herbes* as well as regional uses of certain herbs such as basil, fennel, oregano, sage, and saffron (*Mastering* 18). With this information, Child outlines how herbs are used in French cooking, nationally and locally. But, she also shows a cognizance of her American audience’s knowledge of herbs; the limited availability of fresh herbs may preclude many of her readers from using them. However, Child offers alternatives: “Excellent also are most of the dried herbs now available” (*Mastering* 18). With the rise of the supermarket during the 1950’s and early 1960’s, dried herbs appeared on shelves more prevalently than fresh herbs did in the produce section. Therefore, Child provides her readers with options that reflect their range of access to materials, in effect illustrating the interdependence of multiple systems: culinary practice, economics, and geography.

Yet, Child does not end her instruction with these two possibilities; she provides a third option that rests between fresh and dried herbs: “Some varieties of herbs freeze well. [...] Be sure any dried or frozen herbs you use retain most of their original taste and fragrance” (*Mastering* 18). With this instructional note, Child again pulls economics and geography to the

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<sup>95</sup> Child gestures to Brillat-Savarin once again, specifically his notion that “gloomy faces” can ruin a meal. The wrong kind of wine or sour dinner guests influences taste (135).



fore alongside material and taste; she offers her American readers—many of whom are culinary neophytes—practical tools for using herbs and creative options for integrating them into this new culinary practice. The immediate subsequent entry in the “Ingredients” chapter is on the herb bouquet, or *bouquet garni*, which Child defines, explains how and why it is used, and provides instruction about how to build an herb bouquet. This serves as an extension to the prior entry on herbs and offers the practitioner another creative option in her own culinary practice while also pointing to how the system culinary practice-as-art operates in-progress. The explanation of the herb bouquet’s usage, including the “flavoring [of] soups, stews, sauces, and braised meat and vegetables,” provides the practitioner with an understanding of the spectrum of dishes for which this seemingly simple ingredient may be appropriate (*Mastering* 18). Thus, the practitioner can see how the herb bouquet can blend together the ideas of taste, endless variations, and creativity, and she can also predict that the information offered in this early chapter will be applicable throughout the variety of recipes to follow.

The techniques required in this process of the *Fricassée de Poulet à L’Ancienne* recipe are both specific to fricassee and applicable to other dishes. Therefore, the practitioner builds her repertoire through discipline and practice. The addition of the stock and water to a specified level (“just [covering] the chicken”) within the casserole, for example, illustrates a particular cooking process that is not limited to this recipe or to fricassee generally. This technique also has application in braising and poaching; therefore, the practitioner can learn how this technique works within this recipe and then apply it to a large number of others, again with the goal of divorcing herself from recipes altogether. Furthermore, the practitioner can comprehend the notion of “simmer” within this process. Through discipline, she will discover how a simmer is achieved and how it differs from boiling. Like the aforementioned technique, the use of simmer

will extend beyond this recipe but can be practiced here, adding to the practitioner's creativity and ability to engage with endless variations of recipes thereby showing the in-progress nature of the system and how seriation works for integrating processes and techniques into the home cook's practice.

Child mentions perhaps the most elusive technique at the end of this process: "taste for seasoning." This technique can only be achieved through trial-and-error and over time.<sup>96</sup> It gestures to Child's time in her "Roo de Loo" that she recounts in *My Life in France*, experimenting with different French processes and techniques as well as her commitment to discipline required of this practice. With "taste for seasoning," the practitioner, if she has worked with other recipes in the text or if this is her first, has learned or will learn that every dish requires this technique in some way.<sup>97</sup> This technique also requires a mix of taste and creativity as well as discipline to find the right balance among ingredients for that particular dish. As a practitioner learns how much salt (and pepper) to add, she can integrate this new technique into her growing repertoire, building confidence along the way. Further, the mix of taste, creativity, and discipline within this one technique illustrates how Child's culinary practice operates as art: the privilege of process (the process of seasoning rather than a singular moment or act of labor) and the love of cooking—or in this case, technique of seasoning—for its own sake. The conversation that the practitioner has with the dish during this technique—the back and forth in attempt to find the proper balance of flavors—reflects the art of Child's culinary practice as well. For the moments in which the practitioner is engaged in this dialogue, the emphasis rests not on

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<sup>96</sup> In contrast, trial-and-error cannot exist in the culinary world of the *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* because the objectives set forth for the homemaker do not privilege process, which values trial-and-error; instead, this text insists on quickly produced meals for the homemaker's family without regard to *how* the meal is constructed. Thus, trial-and-error, which requires discipline and time commitment, belies the objectives of this particular cookbook and of many like it during this era.

<sup>97</sup> Dessert may be the most notable exception, as these dishes require more precision than the nuance of salt and pepper seasoning.

the end product but on the process, technique, and material that consume her attention. All of the processes, techniques, and materials up until this point remain present as well, blended together in an artful way and ready to be altered once more with the practitioner's addition of salt (and pepper).

Finally, comparable to the learning curve of "taste for seasoning," confirming that the chicken is cooked also requires some disciplined trial-and-error. Child offers specific instructions in the second part of this simmering process; however, the influence of other elements on the system, such as the type of stove used, the amount of heat infused into the dish, and even the type of casserole dish or equipment that is used, can greatly affect how much time is required for the chicken to cook to the appropriate (and safe) temperature. Though she provides a probable time range, Child's most useful directive reflects the trial-and-error practice (afforded by seriation) in which the practitioner must engage with seasoning: using a fork to test if the chicken has reached the proper temperature and using the "clear yellow" juices as the indicator. With this technique (which the practitioner can, of course, apply to other chicken dishes), she must learn what "clear yellow" juices look like and to not over-test the chicken (e.g. pricking the chicken with a fork repeatedly), which could cause it to lose its moisture, turning it dry. Both can only be accomplished through disciplined trial-and-error.

Child, in this process of "simmering in stock and wine," demonstrates how culinary practice is further activated as art. She foregrounds process, technique, and material while also integrating taste, discipline, variations, history, and creativity. Further, this step—or set of processes, techniques, and materials—serves as a microcosm of the entire recipe and its organizational structure with its focus on interdependent steps that insist that the practitioner

focus on the immediate moment of culinary practice rather than on the final product. Child's culinary practice-as-art asks her readers to linger and enjoy the practice itself.

The next process operates as a link between the simmering and sauce steps, specifically with the use of cooking liquids:

**Table 5**

*ONION AND MUSHROOMS GARNITURE*

16 to 20 white-braised onions, page 481	While the chicken is cooking, prepare the onions and mushrooms. Add their cooking
½ lb. fresh mushrooms stewed in butter, lemon juice, and water, page 511	juices to the chicken cooking sauce in the next step.

Three significant components of culinary practice-as-art appear in this brief step. First, Child integrates two different techniques that are delineated in another chapter of the text, showing again how culinary practice-as-art operates in-progress and relies on seriation to do so. In Chapter 8 “Vegetables,” she provides the details for braising onions and stewing mushrooms. The practitioner must not only read each specific recipe but also the preceding information in order to learn how to properly slice both vegetables. The integration of these techniques into the process here shows the interdependent nature of culinary practice-as-art and establishes the second aspect of this system shown in this portion of the recipe. The simultaneity required here illustrates the multiplicity of culinary practice-as-art; the practitioner must cook the onions and mushrooms at the same time, which includes preparation and monitoring. To successfully complete these techniques, the practitioner must be disciplined about the individual techniques (e.g. slicing an onion or properly chopping a mushroom) and the time management necessary to coordinate the techniques with one another as well as with the simmering chicken.

Finally, Child shows how these vegetables, after undergoing their transformative processes, assert multiple functions within this dish, in effect belying the brevity of the directions

for their preparation. By simply looking at the heading for this portion of the recipe, the practitioner knows that the onions and mushrooms will be used for a type of garnish, but their function does not end there. The cooking liquids from the braising and stewing processes that are added in the next step, though mentioned in this section of the recipe, show how elements—the cooking liquids—that experience individual transformations can then combine to create a new layer of taste as well as blend with a third element—the simmering chicken—to form another, new set of flavors, ultimately changing the entire dish. The multiple and simultaneous alterations to and among these materials demonstrate the systemic nature of culinary practice-as-art, specifically through de-differentiation, and how these cooking liquids operate as a bridge between processes. Child’s instruction here regarding discipline and time management will become necessary to a practitioner who is building her repertoire, but the demonstration of how these techniques and processes function interdependently becomes essential to understanding how culinary practice-as-art operates, not solely for this recipe but as a representation of the practice as a whole.

The sauce portion of the recipe includes four sets or steps that build on the prior sets/steps:

## **Table 6**

### *THE SAUCE*

<p>2 egg yolks  <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cup whipping cream  A 2-quart mixing bowl  A wire whip</p>	<p>Simmer the cooking liquid in the casserole for 2 to 3 minutes, skimming off fat. Then raise heat and boil rapidly, stirring frequently, until the sauce reduces and thickens enough to coat a spoon nicely. Correct seasoning. You should have 2 to 2 <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cups.</p> <p>Blend the egg yolks and cream in the mixing bowl with a wire whip. Continue beating, and add the hot sauce by small tablespoonfuls until about a cupful has gone in. Beat in the rest of</p>
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Table 6 (cont'd)

A wooden spoon

Salt and pepper  
Drops of lemon juice  
Pinch of nutmeg

the sauce in a thin stream.

Pour the sauce back into the casserole, or into an enameled or stainless steel saucepan (do not use aluminum). Set over moderately high heat and, stirring constantly, reach all over the bottom and sides of the casserole, until the sauce comes to a boil. Boil for 1 minute, stirring.

Correct seasoning, adding drops of lemon juice to taste, and a pinch of nutmeg. Strain the sauce through a fine sieve.  
(*Mastering* 260)

In addition to learning the overall process involved in making a sauce within culinary practice-as-art, the practitioner will also gain knowledge about the various techniques used that have application beyond the area of sauces. Similar to seasoning in the prior step, Child introduces a number of techniques that can only be learned via trial-and-error. Further, she creates an opportunity for the practitioner to see why French sauces are considered art—but not simply because of taste, as is often assumed, but also because of process, technique, and material. To begin, the use of cooking liquid here serves as a bridge between different processes, and the practitioner can immediately learn how this particular process operates as a transition between recipe steps while also learning how cooking liquid can change consistently, taste in particular, through the use of heat. And, she can begin to comprehend how different materials interact and operate interdependently and in-progress under the influence of various forces, such as different temperatures or constant stirring.

Also, she will learn how this reduction process requires attention and maintenance on her part—skimming fat and monitoring the reduction to watch for its proper consistency. These two techniques, which comprise this process, can only be learned through disciplined practice and trial-and-error. First, the practitioner must know how to skim fat off of the top of the cooking

liquid and how much and when she has completed this process. Second, the reduction process and technique require time, which is dictated by the stove, heat distribution, and the type of casserole (or equipment) used, and the practitioner will learn, through trial-and-error, how her individual equipment influences this process and technique. Also, she will learn what “thickens enough to coat a spoon nicely” means in the context of this particular sauce and for the process of reduction generally. In addition to how the sauce appears on the spoon, the practitioner will gain knowledge about how thickening agents, such as the combination of butter and flour, along with heat transform liquid; the systemic nature of culinary practice becomes visible with this process via de-differentiation in particular as the dissolved boundaries permit this multiplicity and exchange of “information.”

Child also presents the notion of layering with regards to seasoning in this sauce portion of the recipe (particularly in the first and last steps) that also point to how this is a process and a system, specifically the multiplicity of these layers. Though the practitioner seasons the dish during the simmering process, she will continue to “correct” the seasoning as she goes, in order to account for the changes that the dish experiences through the different processes and techniques used. Learning this layering technique will be a vital part of the practitioner’s repertoire, as nearly every dish (with the exception of most desserts) requires its use. Layering seasoning is not an exact science, and in this way, it represents the inherent creativity within culinary practice-as-art. The practitioner, through trial-and-error, will learn how to season a dish by developing her own “style” that reflects how her kitchen is organized (e.g. where the salt and pepper are located in relationship to the stove), the type of salt and pepper that she uses (e.g. Maldon, Kosher, Himalayan, sea), and the dispensary mechanisms that she selects for each (e.g. a certain type of pepper grinder or pre-ground pepper in a jar). The fundamental nature of

seasoning seems to belie such creativity, yet this is one of the very reasons how and why it *is* creative—the practitioner can develop it to reflect who she is as a culinary artist. And, this layer shows how the system of culinary practice-as-art operates in-progress—the seasoning practice will continuously be adapted as the practitioner gains knowledge and skill.

In the next portion of the sauce process, Child introduces three techniques that the practitioner must master, all of which require disciplined practice. The ingredients list for this second step calls for two egg yolks, thus the practitioner must know how to separate eggs, which is a technique that requires disciplined practice through trial-and-error. Different strategies exist to successfully separate a yolk from the white; therefore, the practitioner must experiment with these various options to identify which one works best for her. Creativity, again, emerges as necessary with this technique. How a practitioner separates an egg reflects her own culinary style and the art of this culinary practice.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, blending egg yolks and cream with a whisk (or whip) requires practice as does knowing when the two are appropriately blended. The practitioner will need this technique in her repertoire for a range of dishes, and she will also need to master the simultaneity of whisking and streaming in additional materials as is called for in this portion of the recipe. Undergirding all of this remains the “love of cooking for its own sake,” and finding one’s own “style” in terms of seasoning, separating an egg, or even holding a whisk gestures to this “love” and to creativity. These represent the intangibles of culinary practice-as-art that Child (and Fisher) deeply value and believe are significant elements that distinguish their practice from cooking. This variation also points to the multiplicity in the system of culinary

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<sup>98</sup> Separating an egg, then, functions similarly to seasoning insofar as it shows the creativity and individuality of the practitioner. The options for separating an egg include cracking the egg onto a spoon that is over a bowl and allowing the yolk to stay on the spoon while the whites drop, using a kitchen tool designed specifically for this purpose, and passing the yolk back and forth between the two halves of the egg shell while allowing the whites to fall to a bowl below. Of course, other strategies exist, and these are discovered through trial-and-error when a practitioner needs to find a technique for separating an egg that reflects her abilities, needs, and environment.



practice-as-art; different techniques for separating eggs can be accounted for in a system rather than a linear structure, which would preclude the numerous ways for achieving this technique.

The processes, techniques, and materials used for the sauce portion of this master recipe demonstrate the systemic nature of culinary practice and how culinary-practice-as-art operates. The sauce does not signal the completion of this dish, thus the emphasis is not on the final product. Instead, the practitioner focuses solely on the sauce, building on prior processes and altering the dish once more. Much like a painter who concentrates on one portion of a canvas, the practitioner can simultaneously deliberate on one portion of a recipe while seeing the dish in its entirety. Furthermore, the in-progress nature of culinary-practice-as-art becomes clear here, especially with the seasoning and separation of the egg; these techniques continue beyond this singular recipe and exist as part of the practitioner's culinary practice-as-art. The in-progress and multifarious nature of culinary practice-as-art creates the opportunity for this simultaneity and also demonstrates the creativity inherent in this culinary practice.

Finally, Child offers the process for finishing *Fricassée de Poulet à L'Ancienne*, entitled "Final assembly" and "Reheating and serving." Though the dish itself is completed here, culinary practice-as-art does not end with the sprig of parsley. Instead, parsley gestures back to the beginning, to the suggested wines and accompanying dishes.<sup>99</sup>

## Table 7

### FINAL ASSEMBLY

A clean casserole

Arrange the chicken, and the onion and mushroom garniture, in the casserole. Pour the sauce over it. (\*) Except for reheating, and the

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<sup>99</sup> In this way, the interdependent nature of the culinary practice-as-art comes to the fore once again. Instead of a looping culinary practice, which would reflect a closed system, this gesture back to the wine and accompanying dishes demonstrates how culinary practice-as-art functions as an in-progress system with multiple interdependent processes, techniques, and materials, such as this fricassee dish with a "full-bodied white Burgundy," risotto, or buttered peas (*Mastering* 258-59).

Table 7 (cont'd)

	final buttering of the sauce, the dish is now ready and can wait indefinitely. To prevent a skin from forming over the sauce, spoon over it a film of cream, stock, or milk. Set it aside uncovered.
	<i>Reheating and serving</i>
	Set casserole over moderate heat and bring to the simmer. Cover and simmer very slowly for 5 minutes, or until the chicken is hot through, basting it frequently with the sauce.
1 to 2 Tb softened butter	Off heat and just before serving, tilt casserole, add enrichment butter, and baste the chicken with the sauce until the butter has absorbed into it.
Sprigs of fresh parsley	Serve the chicken from the casserole; or arrange it with the onions and mushrooms on a hot platter, surrounded with rice or noodles, and covered with the sauce. Decorate with sprigs of fresh parsley. ( <i>Mastering</i> 260-61)

Even within these last processes, the practitioner will engage in techniques not employed in the earlier steps. Yet, like many other processes and techniques used throughout this recipe, these are vital for the practitioner's repertoire. Further, they demonstrate the interdependency of culinary practice-as-art and how these concluding steps build upon the previous sets of processes, techniques, and materials. Primarily, this portion of the recipe features three techniques that the practitioner will need in her culinary practice and that demonstrate how culinary practice-as-art operates. First, the chicken requires basting during the reheating and serving phase, and though Child introduces the definition of "basting" earlier in the "Definitions" chapter, the practitioner now engages in the action—or art—of basting twice during the last step. Child defines basting simply as "to spoon melted butter, fat, or liquid over foods" (*Mastering* 11). The brevity of this description reflects the technique, but the practitioner does not know when this will occur in any

given dish. In the fricassee recipe, she will activate this technique and learn when it occurs and how it functions in a dish.

The first act of basting occurs during the reheating process, and the liquid that is poured over the chicken helps to heat the chicken, which the practitioner will learn through employing this technique. The second time that she must baste occurs after she adds the enrichment butter (or the final buttering of the sauce), and unlike the prior act of basting, this time an additional material alters the appearance, texture, flavor, and function of the sauce, which the practitioner can watch occur as she integrates the butter with the sauce. De-differentiation affords these multiple changes. The butter gives the sauce a shimmery appearance while adding a creamy texture and infusing a light nutty flavor. And, the changes (the flavor alteration in particular) impart an added layer of butter flavor into the chicken, keeping it moist as well. The buttering of the sauce also shows how one material can simultaneously bring together flavors and alter them, creating a new layer. The techniques of basting and buttering of the sauce operate interdependently here as well as with the prior processes and techniques in this recipe, demonstrating the multiplicity of culinary practice-as-art at the same time.

Finally, Child introduces the technique of plating in the final step of this recipe. Plating, while it signals the end of this specific dish, shows how culinary practice-as-art extends beyond specific culinary processes. Plating, as Child describes it here and throughout *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, privileges creativity, taste, process, and discipline, and it shows the interdependent nature—and art—of her culinary practice as a system. Other cookbooks and many practitioners overlook plating as part of culinary practice, but Child, as indicated with this representative recipe, affirms its importance within culinary practice-as-art. Plating provides the practitioner with the opportunity to engage in creativity with this visual portion of the dish—how

she arranges the materials reflects her individualized adaptation of culinary practice-as-art much like how she seasons with salt and pepper. But, this expression of creativity manifests visually for her fellow diners to see and experience. To those who follow cooking (e.g. readers of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*), they may view plating or the visual display of the “final” dish as the end of the recipe, as linear cooking would indicate this. Child, however, counters this by showing plating as an interdependent technique with the other sets of processes, techniques, and materials in the recipe rather than the culmination or coalescence of these sets. Plating as a technique functions simply as a part of the practice, or one element within the system. Yet, it can prove challenging, thereby requiring disciplined practice through trial-and-error—plating demands a creative and artistic eye. For example, the practitioner will need to decide how to arrange the chicken with the onions, mushrooms, and rice or noodles that presents a visually inviting dish: will the onions and mushrooms cover the chicken or be spooned to the side? Will the noodles or rice look better underneath the chicken or to the side and spooned in a half-moon shape? Until the practitioner experiments, she will not learn how she best plates dishes or how she can infuse her own individuality into this portion of the dish. This added use of creativity serves as one more way that the practitioner engages with the recipe's processes, techniques, and materials. It also provides a sense of fun and emphasizes the “love of cooking for its own sake,” which can liberate the home cook from monotony and labor in service of others. Child's recipe form and culinary practice-as-art overall invites individuality and play, which greatly differs from the prescriptive linearity of cookbooks such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*.

### **Endless Variations**

To demonstrate how process, technique, and material carry through multiple recipes and to show how a practitioner can introduce her own creativity into dishes while divorcing herself

from recipes, Child includes variations of the master recipe throughout *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. For *Fricassée de Poulet à L'Ancienne*, she includes two types of variations: sauce alternatives and two (of many) variations of the full recipe. These variations occur because of seriation and de-differentiation at work within the system. In the introduction to the sauce variations, Child explains in broad terms how the sauce can be altered, allowing the practitioner to use her creativity as she becomes more confident and comfortable with the processes, techniques, and materials used for this sauce. The general instructions for altering the sauce that Child provides include omitting the “egg yolk liaison at the end,” substituting a cream sauce, and reducing the “cooking liquid until it is quite thick then [simmering] it slowly while thinning it out with spoonfuls of heavy cream until it is the consistency you wish it to be” (*Mastering* 261). If the practitioner is not at a place where she feels ready to explore these options because they may feel too advanced then Child offers three variations of the sauce that demonstrate how the prior flexible instructions can be applied. In each of the three sauce variations, the practitioner will recognize familiar process, techniques, and materials, in effect illustrating how the sauce variations simultaneously still remain connected to the system of the master recipe while also building upon and altering it.

The three sauce variations also acquaint the practitioner with some international cuisines (or at least gesture to them) while offering a wide range of flavors to change the master recipe. With these international or “ethnic” flavors, Child opens her reader’s eyes to cuisines outside of a typical American home cook’s experiences and points to some of the demographic diversity in the country. She suggests, then, that America can also benefit by integrating its diverse cuisines into one complex national cuisine, and she shows that these flavors actually operate complementary to rather than counter to familiar flavors.

*Fricassée de Poulet à l'Indienne*, or curry sauce, introduces a unique taste and fragrance to the sauce. Many readers of Child's text may not have even tried Indian food let alone cooked with any of its primary materials; however, this sauce allows the practitioner to become slightly familiar with one of that country's most prominent ingredients—curry powder. Though the process may not be traditionally Indian, the taste represents the type of flavors found in the nation's cuisine. Furthermore, the use of curry in a traditionally French recipe that has been translated for an American audience demonstrates the elasticity of cuisines and how easily materials cross borders among different national cuisines. The second sauce continues this expansion of the practitioner's culinary horizons as it introduces her to a possibly more familiar flavor: paprika. *Fricassée de Poulet au Paprika* follows the same process as the curry sauce but introduces paprika into the sauce rather than curry powder. Many American readers of Child's cookbook may be familiar with this spice as it became associated with some of the Eastern European nations from which a large number of American immigrants came.<sup>100</sup> However, its use in a French sauce represents perhaps a less recognizable use; therefore, the practitioner not only learns another variation of the sauce but also crosses additional culinary borders. And, these two divergent spices, representing vastly different national cuisines, show how flexible and elastic the sauce is, inviting the practitioner to use creativity in developing variations of it.

Finally, *Fricassée de Poulet à l'Estragon* returns the practitioner to a taste or flavor commonly found in French cuisine—tarragon. The practitioner has already become somewhat familiar with tarragon because she has thoroughly read the introductory pages, including the chapter about culinary definitions and the section that covers herbs. In the definition section, the

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<sup>100</sup> Though paprika is often linked to countries such as Hungary, the spice finds its roots in Africa and Asia, and through trade and migration (as is often the case with food and foodways), the spice became prominent in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria, for example. This further demonstrates the elasticity of national cuisines, in this case, via materials.

practitioner learns about *fines herbes*, a “mixture of fresh parsley, chives, tarragon and chervil,” which are staples in the French kitchen (*Mastering* 18). Thus, she knows that tarragon (specifically French tarragon rather than Russian tarragon) holds a prominent place in French cuisine. In this way, the practitioner expands her knowledge base about this nation’s cuisine much like she does with the other two sauce variations. With this third sauce, she can then engage creatively and integrate other significant French herbs to the sauce to create additional variations of the sauce, such as thyme or chervil. Also, the use of fresh (or dried) herbs, as this sauce variation necessitates, requires that the practitioner add them at a different point in the recipe than the curry or paprika sauce (the curry and paprika powders are added during the “preliminary turning of 5 minutes in butter”) (*Mastering* 261-62). Instead, she blends the tarragon into the recipe during the simmering process. With this distinction among the variations, the practitioner learns how to work with spice powders and fresh or dried herbs within this particular process. Thus, she can incorporate this knowledge into her culinary repertoire, echoing Child’s words from the introduction regarding divorcing oneself from recipes.

In addition to the sauce variations, Child provides two vastly different “riffs” on the master recipe, demonstrating how seriation works in this system—replicating processes, techniques, and some materials to create a new element. Both include wine pairing and accompanying dish suggestions in the introduction as well as a brief explanation regarding how the variation differs from the master recipe. With a general delineation that Child provides in each initial paragraph, the practitioner gains an understanding of how the variations alter the master recipe in terms of process, technique, and materials. For the first variation, *Fondue de Poulet à La Crème*, or chicken simmered with cream and onions, Child introduces it as a “rich and delectable dish” in which “the chicken is cooked in butter and onions, then simmered with

wine and heavy cream” (*Mastering* 262). With a quick glance at this variation, the practitioner will notice key changes to the materials required, most notably the addition of white pepper, curry powder, whipping cream, and an increased number of options for the simmering liquid, which now includes cognac, Calvados, Madeira, or port in addition to the original dry white wine and dry white vermouth. The alterations in the materials clearly indicate a shift in flavors as well as process. And, the removal of certain materials, such as the carrots, celery, and garniture, also signal this change in taste. With the addition of cream, for example, the practitioner will note that the cooking time requires a change: after pouring the hot cream, she must “bring [it] to the simmer, baste the chicken, and cover the casserole. Maintain at the barest simmer for 30 to 35 minutes” (*Mastering* 263). During this process, the practitioner learns how to alter the master recipe, how to work with cream for a sauce, and how to build upon the addition of materials, such as curry and cognac. Child demonstrates two key facets of culinary practice-as-art: how it operates always in-progress and its systemic nature.

The second variation that Child provides has actually become one of the most well-known dishes from *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*—*Coq au Vin*, or chicken in red wine with onions, mushrooms, and bacon. Child introduces this “popular dish” by noting that its name can change depending on the wine used (e.g. “*coq au Chambertin*, *coq au riesling*”), which immediately suggests additional variations on this recipe (*Mastering* 263). The variations on the variation represent both the in-progress nature of culinary practice-as-art and its function as a system—the variations on variations (or an example of how seriation works) can multiply and remain networked in an extensive system of elements. Here, Child *shows* her definition of “endless variations.”



Next, she clarifies the use of wine by noting, “either white or red wine” can be used, “but the red is more characteristic” (*Mastering* 263). She also adds that parsley potatoes most often accompany this dish in France, which, in addition to the preceding information, provides some history for the practitioner (*Mastering* 263). With the knowledge that this dish is popular within in French (a gesture to that history), the practitioner, or artist, quickly becomes familiar with processes, techniques, and materials that are also common in French culinary practice, and she can then expect to encounter them in other recipes throughout the text. And, with a quick glance at the entire recipe, the practitioner immediately notices notable changes in process, technique, and material from the master recipe.

To begin, the use of bacon signals one of the most significant variations, representing a triangulation of the three primary components of culinary practice-as-art: process, technique, and materials, and the practitioner will have learned about the general use of bacon in French cooking from reading the “Ingredients” chapter. In this introductory section, Child differentiates between the type of bacon used in French cooking and the type of bacon to which her American readers will have access: “The kind of bacon used in French recipes is fresh, unsalted, and unsmoked, *lard de poitrine frais*. As this is difficult to find in America, we have specified smoked bacon; its taste is usually fresher than that of salt pork” (*Mastering* 15). Not only does Child offer detailed information about the type of bacon used in French cooking, but she also contrasts it with the various types of bacon available to her American audience and why the suggestion is made here. Though the practitioner will note that the suggestion of smoked bacon seems to contradict the unsmoked quality of French bacon, the important commonality between the smoked bacon and *lard de poitrine frais* is the unsalted characteristic. The unsalted quality will allow the practitioner to control the salt in this dish rather than sacrificing control of salt to a

material such as salted bacon, a fact that she will discover through different processes that require bacon. Furthermore, to erase the smoked v. unsmoked distinction between the two types of bacon, Child provides instructions for a technique called blanching, which calls for the bacon to simmer in water “to remove its smoky taste” (*Mastering* 15).

While Child offers such information in this opening chapter, she also includes more detailed instruction in the opening process of the *Coq au Vin* recipe. Thus, the practitioner will enter this variation recipe with the general knowledge about using bacon but will engage in the process of blanching to start the dish. Further, she will learn how to cut bacon into “*lardons* (rectangles  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch across and 1 inch long),” which she can then add to her growing culinary repertoire (*Mastering* 264). In the initial step of this variation recipe, Child triangulates process and technique with one material—bacon. As such, she demonstrates, once more, the multiplicity and simultaneity of culinary practice-as-art: the technique of cutting to bacon into *lardons* combines with the process of blanching that will transform the flavor of the bacon, in effect establishing the initial layer of flavor for this recipe—a facet of culinary knowledge that the practitioner can apply to other dishes.

In addition to sautéing bacon, which is a new technique and process (sautéing the bacon in butter then removing it to use the rendered fat as a cooking liquid), Child introduces another key technique to the practitioner: flambé (*Mastering* 264). Notably, Child does not discuss this technique in the introductory chapters but lists it in the index. The flambé technique is most often associated with desserts, but Child uses cognac and flambéing in her *Coq au Vin* recipe much like she does for the crêpe recipes. This technique (pouring cognac into a hot pan, lighting it with a match, and shaking the pan back and forth until the flames subside) and process (infusing the chicken with the flavor of the cognac while quickly burning off the harsh alcohol residue)

can be rather intimidating to many practitioners, especially to those whom are new to culinary practice. Therefore, this technique (and any technique that requires using a open flame in the kitchen, such as kitchen torch, or an alternative technique for flambéing, such as the use of gas burners, the practitioner tilts the pan slightly to catch part of the flames thus causing the alcohol to ignite) must be practiced carefully, and with discipline, the practitioner can master this rather simple but somewhat frightening technique. With the *Coq au Vin* recipe, then, Child challenges her readers to further their own practice and reveals another process that significantly alters the taste and appearance of a dish, in effect reflecting the interdependent and flexible nature of this larger system.

In addition, Child familiarizes her readers with one of the many butter-based mixtures in French culinary practice. *Coq au Vin* uses a *beurre manié* (or kneaded butter) as a thickening agent that is added following the simmering process, which differs from the master recipe when the flour and butter are added at the beginning of the recipe. The instructions that Child offers appear simple in execution but do require some disciplined practice to know when the sauce is thick enough to continue to the next process: “Blend the butter and flour together into a smooth paste (*beurre manié*). Beat the paste into the hot liquid with a wire whip. Bring to the simmer, stirring, and simmer for a minute or two. The sauce should be thick enough to coat a spoon lightly” (*Mastering* 265). The practitioner will be familiar with the material here and, in some ways, the process, but the technique will be new—seriation and de-differentiation permit this change. Thus, Child demonstrates how certain processes can be achieved through different techniques; in this case, the practitioner has learned, from the master recipe, how to thicken a sauce by adding flour to the chicken that cooks in butter and now will learn how to create a more visible or direct thickening agent—*beurre manié*. The use of this technique demonstrates to the

practitioner how she can use the mixture of flour and butter to thicken sauces at different points within the recipe, a lesson that can be carried into dishes within and outside of French culinary practice (again showing the interdependent and elastic nature of culinary practice-as-art as a system).

Further, she will understand the material more directly than what is available in the master recipe, specifically the ratio of flour to butter to create this specific new material. And, because of the paste's direct addition to the liquid, the practitioner can observe how the liquid thickens and can assess the amount of time necessary for this process. In this short step, Child networks process, technique, and material to demonstrate how culinary practice-as-art operates as a system, how the practitioner can build upon processes within the variation recipe that are introduced in the master recipe, and how certain culinary processes can be achieved via multiple techniques.

Finally, Child introduces different materials into the *Coq au Vin* recipe that do not appear in the master recipe, once again showing how seemingly small adjustments to materials, in this case, can drastically alter a dish's flavor, texture, and appearance—or, how a change in the elements of a system shifts the system entirely. In addition to the cognac, Child changes the white chicken stock to brown chicken stock (or brown stock, or canned beef bouillon), which will alter the appearance of the dish, deepening the red color provided by the “young, full-bodied red wine,” and give the dish a more full or robust layer of flavor (or a more “meaty” flavor that gives depth to the wine) (*Mastering* 264). With this subtle change, Child shows how different stocks, which are common ingredients in many cuisines, alter the appearance and flavor of a dish; with this knowledge, the practitioner can evaluate how she can use various stocks in a range of dishes. The versatility of stocks shows the practitioner another dimension to Child's

idea of “endless variations” and invites her to be creative with this common material in culinary practice.

*Coq au Vin* includes the addition of tomato paste and garlic, two materials that many of Child’s American readers might not associate with French cooking but with Italian cuisine instead. Like the brown chicken stock, the tomato paste alters the appearance of the dish, brightening the deep red hues of the wine, and the flavor by adding more acidity and tartness or tanginess. Garlic contributes a warm, almost spicy flavor that complements the tartness of the tomato paste, the fruitiness of the wine, and the meatiness of the brown chicken stock. With these changes, the practitioner begins to learn how two ostensibly minor alterations in materials dramatically shift the appearance and taste of dish, making it appear incongruent to the master recipe. Moreover, with these two ingredients, the practitioner learns how their characteristics contribute to a dish, which can provide her with an opportunity to be creative with these materials in future dishes. The potential for this creativity demonstrates the in-progress nature of culinary practice-as-art; the use of garlic, for example, can create a network of possibilities for its use in other dishes—one use might inspire another then another and so on. And, once the practitioner has divorced herself from recipes, the creative possibilities even with one material such as garlic become seemingly endless.

These two recipe variations—*Fondue de Poulet à La Crème* and *Coq au Vin*—demonstrate Child’s notion of “endless variations” as she gestures to many others through the sets of processes, techniques, and materials in these two rather different recipes and how creativity works in culinary practice-as-art. She shows how processes and techniques can be carried through multiple recipes, and while the practitioner repeats some processes and techniques, they do not become repetitive and monotonous, which characterizes the type of

cooking proffered by *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. Child avoids repetition and monotony (seriation is defined by “innovation” rather than monotony) through the use of different materials and using both at different moments in recipes or using different techniques to create the same process. Thus, Child does not limit “variation” to the dish or recipe but expands it to include processes, techniques, and materials broadly as well as taste and even history. She integrates creativity and insists upon rigorous discipline in order to explore these variations. By pulling together these various definitions of “variation,” Child privileges the practice over product once more, and by doing so, she blends in the more elusive element of culinary practice-as-art: the love of cooking for its own sake.

The recipe for and variations of *Fricassée de Poulet à L'Ancienne* serve as an effective example of how culinary practice-as-art functions as a system. Child shows how this culinary practice operates as a network of sets of processes, techniques, and materials while integrating elements of creativity, taste, history, variation, and discipline. Whereas *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* and cooking privilege a linear and expedited (in service of the family) structure along with the dish-on-the-table as the objective, Child activates culinary practice-as-art that privileges creativity, the interdependence of processes, techniques, and materials, and the love of cooking for its own sake. At the same time, she illustrates how culinary practice-as-art works as a system: always already in-progress, interdependent, multiple, and hybrid. In this way, Child shows how the *system* of culinary practice-as-art significantly shapes how this culinary practice is, in fact, art.

To reach the place where she could construct this culinary practice-as-art system, Child required a similar culinary transformation as her friend Fisher, and her journey began with her first meal in France. It continued as she trekked through Parisian markets, dined in local cafés, and immersed herself in French culinary practice through her own trial-and-error and an

education at the famous Le Cordon Bleu—all of which she chronicles in *My Life in France*. Child's memoir provides the context for her pioneering cookbook and its sequel as well as her popular television program, *The French Chef*. In *My Life in France*, Child maps her culinary awakening and leads her readers directly to the opening pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* where she sets them upon a new journey—culinary practice-as-art.

### **Julia in Paris**

*My Life in France* reached mainstream audiences, beyond culinary memoir readers and “Julia Child geeks,” first through blogger Julie Powell who tackled the task of making every dish in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and blogged about her experiences with each dish beginning in 2004.<sup>101</sup> The blog evolved into a published text that was optioned for the film *Julie and Julia* (2009), which brought Child to a new generation and drew attention to her life in Paris. This mainstream popularity, however, cannot diminish the significance that *My Life in France* has always had for Child admirers, culinary historians and scholars, “foodies,” and culinary professionals. Though a recent publication, the ideas for this memoir brewed in Child since 1969; she did not decide to publish it until late in life in 2004 just before her death (Child *Life* ix). Friend Alex Prud'homme assisted her with its publication, and Child finally had the opportunity to concentrate her experiences of her time in France during the 1950s to show how *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* originated.

Child's life in Paris began very much like Fisher's—innocent eyes absorbing every detail and a palate shocked into new understanding by the beauty and *art* of French cuisine. Of course, her road to France was a much different one than Fisher's. Child and her husband Paul arrived in Le Havre on November 3, 1948, but her love of travel did not begin here. She and Paul had both

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<sup>101</sup> Longtime friend Sara Moulton notes that Child actually “hated” Powell's blog, and “she did not want people making money off her name. She was very pure about that. She just didn't believe in that kind of commercialism” (Keeler).

worked for the U.S. government during World War II, and recently, the American public discovered that both were spies.<sup>102</sup> In *My Life in France*, Child reveals that she and Paul worked for the Office of Strategic Services, “the precursor to the CIA” (12-13). However, she never discusses her tasks or assignments. She met Paul while stationed in Ceylon in 1944, where she was “head of the Registry, where, among other things [she] processed agents’ reports from the field and other top-secret papers” (*Life* 13). Later, the OSS transferred the couple to Kunming, China. While working in clandestine services, Child grew fond of “delicious Chinese food,” but because she was working, she did not “count [their] wartime in Asia as real living-time abroad” (*Life* 13). Two years after their marriage in 1946, they sailed to Europe. After being at sea for a week, Child set foot in Europe for the first time, “not knowing what to expect” (*Life* 11). What she found, though, would alter her life in the most profound of ways and irrevocably shape American culinary culture.

Upon her arrival in France, she found that she needed to fight the preconceived notions about France and its people that were planted in her young head by her conservative father.<sup>103</sup> For Child, “the sight of France in [her] porthole was like a giant question mark,” a compelling and somewhat frightening vision (*Life* 14). The train trip through the Norman countryside seemed “quintessentially French, in an indefinable way” to Child, which, combined with the “giant question mark,” allowed her to be open to the newness of France, much like Fisher (*Life* 15). The innocence, curiosity, and general wonder provided Child with the disposition to be seduced by France, and even during that initial train journey, she observes “quite unexpectedly

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<sup>102</sup> See Jennet Conant’s *A Covert Affair: Julia Child and Paul Child in the OSS* (2011).

<sup>103</sup> Even though “Big John” McWilliams had never been to Europe, he believed the French to be “dirty” and “dark” (Child *Life* 13). As a result of his influence and the narrow representation of the French in the American media, Child “suspected that France was a nation of icky-picky people where the women were all dainty, exquisitely coiffed, nasty little creatures, the men all Aldophe Menjou-like dandies who twirled their mustaches, pinched girls, and schemed against American rubes” (*Life* 13-14).



[that] something about the earthy-smoky smells, the curve of the landscape, and the bright greenness of the cabbage fields” were already working their magic on her (*Life* 15). From this moment, their courtship would be passionate, lingering, and all-encompassing—mind, body, and soul; Julia Child would be France’s.

The “Seduction of Julia Child” did not begin in Paris but in Rouen, which lies northwest of the capitol. At Restaurant La Cou ronne, Child had “the most exciting meal of [her] life,” and one that would indoctrinate her into the world of French culinary tradition (*Life* 19). Though, as Joan Reardon notes, the particular details of the meal at Restaurant La Cou ronne “[vary] from time to time,” Child recalls vividly in *My Life in France* that the dining experience was revolutionary (*Celebrating* 14). Immediately, Child was struck by how she and the other foreign guests were treated: “Nobody rolled their eyes at us or stuck their nose in the air” (*Life* 17). She could instantly see that her father’s prejudices—and her own—were rather misguided. Child described the smells that greeted them as “heavenly,” and she quickly learned about French dining practices from two businessmen seated next to her (*Life* 17). The pair ordered wine at lunch, which astonished Child, but Paul, who had visited France previously, explained that, in this country, “good cooking was regarded as a combination of national sport and high art, and wine was always served with lunch and dinner” (*Life* 17). Child certainly took the characterization of French culinary practice as “high art” to heart because she soon trained her eyes, nose, and palate to that of an art connoisseur. However, she began, at this meal, as a novice—an art neophyte. At Restaurant La Cou ronne, Child started to train her senses to shift from undefined and underdeveloped to refined and acute.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> In this way, Child recalls her friend Fisher’s attention to the sensory experiences of French cuisine. In *Map of Another Town*, Fisher had already greatly honed her culinary senses, while Child reveals how the process occurs, thus giving insight into how Fisher also engages in the process.

Child “sort of recognized [the] intermixing aromas” in the restaurant’s dining room, but she could not name them (*Life* 17). With the smell of “something oniony,” Child commenced her French culinary education (*Life* 17). Though she did not know what a shallot was, she soon learned and also gained knowledge of a traditional preparation of this vegetable: sautéed in butter (*Life* 17). While a seemingly simple technique in the grand scheme of French culinary practice, Child would later place it into context—as an essential method. She identified the two subsequent smells—“a warm and winy fragrance” and “something astringent”—with the benefit of her knowledge at the time that she is writing in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (*Life* 17). In 1948, a young and gastronomically naïve Child perhaps could not have known that these smells were a “delicious sauce being reduced on the stove” and “the salad being tossed in a big ceramic bowl with lemon, wine vinegar, olive oil, and a few shakes of salt and pepper” (*Life* 17-18). But, with her developed culinary knowledge over the years, she returns to this moment and deconstructs these smells effectively. Further, Child keenly highlights a few significant French materials—a wine-based sauce, lemon, wine vinegar, and olive oil. By foregrounding these items, she shows that, even in the beginning, she was conscious of some of the significant elements of French culinary practice and that these seduced her, much like she would later hope that they would seduce the readers of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Further, Child greatly valued the role of teacher, which becomes even more evident during her later career, and evidence exists of her penchant towards education even in the early pages of *My Life in France*, especially when recalling that first meal in Rouen. We also see how she learned about the various dishes that she enjoyed—Paul shared his knowledge and experiences with her. She simultaneously reminisces and instructs when discussing that first French meal. After the smells washed over her, Child focuses on the “half-dozen oysters on the

half-shell” that began the famous meal (*Life* 18). She compares them to the Washington and Massachusetts oysters that she had and thought the American oysters were “bland,” and she “never much cared” for them (*Life* 18). Her ability to immediately notice the difference between the oysters demonstrates Child’s honed attention to the sensual experience of food, even before she gained any formal training.

She follows this revelation about oysters (a moment that her friend Fisher would almost certainly recognize and appreciate) with a moment of instruction—one that she experienced and then shared: the oysters were served with “rounds of *pain de seigle*, a pale rye bread, with a spread of unsalted butter” (*Life* 18). She adds, “The French have ‘crus’ of butter, special regions that produce individually flavored butters” (*Life* 18). For Child, most of the future audience of her cookbook and television programs in the U.S. would not know such information; however, by providing examples (*Beurre de Charentes* and *beurre d’Isigny*), she shows why such knowledge is important in the kitchen and how it can be used (*Life* 18). Child echoes attention to butter here in the opening instructional pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, demonstrating how she translated her own experiences into education for her readers. She also gestures to the artisanal philosophy that is central to French culinary practice and the significance of local materials to this nation’s cuisine. Throughout *My Life in France*, Child consistently discusses these local foods, in effect showing the privileged position these materials and the artists have in French culinary culture, and with each example, she adds a layer to her emerging culinary practice-as-art philosophy.

For the main course, Child dined on the “*sole meunière*,” despite Rouen being famous for its duck dishes (*Life* 18). Child recalls, “It arrived whole: a large flat Dover that was perfectly browned in a sputtering butter sauce with a sprinkling of chopped parsley on top” (*Life* 18). The

preparation and presentation of the entrée served as another educational moment for Child; she began to see the veil on French cuisine, once a mystery, pulled back to reveal a variety of culinary processes, techniques, tastes, and sensual experiences. Her focus on the plating during this initial meal informs her components of culinary practice-as-art as evidenced in the attention to this element in the *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* recipes. While many readers of both the memoir and culinary text might perceive plating as the only aspect that is artistic because it is visual, Child challenges this by blending the visual with other sensory experiences such as smell. She shows how culinary practice-as-art operates interdependently and multifariously.

Also, one can nearly picture Child cataloging each individual smell and visual detail of the *sole meunière* for reference later. She lingers on the taste and texture of the “morsel of perfection” (*Life* 18). While meditating on these small but significant details, Child compares the dish with others that she tasted while growing up and living in the United States; she mentions broiled mackerel, poached salmon, and pan-fried trout (*Life* 18-19). But, Child asserts, at La Couronne, the fish and dining experience were of a “higher order than any [she’d] ever had before” (*Life* 19).<sup>105</sup> This comparison and others like it inspired Child to learn about the traditional methods of fish preparation in French cuisine and turn this knowledge over to American home cooks, who can move beyond pan-fried trout and expand their culinary practice and cuisine, in effect playing with the system’s elastic boundaries.

In addition to the entrée, Child and Paul ordered a *salade verte*, and while she enjoyed the “lightly acidic vinaigrette,” the most significant aspect of this course was the bread, for Child sampled her “first real baguette” (*Life* 19). One cannot overlook this seemingly innocuous fact because Child fell in love with the baguette and eventually insisted on learning the intricate

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<sup>105</sup> Child also begins to gesture to Brillat-Savarin’s philosophy of the pleasures of the table, specifically the notion that “at the end of a well-savored meal both soul and body enjoy an especial well-being” (183). She continues to do so with more specificity as her knowledge of French culinary practice and cuisine grows.

baking process involved in producing an acceptable French baguette. Her description of the bread trumps her discussion of the wine and the salad, which further suggests its importance: it had a “crisp brown crust giving way to a slightly chewy, rather loosely textured pale-yellow interior, with a faint reminder of wheat and yeast in odor and taste” (*Life* 19). Child would come to learn the “hows” and “whys” of the French baguette with the intention of mastering the art of this French bread and sharing the knowledge with an American audience. But, at this moment, we witness how a simple loaf of bread hypnotized Julia Child.<sup>106</sup>

To conclude this most memorable meal, Child and her husband ordered *fromage blanc* and dark *café filter*; the latter seemed to fascinate Child (*Life* 19). Even the process of coffee making at La Couïronne intrigued her; thus, one can perhaps extrapolate that she filed this information away for future educational purposes, specifically focusing on the notion of process rather than simply the cup of coffee that begins each day. Finally, leaving the restaurant, Child recalls that she and Paul “floated out the door into the brilliant sunshine and cool air” (*Life* 19). The sense of bliss that Child conveys seems to be an understatement given that her first lunch in France had been “absolute perfection” and “the most exciting meal of her life” (*Life* 19). With “bliss,” she also points to the pleasures of the table that she experiences throughout this meal. Moreover, her meal at La Couïronne would become “the standard by which [she] would now measure every eatery” (*Life* 22).

Like her philosopher counterpart Fisher, Child’s culinary education began almost instantly upon her arrival in France. This immediacy seems to have surprised her and drastically shifted how she thought about cuisine and culinary practice. A fundamental change occurred during the span of only a meal that forced Child to hit her culinary reset button, to return to food

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<sup>106</sup> Child’s interest in the baguette begins as a flirtation but develops into a passion, much like the artists who created each delicately made loaf. She is not simply focused on the taste of this French staple but on the process, on the art.

and culinary practice *cum tabula rasa*. Child chose somewhat of a different path than Fisher to reach a place where she would construct a culinary practice, which draws on French tradition, and adapt it for an American audience, activating it as art. And, this awakened her insatiable appetite to learn all that she could about the new love of her life—French cuisine.

Child echoed Fisher’s journey in two key ways: focusing on dining establishments and engaging in culinary practice in a small French kitchen. Child immersed herself in cafés, bistros, restaurants, and Parisian culture and began cooking in her tiny Paris apartment kitchen, becoming increasingly familiar and curious about French culinary practice. (Child’s narration of this portion of her early Parisian experience reads most like a standard memoir, with strict chronological accounts that move almost predictably from one to the next.) Before Child tried to tackle French meals on her own, she explored local eateries, noting immediately how “very different” Parisian restaurants were from their American counterparts (*Life* 25). These differences, such as “cats on the chairs, poodles under the tables or poking out of women’s bags, and chirping birds in the corner” at a bistro, allowed Child to understand that dining and everyday life were intimately intertwined (*Life* 25). She shares that she and Paul “made a point of trying every kind of cuisine, from fancy to hole-in-the-wall” (*Life* 25). The more experience that Child garnered through this gastronomical exploration, the more she discovered how inextricably connected French culture and cuisine are and how French everyday life is deeply informed by food. This discovery pushed Child to become more submerged in Parisian life, greatly transformed her way of viewing the world around her, and, most significantly, how she perceived her own relationship to food. Further, the interdependent nature between culture and food that Child witnessed deeply shaped the initial layers of *Mastering the Art of French*

*Cooking*, as Child believed that, by mimicking the French, American home cooks and the cuisine itself could achieve a comparable level of complexity and sophistication.

Child frequented Michaud, a small restaurant catering mostly to locals and run by a frugal woman “known simply as Madame” (*Life* 28). She observed Madame with a businessperson’s eye, learning how she managed her kitchen and staff. She focused on Madame’s efficiency and “intimate and subtle charm,” which perhaps helped Child to understand how one’s demeanor should be when running a successful dining establishment (*Life* 28). At the same time, Madame offered a model of a successful woman who owned and operated a restaurant, a fact that would prove invaluable as Child pursued her own gastronomical education and career in a male-dominated field. Moreover, through such study, Child also witnessed how the systems of gender, economics, and labor operated interdependently within French culture. She watched a woman manage a food-centered business with efficiency—both in terms of economics and service—and care, illustrating how to balance the two to create an establishment that would attract repeat customers and even regulars. Madame did not simply “glad hand” the customers. Instead, Child notes, “You’d always shake her hand three times: upon entering, when she dropped by your table in the midst of your meal, and at the door as you left” (*Life* 28). This intimate attention creates a dining *experience*—pleasures at the table—rather than simply a meal at a indistinguishable restaurant. This lesson proved invaluable for Child as she developed her culinary philosophy and practice: dining was not solely about the food on the plate but about the complex and comprehensive experience of culinary practice and cuisine.

Madame also expedited orders with efficiency and expertise: “In one motion, she’d glance at the ticket, dive into a little icebox, and emerge with the carefully apportioned makings of your meal—meat, fish, or eggs—put it on a plate, and send it into the kitchen to be cooked”

(*Life* 28). Child observed a woman who knew every aspect of her business—someone who wanted her hands in each facet of the meal—and, most significantly, took pride in the cuisine and her customers’ dining experience. With Madame, Child witnessed that culinary practice was not solely labor focused to be in the service of a family or a plan to earn an income but an art, born of love and a passion for cuisine with an emphasis beyond the dish on the table.

Another dining establishment that influenced how Child would view French cuisine was La Truite, which was owned by the cousins of the La Couëronne proprietors (*Life* 48). Two dishes, prepared by chef Marcel Dorin, left a great impression on Child: roast chicken and *sole à la normande*. She seems drawn to the roast chicken because of the preparation method, a lesson that she would file away. “Suspended on a string, the bird twirled in front of a glowing electric grill,” Child recalls, and “every few minutes, a waiter would give it a spin and baste it with the juices that dripped down into a pan filled with roasting potatoes and mushrooms” (*Life* 48). While roasting is not solely a French method, Child’s observation of this particular version of this technique informed her perception of the French people’s creative relationship to food. The innovation combined with a flavorful simplicity intrigued Child, and her description of the technique hints at the in-progress nature of her own culinary practice-as-art as well as the elasticity among multiple elements in this system: basting occurs frequently and the juices that have dripped not only function as the material for basting but also work to flavor and cook the vegetables below the chicken.<sup>107</sup> She later emphasizes such multiplicity and in-progress characteristics in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

The *sole à la normande*, however, earned Child’s admiration for its flavor and texture. In fact, she describes the dish as “voluptuous,” and she “had never imagined that fish could be

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<sup>107</sup> In fact, Child becomes deeply enamored with this simple yet significant French dish; she explains that, in “one taste,” she “realized that [she] had long ago forgotten what *real* chicken tasted like!” (*Life* 48).



taken so seriously” (*Life* 48). In addition to “voluptuous,” Child describes this dish as “a poem of poached and flavored sole fillets surrounded by oysters and mussels, and napped with a wonder-sauce of wine, cream, and butter, and topped with fluted mushrooms” (*Life* 48). In this one dish, she encountered many of the flavors, ingredients, and practices that have defined French cuisine, from the poaching of fish to a wine, cream, and butter sauce, and she views these elements like perfectly chosen diction flowing together seamlessly in a poem. Experiencing some of these cornerstone elements of French cuisine allowed Child to see how ingredients marry to complement each other and the other items on the plate, like sole fillets. Moreover, she witnessed firsthand how complementary flavors actually enhance one another and how those are created in this particular cuisine—Child saw the system of culinary practice-as-art.

The latter revelation proves abundantly significant because Child’s awareness of how seriously the French value their cuisine greatly informed her own approach to food and allowed her to understand the need for “rigorous discipline” regarding practice and tradition later in her educational journey (*Life* 68). Yet, she also saw that, even with the earnestness, French cuisine was art, and the chefs were artists. Her description of the *sole à la normande* as a “poem” is more than a flourish of language; instead, it demonstrates her comprehension of how culinary practice can be perceived as art. This dish clearly emphasized process, technique, and material: the way that the fish was prepared, the artist’s skill used in this preparation, and the quality of the fish itself. Further, Child hints at other facets of how culinary practice can be viewed as art: the elements of taste, history, and creativity are also apparent here, specifically when she describes the multiple elements of the “poem.” The various materials and processes used to cook them created a blend of flavors that produced a unique taste, and the history of French culinary practice also emerges here, particularly with the sauce and use of local ingredients such as

oysters, mussels, and mushrooms—the entire dish was infused with the chef’s (or artist’s) creativity. With this singular dish, Child began to see how a multitude of elements network into a system to create a type of culinary practice that spoke to her and one that she desired to explore further.

Le Grand Véfour, a famous and historic Parisian restaurant, serves as one principal component that shapes Child’s gastronomical journey. The renowned establishment opened its doors in 1750, and Child and Paul stumbled upon it one day while touring Palais Royal park (*Life* 56). Child recalls being quite impressed with the service and the lingering presence of regular patrons that included Colette, who had her own special seat (*Life* 57). She was also struck by the food, which, of course, existed at the forefront of her recollection. Though initially intimidated by the maître d’hôtel and sommelier, Child warmed to them and enjoyed a “nearly perfect luncheon” (*Life* 56). Their leisurely two-hour lunch included “little shells filled with sea scallops and mushrooms robed in a classically beautiful winery cream sauce. Then [they] had a wonderful duck and cheeses, and a rich dessert, followed by coffee” (*Life* 56). Similar to her meal at La Couronne, Child selected dishes that featured essential materials in French cuisine—seafood, mushrooms, wine sauce, duck, and cheese. By doing so and with attention to how the scallops and mushrooms were plated, she reveals how cognizant she was of this significance of these ingredients even in the early stages of her education. In this way, Child mirrors her friend Fisher’s sensory experiences in Aix; both women demonstrate the *process* of developing one’s culinary consciousness.

In addition to highlighting process, technique, and material, Child also foregrounds the manner in which they dined. Two hours lingering over and savoring a meal did not stem solely from the wonderful dishes eaten but also from the place in which she dined (in this case a

historic Parisian restaurant with excellent service) and the people with whom she dined. Child focuses on the pleasures of the table once again, particularly the notion that they “are a reflective sensation which is born from the various circumstances of place, time, things, and people who make up the surroundings of the meal” (Brillat-Savarin 182). She learned that these were essential to a complete and fulfilling culinary practice and to a complex and multifaceted national cuisine. This learning process was necessary for her to take the next step—the cooking of such dishes.

While Child continued to explore the cafés, bistros, and restaurants in Paris, she also decided to pursue the next tier of her gastronomical education—cooking. She initiated this process by configuring the kitchen at her “Roo de Loo” apartment. Child had to adjust to more rustic living than she experienced in the United States, but she seemed to have embraced this potentially challenging living arrangement. Her new “kitchen was large and airy with an expanse of windows along one side, and an immense stove—it seemed ten feet long” (*Life* 33). This “monster” contained a “little two-burner gas contraption with a one-foot square oven, which was barely usable to heat plates or make toast” (*Life* 33). These “primitive” conditions, which included no hot water in the kitchen sink, reminded Child of a family cabin in Maine, and as such, she decided to reconfigure her kitchen to be less rustic, given that she was, after all, “living in the cultural center of the world” (*Life* 34). Using her ingenuity, Child designed a “makeshift hot-water system [...], a dishwashing station, and covered garbage cans” (*Life* 34). She also needed to organize the small kitchen to make efficient use of the limited available storage space; Child hung utensils and pans from every possible place—a strip of hooks above the small stove for utensils and a metal rod along the front of the main counter where a row of frying and sauté pans rested.

By creating a workspace—or a studio—that was designed for efficiency and accessibility, Child took the first step in her learning process and echoed Fisher’s own experiences with reconfiguring a small French kitchen while recognizing her ability to adapt. This organization complemented the particular space of the kitchen and Child’s culinary practice, or process; she required immediate access to certain tools on a regular basis and located them near the most appropriate appliances or surfaces. This personalized space reflected her creativity—the adaptation of culinary practice that embodied Child’s individual “beautiful rhythm” in the kitchen. Moreover, her innovation in this space would be needed later when she returned to the United States and moved to her home in Cambridge; in the small kitchen there, she needed to creatively use the space available to her, which certainly recalls some of the touches of this Parisian apartment.<sup>108</sup>

Child took pride in designing her kitchen space at the Roo de Loo; the feeling of imposed labor, suffocation, or a lack of creativity remained absent even before she prepared one meal. She experienced how economics and labor intersect here and how they did not limit her. Even on a budget and within a small space, Child created a livable and functional space, and this was not labor or work for her but the development of a passion and love for cuisine. Another way that Child experienced the connection between labor and economics was the immersion in the Parisian markets; she admits that she “rather enjoyed shopping and housekeeping” (*Life* 36). By visiting the markets, she could advance her knowledge about how culinary practice, labor and economic systems, and everyday life network. Marketing served as another step in her

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<sup>108</sup> She hung utensils and pans from the ceiling and pegboard walls in this kitchen much like she did in her Parisian apartment. The American History Museum in Washington, D.C. now possesses this Cambridge kitchen, which was removed from its original home and rebuilt in the museum space. The multiple canisters of whisks and wooden spoons near the stove, for example, show how Child strategically located her most widely used tools near the places where she engaged in her creativity most often. The methods that she learned in Paris greatly informed how she arranged her Cambridge kitchen to make it the most efficient and complementary to her creativity and practice.

educational process, and once she decided to learn the language, she embarked upon exploring the markets while putting her new language skills to use. The addition of the language to her developing culinary practice demonstrates the complexity of this system, and Child believed that knowing French would allow her greater and more intimate access to the country's culinary practice and cuisine.

Child became a regular at her neighborhood marketplace and soon grew friendly with Marie des Quatre Saisons, “a darling old creature, round and vigorous, with a crease lined face and expressive, twinkling eyes” (*Life* 43). Child frequented her cart because Marie carried the “freshest produce of each season,” but perhaps more significantly, Marie “took great pleasure in instructing [Child] about which vegetables were best to eat and when; and how to prepare them correctly” (*Life* 43-44). Child's teacher and classroom at the local market proved invaluable as she explored seasonal dishes featuring this produce. She did not simply learn how to identify produce at its time of ripeness; rather, she gained vital skills (or processes) necessary for the multifarious nature of culinary practice-as-art—each item of produce, its season, and most common processes used for each. Child began to understand the interdependent and complex nature of culinary practice-as-art (as a system), not as a diner as she had earlier but as an artist. The hands-on, sensory experience in that market added another layer to her culinary knowledge and shifted her point of view from customer to creator/artist. This information also opened another avenue of creativity and understanding for Child as she continued to learn the art of French culinary practice.

Child desired to acquire knowledge about another critical material of French culinary practice—cheese. At her favorite *cr  merie*, Child learned how the French valued their local cheeses as shown by the care taken and the knowledge about the cheese that “Madame la

Proprietress” possessed (*Life* 44). Though only a brief mention in *My Life in France*, Child’s education at the *cr  merie* allowed her to witness how a honed technique or skill, like judging the ripeness of a cheese, could potentially service her culinary practice. Madame asked her customers specific questions about when the cheese would be served (lunch, dinner, or in a few days, for example) and then followed her questions by searching for the right cheese: “[S]he’d open several boxes, press each cheese intently with her thumbs, take a sniff and—voila!—she’d hand you the right one” (*Life* 44). Child routinely watched Madame engage in this process, which gave her insight into how such a specific technique was sharpened, how prized it was in culinary practice, and how French cuisine and culinary practice valued this particular material.

Moreover, she observed the artistry of Madame’s process as well as her passion for her food. Through her experiences at the *cr  merie* and at the market, Child witnessed the artisanal philosophy that significantly informed French culinary practice, which she eventually applied to her own practice and afforded her a greater understanding of and appreciation for French culinary practice. The pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place for Child as she moved through the different facets of French culinary practice, like the role of cheese in the cuisine.

### **Le Cordon Bleu**

In 1949, Julia Child’s relationship to French cuisine and culture changed dramatically. For her 37<sup>th</sup> birthday, her husband Paul gave her *Larousse Gastronomique*, one of the premier culinary texts at the time. She “devoured its pages” fast and furiously, absorbing more formalized knowledge of the cuisine that she had grown to love (*Life* 59). Child confesses that she knew that “French food was it for [her],” and Paul’s gift not only confirmed this but also allowed her to expand her knowledge base (*Life* 59). In addition to fueling her interest, Child familiarized herself with how culinary authorities wrote about French cuisine and presented it in

a formal fashion. While *Larousse Gastronomique* adheres to an encyclopedic form, the specificity of the entries certainly inspired Child as we see comparable detail later in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. In certain ways, she mimics the encyclopedia entry form in her text when she provides delineated information about techniques and materials. Further, *Larousse Gastronomique* signaled the beginning of Child's formal culinary education and continued to stoke the fire of her passion for French cuisine.

As she explored French culinary practice with more scrutiny by studying *Larousse Gastronomique*, Child shared her growing love of this cuisine with friends, but they did not understand her "passion," she confesses; they failed to "understand how [she] could possibly enjoy doing all the shopping and cooking and serving by [herself]" (*Life* 59). Their perspective reflected cooking as labor—as work that was part of a monotonous routine. But, Child's set of experiences in France thus far in her journey demonstrated how culinary practice did not need to be burdened by the weight of labor that was rooted in problematic prescriptions of gender roles. Instead, she demonstrated how she began to shift how culinary practice operated—from a place of creativity and passion rather than labor in the service of others.

As she delved deeper into *Larousse Gastronomique*, Child realized that as much as the important text offered her in way of an education, she desired more. Though "[salivating] over recipes in the *Larousse Gastronomique*" and dining at the city's restaurants proved invaluable and satisfying, she "wanted to roll up [her] sleeves and dive into French cuisine" (*Life* 59). With this desire and a healthy curiosity, she attended a demonstration at L'Ecole du Cordon Bleu (known colloquially as Le Cordon Bleu), and following that glimpse into the famous Parisian institution, Child "was hooked" (*Life* 60).

Her experiences at Le Cordon Bleu assume one of the longer chapters in *My Life in France*, and historians such as Laura Shapiro and Joan Reardon have well-documented Child's time at the school. Two key factors emerged from Child's time at Le Cordon Bleu that significantly informed her culinary practice-as-art, as articulated in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*: the insight that she received regarding women and the culinary profession and—and perhaps more significantly—the professional, structured, and disciplined training in French cuisine that she experienced. Arguably, Child's immersion into another “male-dominated” environment furthered her awareness of how gender issues shaped culinary practice, particularly in her native country (*Life* 63). Also, the pedagogical strategies that she witnessed during her formal culinary training, along with the materials and practices, shaped how she constructed *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*—with a carefully developed system of culinary practice aimed at instructing the American home cook and an emphasis of art over labor and creativity over routine.

In October 1949, Child enrolled in a six-week intensive course at Le Cordon Bleu; however, on her first day, she discovered that she “signed up for a yearlong Année Scolaire instead of a six-week intensive course” (*Life* 61). Though the course was expensive and she and Paul certainly lived on a budget, the couple agreed that this “serious commitment” was “essential to [Child's] well-being” (*Life* 61). Child began the course with high expectations, and she along with two other young women, one English and one French, embarked on this culinary journey. However, Child soon discovered that this particular course did not meet her expectations of a French culinary education. After two days of “this ‘housewife’ course,” Child knew that it was not for her; it was too “elementary” (*Life* 61). Child's use of “housewife” in connection with “elementary” reflects the American system of gender operating at the time (similar to how



Friedan saw housewives). “Housewives” cooked in service of others, and their type of cooking was not culinary practice—it was linear, simplistic, and lacked the complexity and multi-dimensionality that Child sought. For her—and for many American women—“housewife,” when viewed through a culinary lens, was a derogatory term, one that suggested a lack of creativity and a general lack of skill.

When discussing this subject briefly in this portion of *My Life of France*, she mixes embarrassment as an American, near disdain for the lack of skill of the two women, and determination to compromise a unique tone. Throughout her discussion of Le Cordon Bleu, Child’s tone meanders among all three of these, which reveals the complexity of the experience at the school. Child also demonstrates an awareness of this association here as she gestures to a critique of the gender system. But, she also takes the delineation of the culinary profession along gender lines to task, in effect critiquing this system through her culinary practice-as-art, most notably in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and on *The French Chef*.

In order to find a course that was not “elementary,” Child took the initiative and met with the school’s owner, Madame Élizabeth Brassart, who quickly shared her feelings about Americans with Child: “They can’t cook!” she exclaimed, much to Child’s surprise (*Life* 62). Madame Brassart articulated a commonly held belief by many French culinary professionals and amateurs alike (one that Fisher encountered repeatedly). Despite Madame Brassart’s assertions to the contrary, Child demonstrated her growing level of culinary knowledge, and the two women discussed the appropriate path for the young American: haute cuisine or “*moyenne cuisine* (middle-brow cooking)” (*Life* 62). Madame Brassart affirmed that Child was “not advanced enough” for the haute cuisine course (“a six-week course for experts”) but that she was “suitable for the yearlong ‘professional restaurateurs’ course,” which had just begun (*Life* 62). This course

initiated Child into not only the world of professional French culinary practice but, through the course's instructor Chef Max Bugnard, also showed her the positive influence and efficacy of a skilled teacher, a factor that guided how she wrote *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Her first days in this course worked in stark contrast to the “housewives” class that she had mistakenly enrolled in earlier. Instead of a classroom solely comprised of women, “eleven former GIs” shared the classroom kitchen with Child, and upon entering the class, these men “made [her] feel as if [she] had invaded their boys’ club” (*Life* 63). Child notes, however, that given her war experience among mostly men that such an attitude did not faze her in the least (*Life* 63). Her observation here proves telling—her use of “boys’ club” in particular because she articulates the dichotomy of professional and amateur (or home cook in this case). Even though French home cooking in the past had been the purview of women, men dominated the professional milieu.<sup>109</sup> The reminder of this distinction at the beginning of the course served Child well as she compiled information for her iconic cookbook. Her audience would not be professional chefs (read: mostly men); instead, she aimed her instruction at the home cook—not the boys’ club but the individual woman in her American kitchen who struggled with culinary practice and wanted to find the artistry in cuisine and process.

In her classroom, Child notes that most of the GIs served as army cooks and that “they seemed serious about learning to cook, but in a trade-school way;” she adds that despite their “entrepreneurial ideas,” “there wasn’t an artist in the bunch” (*Life* 63).<sup>110</sup> Rather than learning culinary practice-as-art, which Child clearly values, she recognized that these men desired to

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<sup>109</sup> The same holds true in America, even today; however, the culinary landscape has evolved regarding the presence of women in professional kitchens.

<sup>110</sup> Child specifies that their ideas focused on “setting up golf driving-ranges with restaurants attached, or roadhouses, or some kind of private trade in a nice spot back home” (*Life* 63). The emphasis, for Child here, centers on profit via culinary practice, which did not align at all with her own goals. And, rather than chastising the GIs for such capitalist ideas, she simply distinguishes between art and labor, allowing her culinary philosophy to float to the surface through one word: artist.

learn cooking as labor, with its emphasis on product over process and financial gain over artistry. Her critique of the gender system occurs once again but with regards to men this time. Her use of the phrase “in a trade-school way” rings similarly to the “elementary” label that she employed for the “housewives” course. For the men in her class, they wanted to learn to cook for the purposes of labor that generated an income, as opposed to the “housewives” who cooked as labor in—unpaid—service of others. Though she confesses that they “became a jolly crew,” their goals for the course seemed to fulfill a familiar pattern; Child does not articulate surprise or bewilderment at her initial observations about these GIs (*Life* 63). Rather, her lack of detail about their learning goals, alongside her clear distinction between art and labor or production, reveals one of her objectives for the course: to alter this privileging of cooking as labor and activate American culinary practice-as-art.

To do so, Child dedicated herself to learning every complicated and detailed intricacy of French culinary practice. Unlike her classmates, Child was looking to emulate her instructor Chef Max Bugnard, who she clearly admired and respected (*Life* 63-64). While Child prided herself on being a consummate student, in these early days at Le Cordon Bleu, it becomes clear that she also wanted to evolve into a successful culinary teacher. She began her journey towards both goals (activating culinary practice-as-art and culinary instruction) in the cramped basement kitchen at Le Cordon Bleu, hanging on every word from Chef Bugnard. She learned the fundamentals, such as sauce bases, and “later, to demonstrate a number of techniques in one session, Bugnard would cook a full meal, from appetizer to dessert” (*Life* 64). With this pedagogical strategy, Child gathered information about “the proper preparation for crudités, a fricassee of veal, glazed onions, *salade verte*, and several types of *crêpes Suzettes*,” for example (*Life* 64). While Child learned these necessary processes and techniques, the more influential

lessons came in the form of broader concepts. Chef Bugnard's influence on Child's culinary practice-as-art crystallized in two key ideas: "learn the correct technique, and that one enjoy one's cooking" (*Life* 65). She "began to internalize" the lessons in culinary practice and philosophy from Chef Bugnard, knowing, as she demonstrates in the pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, that her own culinary practice-as-art would find its roots in these early days at the Le Cordon Bleu (*Life* 65).<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, these two critical ideas showed Child that they could be integrated rather than choosing technique over pleasure and vice versa. Though she was in the midst of learning both while at Le Cordon Bleu (with an emphasis on technique), Child reflects on the process of how the two ideas began to merge for her, which would later coalesce in her culinary practice-as-art and in the pages of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*—both concepts function as critical ideas that underpin culinary practice-as-art in this text. From the demonstration classes, Child learned a series of dishes, one of which became a signature dish in her own culinary text—*boeuf bourguignon*. The processes and techniques taught by the visiting chefs who held these classes provided another layer to Child's culinary knowledge base, adding to her "already established [...] good basic knowledge of cookery" (*Life* 67). Perhaps more significantly, these demonstration classes and added knowledge served "as a catalyst for new ideas;" Child learned the "French tradition of extracting the full, essential flavors from food" (*Life* 67). From this central concept that, up until her time with Bugnard, escaped Child, she would build upon this foundation in her culinary practice-as-art in the form of a critical and central idea of her practice:

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<sup>111</sup> In another moment of being conscious about the gender dynamics in Chef Bugnard's classroom, Child notes that she "was careful to keep up an appearance of sweet good humor around 'the boys,' but inside [she] was cool and intensely focused on absorbing as much information as possible" (*Life* 65). By noting how she had to perform a particular gendered role, Child reveals the distinct line dividing professional and home culinary practitioner; she was not in her "proper place," and she keenly grasped this. Her awareness of such a performance, though, helps her to challenge how home culinary practice is perceived in the United States, as a menial act of labor and 'less than' professional culinary practice solely reserved for the 'reduced' capabilities of women.

learn a process rather than an individual recipe. The process, as she demonstrates in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, extracts the full flavors from food and allows the practitioner to apply the techniques learned in one process to multiple recipes.<sup>112</sup>

Child networked what she learned in the Le Cordon Bleu classroom with the knowledge gained from the Parisian restaurants and markets into her culinary practice-as-art approach. Before putting words to the page, she articulated how she viewed her relationship to French food and cooking. In these early days in Paris, she may not have crystallized her practice, but like the lessons learned from Chef Bugnard, she identified many of the central ideas. She “discovered that cooking was a rich and layered and endlessly fascinating project;” she “fell in love with French food—the tastes, the processes, the history, the endless variations, the rigorous discipline, the creativity, the wonderful people, the equipment, the rituals” (*Life* 68).<sup>113</sup> Though a seemingly incongruent list of culinary components, Child merges these ideas for a two-fold purpose: to primarily show how this culinary practice is activated as art (in effect illustrating how it can function with complexity and as art) and to demonstrate how culinary practice-as-art operates as a system.<sup>114</sup> Child weaves these central components throughout *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and into her triangulated practice of process, technique, and materials to show American home cooks the beautiful complexity and multiplicity in culinary practice-as-art.

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<sup>112</sup> Additionally, Child learned the art of multitasking in the kitchen. She notes that she had a “breakthrough when [she] learned to glaze carrots and onions at the same time as roasting a pigeon” (*Life* 67-8). This epiphany further informs how Child will construct her first cookbook; she and her co-authors organize the recipes to invite multitasking, which Child reveals is both a technique and an art form, particularly with its requisite of creativity.

<sup>113</sup> Child gestures to many of Brillat-Savarin’s ideas here. In particular, she reflects one of his key concepts that shape his philosophy about the pleasures of the table: “[...] no matter how studied a dinner plan nor how sumptuous its adjuncts, there can be no true pleasures of the table if the wine be bad, the guests assembled without discretion, the faces gloomy, and the meal consumed with haste” (185). Within Brillat-Savarin’s and Child’s ideas, we see the interdependent nature of culinary practice-as-art as well as how the multiplicity of elements within this system extend beyond the dish on the plate.

<sup>114</sup> And, Child embeds Chef Bugnard’s two primary lessons into this list, which will later appear in a more fully developed form in her cookbook.

*My Life in France* reads beautifully as a memoir by itself, but when located within the subsystem of domestic literacies, it assumes an added layer of meaning and purpose. When networked with *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, *My Life in France* reveals the process of how Child developed the foundation of culinary practice-as-art and for her groundbreaking culinary text. She shows that a system such as culinary practice-as-art cannot develop overnight or within a vacuum; instead, Child delineates the culinary experiences, education, and trial-and-error in her Parisian kitchen that formed the complex and multifarious system that she proffers in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. She also illustrates how culinary practice must be intimately and productively networked with other systems, such as history and everyday life. Also, in her memoir, she hints at the objectives of the later pioneering culinary text, specifically the desire to educate American home cooks and to alter, for the better, American cuisine and culinary practice, that directly extend from those early days in Paris. Child coalesces her education and diligent training into a pedagogical text that embodies her own learning experiences in France. With *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child transforms from a student, admiring Chef Bugnard, to an expert teacher who would have legions of students around the U.S., and in *My Life in Paris*, she demonstrates her own transformative process.

### **The Sprig of Parsley**

In an August 2009 letter from the editor, *Bon Appétit* editor-in-chief Barbara Fairchild penned a column entitled “Why Julia Still Matters.” She wrote this reflection on Child’s influence in light of the publication’s Julia Child tribute, which was intended to recognize the release of the Meryl Streep-Amy Adams film *Julie and Julia* (August 7) and Child’s 97<sup>th</sup> birthday (August 15). Fairchild identifies some of the reasons that Child has remained important decades after the publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and after *The French Chef*

left television. In a moment of reminiscing about when she and Child “ate together, [...] drank together, and [...] talked together,” Fairchild recalls always being struck that “Julia never seemed to have the full sense of how people cherished and responded to her. People from all walks of life came up to her” (12). Child’s humility and passion endeared her to generations, but it was more than her larger-than-life personality that drew such a diverse audience. She subverted the assumptions that French cuisine was pretentious, unfeasible, and difficult; she made culinary practice-as-art accessible, fun, and invigorating.

Fairchild adds that through the “retro charm” of *The French Chef*, and I would certainly add the continued significance of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and *My Life in France*, we are “reminded [...] how Julia Child’s curiosity, passion, and determination forged a life for her that influenced baby boomers [...], the Irma S. Rombauer generation before, and, yes, even the Mario/Alton/Giada generation after, which also counts Julie Powell among its ranks” (12).<sup>115</sup> With culinary practice-as-art, Child profoundly influenced generations of American home and professional chefs, whether they only dabbled with a few recipes in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and devoured every word (as Powell and many others have done). Regardless of where a culinary practitioner fell on the Julia Child devotee spectrum, Fairchild succinctly notes, via her own experiences with *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, what most of them have in common: “Julia gave me confidence” (12). Because of this pervasive reach, “Julia Child still matters,” Fairchild contends, “and to anyone who cares about food, cooking, and history—she always will” (12). To some outside food circles for example, these claims may sound like nothing more than typical hyperbolic praises lofted on to celebrities, which is all too common in

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<sup>115</sup> Rombauer was the author of the Depression Era cookbook *Joy of Cooking* (1931). Her cookbook has been republished eight times with the most recent in 2006, which was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition.

American culture. However, Julia Child has indeed inspired and shaped careers for those in the food and literary industries; her influence, then, is decidedly tangible.

Fairchild's column includes some of the ways that Child, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and *My Life in France* have changed American food culture but only gestures to others. The notion of confidence hints at how Child's culinary practice-as-art made French cuisine and culinary practice in general 'user-friendly' to all types of home cooks, specifically women. The emphasis on fun, "love of cooking for its own sake," and the form of the recipes in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* contribute to this accessibility; the system that Child created allows for previously challenging cuisine to be available to all. In a way, Child's philosophy and system represent a democratic approach to culinary practice, and the diversity of her fans points to this idea.

Further, the initial release of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* sent shockwaves through American food culture. A comprehensive culinary text arrived on the market to finally challenge the rising popularity of processed and packaged "convenience" foods. With this text, Child earned a seat at the Culinary Algonquin Table and became a critical player in the Good Food Movement. Her core tenets about fresh ingredients, process, creativity, and passion among others complemented Fisher's philosophy, and she desired to steer her readers away from corporate products, or the antithesis to "Good Food." This movement looked to save American cuisine and culinary practice from another turn down the 'wrong' path, or packaged foods, which forced homemakers away from whole and healthy—and better tasting—foods. Child's pioneering text provided a system for righting the course and emendating America's culinary identity crisis. Rather than a cuisine based on the latest fad coming from corporations or the patchwork cuisine as proffered by *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*, Child argued for a



comprehensive culinary practice, one that privileged process, technique, and quality materials, one that afforded creativity and improvisation, and one that was a proficient, proven, and dynamic culinary practice that could put America on the course to constructing a cuisine that reflected its diverse history, create a rich and respected culinary history, and privilege the nation's food sources. Through the model of French cuisine, she demonstrated how to integrate various practices, histories, and materials into a cohesive whole, and Child wanted America to follow suit.

Also, the innovative recipe form that Child offers in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* served as a critical component of how culinary practice-as-art was (and still is) adapted successfully by American home cooks and altered how generations of culinary writers would present instructions and information in their own texts. The form mirrors the systemic nature of culinary practice-as-art, and this embodiment provides cohesion to the text and the practice. Its privileging of process over product and creativity over routine affords the practitioner the opportunity to love cooking for its own sake. As a learning method, the master recipe with variations and the overall structure of Child's recipes have proven successful, and with the flexible boundaries of this form, it opens the door for others to adapt it. Chefs and cookbook authors, therefore, have adopted and adapted the form to fit their own culinary styles and audiences.

Rachael Ray's collection of cookbooks serves as a useful example of this adaptation. Through the adaptation of this form, Ray also integrates significant elements of Child's practice into her own process, such as creativity, divorcing oneself from recipes, and learning a process rather than a single recipe. While Ray's approach draws on Child's master recipe and variations form (a concept that she discussed routinely on her successful Food Network program *30-Minute*

*Meals*), she deliberately models this form in 365: *No Repeats*. For example, her master recipe for “Balsamic-Glazed Pork Chops with Arugula-Basil Rice Pilaf” inspires two dishes: “Balsamic-Glazed Chicken with Smoked Mozzarella and Garlic Rice Pilaf” and “Balsamic-Glazed Swordfish with Capers and Grape Tomato-Arugula Rice” (54-55). A quick glance through the three recipes reveals Child’s influence. First, Ray clearly structures it in the familiar form with the headings “Master Recipe” followed by “And Now Try...” (54-55). Next, she labels what materials are being “swapped” out and what are being omitted from the master recipe (55). Finally, the materials used, evident in the titles of the dishes, clearly extend across each recipe, and the processes do the same, though cooking times differ for the three different proteins used. Seriation and de-differentiation appear here as well, demonstrating how the form of this recipe embodies the system of culinary practice-as-art.

Though Ray is one example, she functions as an effective character in demonstrating Child’s reach. Ray’s Food Network show, cookbooks, and talk show draw large audiences; Ray brings Child’s recipe form and much of her philosophy to a diverse demographic and to those who might hesitate to start their culinary education with *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Ray surreptitiously introduces these practitioners to Child’s methods and opens the door for these home cooks, via her adaptation of Child’s recipe form, to the world of Julia Child. She also demonstrates the efficacy of this form as a culinary instructional tool and its proven success for generations. With this recipe form and *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Child remodeled the American cookbook, and as Ray and others show, these changes still exist today in various adaptations.

Finally, Child enlightens the network of gender, labor, and economics systems via culinary practice-as-art. With the emphasis on process, technique, materials, creativity, and the

“love of cooking for its own sake,” Child points to how gender can be detached from its classification as service-oriented and product-oriented labor to relieve homemakers from the monotony of cooking. In doing so, the “unvalued” labor performed by women in the home would shift to art and offer the actual fulfillment of creativity rather than the illusion of creativity, which publications such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* proffered. Also, the shift from work to art would also locate culinary practice as its own function, a change from cooking as a subsumed task within domesticity. Thus, the homemaker no longer needed to be labeled as such; instead, home cook, practitioner, or culinary artist would serve as a more appropriate label given the practice in which she engaged. On the surface, this might seem like simple semantics, but because of the pejorative connotations that “homemaker” and “housewife” carried, a shift in language becomes necessary and is more accurate. With culinary practice-as-art, Child provides a way out from under the debilitating labor of cooking towards a liberating, creative, multidimensional practice. In other words, Child offers a strategy for addressing the concerns that Betty Friedan articulated in *The Feminine Mystique*, which is an alternative to what Friedan proposes as the solution to the “problem that has no name.”

The illumination of this shift in the gender and labor systems also highlights how the economics system altered as well, specifically within the triangulated relationship with gender and labor. For example, culinary practice-as-art de-emphasizes product-orientation to bring forth issues of material availability via trade and infrastructure, financial access to materials, and the intersection of domestic agriculture and local economic concerns. These issues stem from two primary and interdependent components of culinary practice-as-art—the emphasis on fresh and even local ingredients and the rejection of mass-produced and packaged foods. With a focus on fresh and local ingredients working simultaneously with an anti-packaged foods stance, culinary

practice-as-art—and more broadly the Good Food Movement (with the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable leading the charge)—openly challenged the large food corporations that churned out packaged foods, such as General Mills. In this way, Child and the Movement exhibit a larger resistance to the type of capitalism that was emerging during the early 1960's, the rise of the multi-national corporation with subsidiaries or multiple brands (e.g. Proctor and Gamble, Kraft). Child and the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable asked home cooks to redirect their purchasing power away from food corporations towards more local businesses. Culinary practice-as-art and the Good Food Movement thus proposed shifts in the home for women as well as broader changes to America's economic direction.

By embracing simple and whole foods, Child also gestured to long-forgotten culinary traditions in America, such as farm-to-table and local sourcing, but she studied these same types of traditions while in France as they were clearly integrated into French culinary practice. Child, through her instruction in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, points to how American cuisine and culinary practice could capture the success of French cuisine: a cohesive set of processes, techniques, and materials with a focus on local ingredients. By doing so, she suggests (though never explicitly), local economies can grow and residents can invest in their own communities. Culinary practice-as-art, then, provided a strategy to resist the sweeping capitalism that was emerging and to help local artisans.

Julia Child, as an American culinary icon, activated dramatic changes in multiple milieus by deploying her system of culinary practice-as-art. With *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, she worked to set American cuisine and culinary practice on a course towards a cohesive and comprehensive system that could rival some of the world's most renowned cuisines. She challenged home cooks and professionals alike to embrace a proven practice that could be

adapted to accommodate America's diverse culinary history. The audience of home cooks, who gravitated to both her culinary text and her larger-than-life personality, desired change, though some more hesitantly than others, from the monotony of cooking and the use of packaged foods. Child offered them a system that could provide such liberation.

While Barbara Fairchild contends that Child still matters today because she continues to inspire a range of practitioners, we cannot overlook the more pragmatic reasons why Julia Child remains relevant even five decades after the publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Simply, her system of culinary practice-as-art works effectively; the emphasis on process, technique, and materials functions successfully across cuisines and allows the practitioner to grow her skills while also finding those more elusive yet often most significant elements of Child's system—fun, creativity, and the “love of cooking for its own sake.” This is why Julia Child still matters.

## CONCLUSION THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE ARTIST

In 1968, writer Nora Ephron took the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable (or the “Food Establishment” in her words) to task in an article for *New York Magazine* (34). She pointed her pen at Craig Claiborne, James Beard, Michael Field, Julia Child, and M.F.K. Fisher, but much of her attention was directed at the broader establishment itself—“the purists or traditionalists,” as she labeled them (36). She contended that this group—one of two that comprised the “Food Establishment”—saw “themselves as the last holdouts for haute cuisine. Their virtue is taste; their concern primarily French food” (36). They “[championed] the cause of great food against the rising tide of the TV dinner, clamoring for better palates as they watch the children of America raised on a steady diet of Spaghetti-O’s” (Ephron 36). In other words, the “traditionalists” promoted the system of culinary practice-as-art; they privileged process, creativity, versatility, adaptation, pleasure, and the ‘intangibles.’

On the other side of the table, Ephron identified the “revolutionaries,” represented by cookbook authors such as Poppy Cannon, and this faction was “industry-minded and primarily concerned with the needs of the average housewife [...]; their concern [was] with improving American food” (Ephron 36). They prided “themselves on discovering shortcuts and developing convenience foods;” thus, they perpetuated the linear structure of cooking found in cookbooks such as *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* and advanced the ideas of bypassing process and favored product- and service-oriented work rather than the use of fresh, local foods (Ephron 36). And, if by “improving” American food Ephron means eliminating creativity, continuing cooking-as-labor, and generating profits for large food corporations then she may have been accurate. However, reliance on this limiting linear structure did very little to transform America’s culinary identity and improve taste. Perhaps it was because Ephron was in the midst

of this grand culinary shift that she drastically mischaracterized these two groups (not to mention the fact that she succumbs to the American, or even Western, dependence on problematic dualisms).

The *true* revolutionaries were the “purists” who actually strived to improve American cuisine by bettering the American palate and to liberate the housewife from a dependence on convenience foods, which actually dull the palate. Child and Fisher (along with Beard and Claiborne) revolutionized American cuisine by demonstrating how a shift from the restrictive linear structure of cooking to a system of culinary practice-as-art (with the French model as a primary source) could be effectively adapted for the American kitchen and table. Instead of a ‘steady diet’ of processed foods such as Spaghetti-O’s and TV dinners, the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable pointed American home cooks, specifically homemakers whom they *did* desire to help, in the direction of fresh foods, simple meals that foregrounded the pleasures of the table, and creativity that would afford the practitioner freedom and fulfillment that was precluded by convenience foods. Further, the Roundtable distinguished itself from Ephron’s “revolutionaries” by emphasizing process over product.

More specifically, Fisher and Child proffered a strategy to liberate American women, primarily the homemaker, from the suffocating and monotonous labor of cooking and the prescriptive and restrictive role associated with this labor, in effect simultaneously challenging Friedan and food corporations.<sup>116</sup> These two women argued that such liberation actually *can* occur in the space of the kitchen but must break with the linear structure of cooking and its advocates. Instead, Fisher and Child argued that a shift to the system of culinary practice-as-art would provide such liberation while also overhauling American cuisine and setting it on the path

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<sup>116</sup> Friedan asserted that the kitchen and cooking could *only* be places of debilitating labor for American women whereas food corporations, such as General Mills, created a dependence on processed and packaged convenience foods that and used the illusion of creativity and freedom to market these products to housewives.

to find a distinct culinary identity. And, their texts, specifically the form, illuminated a shift in American literary culture, specifically how many future cookbooks would be written and organized as well as how authors with a comparable sensibility to Fisher would approach the subject of food. Culinary practice-as-art functions as an interdependent and elastic network of elements with a core set of processes, techniques, and philosophical ideas (stemming from French culinary practice) that govern how it operates. With its elastic and hybrid construction, this system invites adaptation and creativity (through de-differentiation, seriation, and interaction for example), which permits the integration of new processes, techniques, and materials as the system undergoes various adaptations. And, with such characteristics, this system altered American cuisine from a disparate and loosely connected set of dishes to a cohesive, diverse cuisine that reflects the fusion of the multiple cultures that exist in the U.S.; it is, thus, defined by reinvention and by this fusion.

The state of American cuisine emerged as a key point of focus in Ephron's article. Notably, the impetus for Ephron's article derived from the launch party, held at the Four Seasons in New York, for the Time-Life *Foods of the World* book series, and the debut text, entitled *The Cooking of Provincial France*, was authored by M.F.K. Fisher with Julia Child named as a consultant—the first and only time the two women would collaborate in print.<sup>117</sup> Yet, they would often share ideas via letters, and they frequently met at the stove and table, whether in a kitchen in Child's Provençal home or at Fisher's Sonoma County home. This text blends together Fisher's discourse with Child's practice (process, technique, and material) and serves as a

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<sup>117</sup> In his recently published book *Provence, 1970: M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, and James Beard, and the Reinvention of American Taste*, Fisher's grandnephew Luke Barr chronicles one of the many times that Fisher and Child collaborated over a stove and at the table. The two women, Beard, and some friends met up at the Childs' Provence home in December 1970. This meeting of the Culinary Algonquin Roundtable (sans Craig Claiborne) represents how the diverse members of this group activated great change in American culinary practice and cuisine. In addition to the conversation at the table about food and wine, they gathered in the kitchen to engage creatively with materials and process, in effect performing their culinary practice-as-art.



representation of how they went about revolutionizing American cuisine and culinary practice—it shows their system of culinary practice-as-art. At the same time, *The Cooking of Provincial France* is not the only way that they activated the culinary shift. Fisher continued to write, bringing her philosophy to large audiences, and Child grew as culinary icon with her popular television program and large catalog of texts. In fact, their collaboration was not necessary for these two culinary icons to activate shifts in American culinary practice and cuisine because their work in the domestic literacies subsystem operates interdependently—their work is already collaborative.

One of the most significant ways that Fisher and Child articulate the system of culinary practice-as-art is through the text's detailed preliminary content, which demonstrates the interdependent and flexible nature of this system. An introduction to the culinary practice and cuisine of France, a sketch of the culinary history of different French provinces, and a snapshot of French family life around the table all embody Fisher and Child's gastronomic philosophy. These sections show how culinary practice-as-art successfully functions (and why) and points to how it perturbs and enlightens shifts in the network of gender, labor, and economics systems.

Fisher's introduction, entitled "Welcome to the Country Kitchens of France," serves as a useful example of the broader function of these introductory pages and immediately differentiates the professional culinary practice from a practice that would be more akin to what her American readers would be more familiar—home culinary practice. She further articulates why this text changes the culinary lens: "[This book] is about French cooking. But to nine out of ten of us 'French cooking' means an elaborate and expensive way of complicating or at least masking foods with sauces" (*Provincial* 6). Like Child's introduction to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Fisher challenges American presumptions about French culinary practice—that

it is not solely “complicated” sauces. She then asserts, “[French provincial cooking] means simply the cooking that springs from the regional areas called provinces for many hundreds of years in the highly diversified country known as France” (*Provincial* 6). Here, Fisher merges her philosophy with Child’s ideas regarding history; France’s long history and its diversity have shaped this dynamic and hybrid culinary practice. Both women suggest that the recognition and integration of a nation’s various histories must be a significant element to culinary practice-as-art, and the French model that Fisher introduces here shows how effective this attention to history can be for a nation’s cuisine. In this way, she illustrates how culinary practice-as-art as a system operates in an interdependent and elastic manner; it allows for the integration of histories and not solely at one moment but over the course time, folding in histories as one would eggs, butter, and flour for dough. Also, the integration of multiple histories exemplifies the need for the change from a linear to a system structure. The linear form cannot account for multiplicity, thereby eliminating the possibility of this integration.

Fisher further highlights this need for history in American culinary practice because “in America we have short memories” (*Provincial* 9). Because of this factor, Fisher suggests that our culinary practice and cuisine have greatly suffered, and “we have been wrenched from set patterns of eating as our forefathers did” (*Provincial* 9-10). Americans have been disconnected from their gastronomical past and have existed within a linear structure that restricts the necessary reclamation and integration of the past. Fisher and Child contend that since “we live in a new gastronomical world, and not always for the better” (pointing to the rise of processed and mass produced foods), we need to embrace our own diverse history and blend it into our culinary practice (*Provincial* 10).<sup>118</sup> By doing so, we can also better ourselves as individuals and citizens,

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<sup>118</sup> Lydia Maria Child’s *The Frugal Housewife* includes practices from which American cuisine has been disconnected. Her non-linear approach and use of local materials, for example, could be reclaimed in American

much like the French: “[The] food these Frenchmen have fed on for hundreds of years has irrevocably shaped the ways they look, feel and think” and all for the better, Fisher implies (*Provincial* 9). The French model that Fisher and Child put forth in this text (and elsewhere) shows their hybrid culinary practice-as-art can be transformative and does so by embracing its fluidity and adaptability. A linear structure of cooking, with its inability to accommodate such multiplicity, would thus preclude such positive transformation.

In addition, Fisher highlights that “provincial kitchens use what grows nearby, even in today’s period of rapid and expert transportation” (*Provincial* 7). She and Child foreground the use of local and fresh materials in their respective texts, and Child also features such ingredients on her popular television program. Thus, they challenge the trends of convenience and processed foods that Ephron’s “revolutionaries” trumpeted and demonstrate that “good food is available at decent prices to all of us who seek it out, pay for it and then prepare with both sense and pleasure” (*Provincial* 7). “Good food” here suggests that what passes for food in the current supermarkets is not *good* and cannot bring pleasure, in part because there is no pleasure in the process—the art is absent. Local ingredients allow for creativity and pleasure in the process while also tasting better than the indistinguishable flavors common in processed foods. Moreover, Fisher challenges the assumption that purchasing local materials is more expensive than the packaged foods found on supermarket shelves across the country. In this text’s recipes, we see evidence of this as well; they are simple and economical, thereby further calling into question the promises of cheaper, faster, and better that the food companies frequently made.<sup>119</sup> By addressing the

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culinary practice-as-art. Fisher asserts, “We can relearn a lot of things our forefathers knew [...] [and] they clung passionately to the resources and traditions of their native provinces” (*Provincial* 53-54). American culinary practice-as-art insists upon this integration of history and reclamation of traditions that defined American cuisine in the past. Thus, Fisher contends, traditions *are*, in fact, revolutionary.

<sup>119</sup> As much as Fisher and Child have influenced our current food culture, which I’ll discuss shortly, so, too, has the insistence by large food corporations that their processed foods are better and cheaper. We also observe similar

economic concerns, Fisher and Child show how the system of culinary practice-as-art shifts the perception of the economics system with regards to the cost of materials: the elements in the system of economics undergo a realignment, foregrounding local and fresh materials that are cost effective and transferring processed convenience foods to a position of de-emphasis.

With this privileging of local materials, Fisher also weaves in the history of this practice and what Americans can gain from such a model: “[We] can all follow with rare enjoyment the patterns of the people who for centuries have managed to subsist on what their nearest hills and brooks and meadows provide for them. They have survived because they use their wits as well as their teeth, and so can we” (*Provincial* 7). “So can we” if we follow this culinary practice-as-art model, she advises. And, she integrates the notion of pleasure once more here, further emphasizing the integral role that the ‘intangibles’ such as creativity, pleasure, and “beautiful rhythm” play in culinary practice-as-art while also reminding her reader that the linear structure of cooking does not allow for these essential elements. Further, Fisher connects the French landscape with the arguably more diverse American landscape; the hills, brooks, and meadows of France have provided sustenance for centuries, and she suggests that the breadth of topography in the U.S. offers comparable, if not more, varied local materials. The history from which Americans are disconnected includes the use of these locally found food items, and Fisher suggests that, by not utilizing the land in the way that our ancestors did, we have debilitated our culinary practice (e.g. downgraded it to cooking) and have lost our gastronomical identity—we fell into the prohibitive linear structure of cooking.

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claims by fast food companies. But, as we are slowly discovering, these claims are masking some troubling science. For example, *New York Times* writer Michael Moss uncovered the psychobiology of the Taco Bell’s Nacho Dorito Taco by working with food scientist Steven A. Witherly, and while there might not be any illusions about the healthiness of this snack food, the science behind the craving for it reveals a nearly insidious deception by these large corporations.

Building upon and integrating with the history and use of local materials, Fisher advocates for the use of artisanal items and focuses briefly on the bakeries in France with particular attention to bread. (The emphasis on French bread gestures to Child and her deep affection for the baguette.)<sup>120</sup> She reveals, “There is sure to be a special kind of loaf, or at least one shape of loaf, peculiar to each region, sometimes even to each small locality [...]. In other words, the bread is completely local, as well as provincial” (*Provincial* 10-11). The artisanal facet of the system of culinary practice-as-art comes to the fore here, and Fisher suggests that the creativity in French culinary practice does not solely remain in haute cuisine but actually begins in the small local kitchens and in the hands of the artists. The signature, local breads comprise the broader national category of “French bread” and signify how culinary practice-as-art operates to construct a national cuisine. By foregrounding this artisanal item, Fisher privileges the use of local ingredients and the intangibles—creativity, pleasure of the process, and “beautiful rhythm” for example—that she and Child show to be integral to culinary practice-as-art as a system and necessary to shifting the stagnant and disparate American cuisine, which is suffering under the influence of the linear structure of cooking.

Briefly, Fisher begins the second section of the opening pages—“Provincial France: Ancient Names Signifying Great Food”—with two brief paragraphs that introduce why she chooses to emphasize the various regions in France. Most significantly, the attention to each region and its cuisine functions as a parallel to the U.S. and its own regional foods. The “striking diversity” and “ethnic dissimilarity [that is] much longer and firmer standing” in France serve as

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<sup>120</sup> In *With Bold Knife and Fork* (1969), Fisher praises Child’s dedication to perfecting the process for making the baguette: “Julia Child, culinary arbiter of at least this much of our century, has recently worked for five solid months [...], and after some 200 bakings which used more than 250 pounds of flour [...], she has set down her perfected method” (242). Fisher’s recognition of Child’s study of French bread shows how an artist engages in process and strives for the “beautiful rhythm” of one particular food item—elements only allowed by the system of culinary practice-as-art.

critical elements to how the nation's culinary practice and cuisine developed (*Provincial* 11). Fisher contends that the French embraced and integrated the diverse practices and foods into its national cuisine, which is why it is revered as one of the world's finest (*Provincial* 11). She adds that the U.S. has both of these qualities and must model its cuisine after the French in order to find its culinary identity and move away from Ephron's "revolutionaries." The system of culinary practice-as-art, with its elastic boundaries and interdependent nature, invites such diversity, and its always already in-progress feature creates a number of opportunities for integrating various processes, techniques, and materials from other cuisines (in effect, constructing a new cuisine from the blend of these others).

Further, Fisher notes that the method of "ageless adaptability," with its blend of diverse practices and materials, by "people determined to survive with grace, no matter what the odds" (*Provincial* 12). Thus, she suggests, Americans can do the same by adopting culinary practice-as-art—a system with a core characteristic of adaptability. These ideas regarding adaptability here echo Child's words in her introduction to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which further solidifies the importance of this aspect of creativity in culinary practice-as-art and in changing American cuisine for the better.<sup>121</sup> And, Fisher and Child demonstrate how they are the true revolutionaries in part because culinary practice-as-art is adaptable over time, allowing history and tradition to blend with the other elements of this hybrid system. This idea, which Fisher mentions has not been present in America, can revolutionize American food and eating.

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<sup>121</sup> In each section about the French provinces, Fisher highlights processes, techniques, and materials that represent not only that region but also how that region contributes to French national cuisine. For example, in her discussion about Provence, Fisher focuses on materials such as tomatoes and garlic, materials that are "justly synonymous with most dishes *à la provençale*" (*Provincial* 27). Each region possesses comparable materials that serve as signature flavors for that area of the country. Fisher, thus, proffers ways for Americans to rethink how they perceive their expansive landscape and relationship to various regional foods and materials that could define American cuisine.

Finally, *The Cooking of Provincial France* includes a profile of middle class French family life around the table. In this section, Fisher, with Child looking over her shoulder as consultant, demonstrates how culinary practice-as-art can enlighten shifts in the systems of gender, labor, and economics while also continuing to emphasize creativity, “ageless adaptability,” use of local materials, the pleasures of the table, and a privileging of process over product. While she focuses on labor and economics, Fisher does so primarily with concerns of gender at the fore, demonstrating how these three systems network with culinary practice-as-art; she shows how the French culinary practitioners in home kitchens—women—are not debilitated or burdened by the monotonous linear structure of cooking. Instead, they engage in culinary practice-as-art, demonstrating how it is detached from labor and embraces the aforementioned elements that Fisher has thus far discussed in the text.

For example, Fisher takes to task the American mode of dining, a representation of the effects of the linear structure of cooking. Instead of a “steak and baked potato,” the multi-course meal prepared by the practitioner would include artisanal (local) bread rather than the “squeezy-fresh soft slices many Americans accept or permit,” hors d’oeuvre, soup, entrée, salad, and cheese (*Provincial* 46). Americans may perceive this type of dining as pretentious or too expensive; however, Fisher challenges such assumptions by demonstrating how this type of dining, or more specifically culinary practice-as-art, benefits not only the practitioner but also the family—and by extension, the nation. She suggests that we rethink how we eat—“we too can meet together *en famille* for a pleasant, quiet drink before a meal, instead of putting the kids in the rumpus room with soft drinks and TV while we adults brace ourselves with a few vodka-Gibsons in the den” (*Provincial* 52). She challenges our routine of disconnection among family

members and how processed foods such as TV dinners and linear cooking perpetuated this disconnection.

Fisher argues, “We too can eat slowly and well and in good company if we really want to, and French families seem to believe that it is worth it” (*Provincial* 52-3). Fisher performs two tasks with this assertion: first, she confronts the American presumption that we cannot dine in this fashion; she contends that we simply choose not to do so. Second, she reminds the reader that the French, with their long and successful culinary history, demonstrate the benefits of eating slowly and embracing the pleasures of the table. This shift in thinking about food and eating also enlightens a realignment of the discursive practice systems: process, creativity, and the “intangibles” of culinary practice-as-art prevent the practitioner from engaging in labor, and even on a budget, the practitioner, with those aforementioned elements, can creatively prepare an artful and enjoyable meal.

In continuing her attention on the practitioner, Fisher maintains that French women—“housewives of every station in life”—“know some basic culinary rules: how to make a soup stock, bone a fish, fricassee or braise a chicken, [and] make elementary sauces” (*Provincial* 54). Because of the system of culinary practice-as-art relies on creativity, multiplicity, “beautiful rhythm,” and “ageless adaptability,” French women have evolved and “have learned these rules more or less instinctively” rather than depending upon a cookbook that advocates restrictive adherence to measurements and a reliance on convenience foods—or a linear structure of cooking (*Provincial* 54). The way that these French women have learned stems from the adaptability and creativity upon which their culinary practice rests; those recipes, developed over a long period of time, became engrained in French everyday life thereby allowing generation after generation of women to easily learn and adapt them in their respective kitchens.



Fisher also suggests that these women do not learn from cookbooks but rather from “recipes that are an intrinsic part of their heritage,” and they want to engage in culinary practice because they have been “exposed throughout their lives to other people [...] who believe that pleasurable meals are essential to their well-being and dignity” (*Provincial* 54-5). The desire to be in the kitchen and to engage in culinary practice stems from the multiple elements that are part of this system, history and pleasures of the table in particular. Culinary practice-as-art invites creativity and the infusion of one’s personality and style into each dish, which translates into “pleasurable meals” that become an integral of French everyday life and generate a sense of well-being (one of the “intangibles” of this practice). Fisher suggests that, for these women, the dish does not hold the sole central place in the kitchen (read: product-oriented); rather, the process, with its elasticity allowing for creativity and adaptability, emerges as the primary focal point for these practitioners.

Moreover, in her discussion about French women as culinary practitioners, Fisher reveals how gender and labor network differently with the system of culinary practice-as-art. The linear structure of woman-as-laborer in the kitchen is notably absent, and instead, we see the multiple roles that French women assume with regards to culinary practice, demonstrating the shift in how gender, labor, and culinary practice align. French culinary history resides with women; they carry this history through their creative adaptation of recipes that are passed from one generation of women to the next. They integrate this long history, local materials, pleasures of the table, and their individual culinary personality into each dish and show how this culinary practice is in-progress while also privileging process over product. This is how these recipes become intrinsic in nature for each generation of French women in the kitchen, and this, Fisher suggests, serves as

an example of how culinary practice-as-art as a system can function as a mode of liberation for American women.

This system that Fisher and Child delineate in *The Cooking of Provincial France* activated great change for American cuisine and culinary practice, and while their philosophies and practice coalesced into the system of culinary practice-as-art, these two women do not remain the sole practitioners. Rather, like the French women who carried their long culinary history, Fisher and Child invited others to adapt their system in order to free women from the linear structure of cooking, to liberate American cuisine, and to initiate changes in American literary culture. The always already in-progress nature of this systems permits it to be adapted time and time again, and we see this occur nearly immediately following the debut of their Time-Life book. Alice Waters, proprietor of Berkeley-based Chez Panisse, represents the many ways that culinary practice-as-art altered American cuisine and allowed practitioners to adopt the practice for their own style. Waters opened her legendary restaurant in 1971 with an all-female staff, and she adapted culinary practice-as-art to fit her style, which privileged the use of local materials and creativity in the kitchen, for not only herself but for her entire staff (Reardon *Celebrating* 212-13). Through her adaptation of culinary practice-as-art, she discovered the multitude of possibilities for experimentation and improvisation afforded by this system. In *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook*, Waters, echoing Child's introduction to *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and Fisher's mapping project, discusses in detail how she engages in culinary practice-as-art, with particular attention to a handful of elements that she privileges in her own kitchen. In this text, we witness the clear and dramatic influence of Child and Fisher's work, and Waters carries culinary practice-as-art through all of her texts and in her restaurant kitchen even today.

In the introductory section entitled “What I Believe about Cooking” in the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook*, Waters begins in a similar fashion to Child by broadly articulating how she views her own culinary practice-as-art; her approach is “not radical or unconventional” (*Panisse* 3). In fact, she emphasizes simplicity, pleasure, flexibility, creativity, and attention to the quality of materials used. She also echoes Fisher by asserting, “Food should be experienced through the senses,” and she foregrounds “the gastronomic excitement that inspires and encourages conversation and conviviality,” or the pleasures of the table (*Panisse* 3). With these broader points of emphasis, Waters breaks down the system of culinary practice-as-art into some of its elements to show the reader how she has adapted this practice and for what reasons. But, she introduces culinary practice-as-art and her adaptation of it through the organization of her cookbook, which is a clear shift away from a linear structure to a form of organization that reflects the hybrid nature of culinary practice-as-art as a system. The table of contents for Waters’ text directly reflects the flexible and elastic nature of the system of culinary practice-as-art. She organizes her recipes by menus but asserts that they can be paired differently, and she, in fact, encourages this creativity. “Inspirations and Adaptations” and “Themes and Variations” serve as two examples of how she envisions culinary practice-as-art. She shows the reader how to think about complementing flavors and materials. In this way, Waters models the system and how it can be effectively adapted to suit an individual style and method.

At a quick glance, the reader can piece together an overview of Waters’ practice and philosophy, which, even with a cursory reading, reveals how she adapts Child and Fisher’s system of culinary practice-as-art. Throughout the text, Waters’ privileging of process over product, creativity, and the interdependency among diverse elements of her version of this system is quite clear; Waters resists any tendency towards a linear structure. “Flexibility”

emerges as the first in a series of elements that demonstrate this adaptation, and she characterizes “flexibility” as an “essential component” of her culinary practice-as-art and an element that allows the practitioner’s “ingenuity, resourcefulness, and personal aesthetics [...] [to] come into play” (*Panisse* 4). Waters suggests that this flexibility comprises part of the larger notion of creativity, and a few paragraphs later, she articulates an aspect of creativity that Child gestures towards in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

She notes, quite plainly, that “we call cook differently,” and her “pinch of salt may be larger than [another’s] pinch of salt,” which points to the ideas that Child hints at—that each practitioner has her own style and divorcing oneself from recipes should be the practitioner’s goal (*Panisse* 5). Unlike *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book*, which insists on adhering to the strict measurement guidelines in each recipe (i.e. linear structure), Waters shows that she designed her recipes to be adapted and altered differently by each practitioner. In this sense, Waters highlights how culinary practice-as-art operates as a system rather than a linear structure, and it will continue to function as such regardless of the practitioner. Moreover, Waters encourages her readers to “trust [their] own instincts” and to “alter the amount of any element [one thinks] needs change” (*Panisse* 5). She echoes Child and Fisher by emboldening her readers to make any changes to the dish that reflects their own style and taste preferences. She also adds that the practitioner should adapt the recipes to use “[her] regional ingredients just as [Waters adapted] the recipes of other regions [...] to the ingredients [...] in California” (*Panisse* 6). Both elements here demonstrate how the system of culinary practice-as-art with its in-progress nature will always permit for such alterations.

Culinary practice-as-art and its adaptation did not end with Waters; in fact, its always already in-progress nature allowed it to continually change American cuisine through different

food trends, changes in technology (from kitchen utensils to agricultural practices), and alterations in health concerns during the four decades that followed Chez Panisse's debut. Fisher and Child's system altered American cuisine in the late 1960s and 1970s through such practitioners as Waters, who promulgated culinary practice-as-art through such movements as California cuisine and eating locally. In our contemporary moment, we can glance across American food culture and observe how culinary practice-as-art has deeply changed and shaped food and eating in the U.S. This system has redefined American cuisine as one of diversity—a fusion of different cuisines around a core set of processes and techniques, and continuous change afforded by the elastic boundaries of the culinary practice-as-art.

From individual home kitchens to restaurants that feature local and seasonal foods and privilege the pleasures of the table (e.g. farm-to-table, growing presence of communal dining in restaurants such as Paul Kahan's The Publican in Chicago), home practitioners and professional chefs engage in culinary practice-as-art in an unprecedented way. We see such change and a crystallization of American cuisine in a variety of forms: celebrity chefs, including Rachael Ray, Bobby Flay, Ina Garten, Susan Feniger, April Bloomfield, and Mario Batali, a resurgence of farmers markets, an dramatic increase in specialty shops that feature artisanal foods (e.g. Red Apron in D.C., an artisanal butcher shop, or San Francisco-based Cowgirl Creamery), individual artisanal products that are sold at farmers markets or online (e.g. Lively Run Goat Cheese in upstate New York, or Zeke's Coffee in Baltimore), city markets (e.g. New York's Chelsea Market, Washington, D.C.'s Union Market, and Los Angeles' The Farmers Market), and gastronomical organizations such as Slow Food International.<sup>122</sup> Each of these examples

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<sup>122</sup> Slow Food International is an organization that “[links] the pleasures of the table with a commitment to protect the community, culture, knowledge and environment that make this pleasure possible” (“About Us”). Alice Waters serves as its current vice president, and she asserts, “Slow Food reminds us of the importance of knowing where our food comes from. When we understand the connection between the food on our table and the field where it grows,

privileges culinary practice-as-art in some form and demonstrates how this system can be successfully adapted to create a more robust and diverse national cuisine and better individual experiences with food and eating.

For example, April Bloomfield, proprietor of New York City's Spotted Pig and other New York restaurants, represents the latest generation of women changing the American culinary landscape with her own adaptation of the system of culinary practice-as-art while also showing the effects of Fisher and Child illuminating shifts in gender roles centered on culinary practice. While still operating in a male-dominated profession, Bloomfield has altered the perception of how women creatively engage with food and eating. Her restaurant and cookbook, *A Girl and Her Pig*, show how more women are embracing the act of eating and a passion for food, which challenges long-held assumptions about women and their relationship to food.<sup>123</sup> The cover photo of Bloomfield's cookbook serves as an example of this shift and hints at her own unique culinary practice-as-art: a confident Bloomfield, in chef's whites, stands boldly with a full (dead) pig wrapped around her shoulders. Not only is she capitalizing on the current pork trend (e.g. pork in all forms, use of all parts of the pig) but she also reveals a resistance to the presumption that women do not relish or savor meat items or dishes. Her cookbook foregrounds the use of pork in a variety of forms, which shows her culinary practice-as-art that emphasizes creativity, adaptability, and pleasure in the process and in taste. She also demonstrates how this system has altered the way in which gender and labor operate with this system; she does not perform labor in service of others in the way that we see how such work is advocated in *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book*. Rather, culinary practice-as-art releases Bloomfield from any

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our everyday meals can anchor us to nature and the place where we live" ("About Us"). This organization embraces some of the central elements of culinary practice-as-art and works to encourage others to adopt this system. And, Slow Food extends beyond the individual table and meal to collaborate with and support those who produce the local materials, which represents the complex and interdependent nature of the system of culinary practice-as-art.

<sup>123</sup> See Susan Bordo, Arlene Voski Avakian, Laura Shapiro, and Carole M. Counihan, for example.

connection to this type of labor and allows her to engage creatively and passionately with food in a way that affords her a career. She shares this creativity and passion with her restaurants' patrons, not as a form of labor but as pleasure.

At Spotted Pig, she privileges these ideas along with simplicity; the menu reads briefly and highlights quality ingredients that are prepared simply and with a "beautiful rhythm" (e.g. Deviled Egg, Prosciutto & Ricotta Tart with Marjoram, and Chargrilled Burger with Roquefort Cheese & Shoestring Fries). More women such as Bloomfield continue to enter the professional culinary field, and by doing so, they influence the average American woman in her own kitchen, to embrace culinary practice-as-art rather than cooking. These professionals can point women home practitioners in the direction of culinary practice-as-art and show them how to embrace this system to better their relationship to food and eating.

In another example, culinary practice-as-art has shaped a current U.S. food subculture—foodie culture. "Foodies" unquestionably embrace all elements of this system and actually advocate for its adaptation in multiple sites (e.g. home kitchens, a shift away from chain and fast food restaurants). This group values local and seasonal materials, artisanal goods, pleasures of the table, and creativity in cuisine; they look to history and other nations' cuisines for inspiration, often with the goal of fusing many of these elements into a hybrid dish or meal (thereby growing or changing American cuisine again), demonstrating the fluidity and always already in-progress nature of this system. Foodies resist the marketing ploys of large food corporations and denounce the use of packaged and processed foods, and they are keenly aware of the economic benefits of culinary practice-as-art—the infusion of money into the local economy when local materials are purchased, for example. Using new and social media, they share information about process rather than product and discuss how they adapt recipes to use local materials or to adjust for individual

tastes. Moreover, this subculture recognizes the liberating function of culinary practice-as-art for both men and women—women do not have to be restricted by the labor of cooking, and the “stigma” of cooking as “only women’s labor” is lifted for men who are practicing in home kitchens in larger numbers than ever. Foodies, who are distinct from culinary professionals, greatly echo Child and Fisher in their philosophy and practice. And, those in this subculture frequently site these two culinary pioneers as experts and icons, who they recognize as having profoundly influenced the evolution of American cuisine—for the better.

Fisher’s and Child’s impact on American literary culture parallels their influence on food culture but may be an overlooked milieu in which they activated change. Child inspired numerous cookbook authors and chefs with the recipe form that she introduces in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*; Rachael Ray serves as one of many examples of how current chefs and culinary practitioners have adopted Child’s effective form. Fisher’s influence complements Child’s. Well-known food writers such as Ruth Reichl, Michael Ruhlman, Alice Waters, and Tamar Adler recognize Fisher’s impact on America’s food and literary cultures. While serving as the *Los Angeles Times* food editor, Reichl wrote about Fisher and her importance more than once, primarily towards the end of Fisher’s life, for example. In 1991, Reichl wrote, “At 84, [eating oysters] is one of the few sensual pleasures left to the woman whose impeccable prose introduced two generations of Americans to what she called the ‘Art of Eating.’ Her genius has been her absolute insistence that life’s small moments are the important ones.” What Reichl recognized as beautiful, or “genius,” in Fisher’s writing was not necessarily the focus on food itself but on the experiences that centered on food, often with an emphasis on pleasures of the table. Reichl continued to write about Fisher and her influence on American food and literary cultures upon until Fisher’s death in 1992. In another illustration of Fisher’s reach, Adler



modeled her *An Everlasting Meal: Cooking with Economy and Grace* (2012) after Fisher's iconic *How to Cook a Wolf*, which Ruhlman, in his review of Adler's text, said is "a worthy companion to Fisher."

Though not in contrast to narratives such as Adler's but perhaps an extension, food blogging has evolved to reflect various forms of food writing that are often associated with Fisher, from the familiar "how-to" that includes a recipe and (frequently) photos of the ingredients and steps to more philosophical takes on food. Julie Powell's blog that chronicled her journey through every recipe in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* represents a common type food blog: a reflection on the process mixed with personal or everyday life experiences. Powell published her blog as a book that was later merged with *My Life in France* for the film *Julie and Julia*. But, the form and content of Powell's blog do not characterize all food blogs. A growing number of culinary writers reflect the philosophical features of Fisher's writing. Writers such as Stacia Trask integrate various approaches to consider culinary practice and American food culture. In her blog entitled *PeaceFoodLove*, Trask focuses on contemplative cooking, which brings together concepts from Buddhism (e.g. meditation, "lovingkindness"), her everyday life experiences as a mother, writer, teacher, and home culinary practitioner, and culinary practice-as-art. She views her approach as "Mettā (love for self and others) + phor (given for something greater) = Feeling FULL" ("Mettāphor"). This way of viewing culinary practice and food culture certainly embodies Fisher's interdisciplinary and philosophical approach to culinary practice and cuisine. The reach of Fisher's influence, of course, extends beyond the world of food blogging. The rise in popularity of creative non-fiction centered on culinary practice from authors such as Anthony Bourdain and Reichl, for example, demonstrates another significant way that Fisher shifted how writers approach and consider food and culinary practice. Through literature, more

writers contemplate the pervasive power of food in our everyday lives and in our culture; the way that they do so stems from Fisher's vast body of work and her process.

The presence of culinary practice-as-art today, whether through individual chefs or sites such as farmers markets and gastropubs such as Spotted Pig, demonstrates how this system and its in-progress nature consistently evolved and was adapted to alter the American culinary landscape. From Child's television programs and her cookbooks along with Fisher's breadth of writing, this system initiated the overhaul of American cuisine in the late 1960's, but this reconfiguration would persist over the following four decades. We are experiencing the results of this dramatic shift now while we also are engaged in further alterations, adapting the system in new and different ways. American cuisine today, with its diversity, attention to history, and embrace of local materials, reveals how culinary practice-as-art operates as a dynamic and hybrid system with elastic boundaries, interdependent elements, and a privilege of process over product; a linear structure could not have provided these opportunities for change or allowed the gender, labor, and economics systems to realign in productive and liberating ways. Through this system, American cuisine asserts an identity, and American home practitioners—or artists—embrace the pleasures of the table and the pleasures of the process—to “have a good time” and that “one enjoy one's cooking.”

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