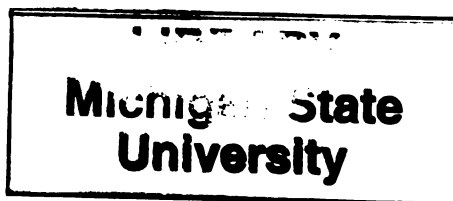




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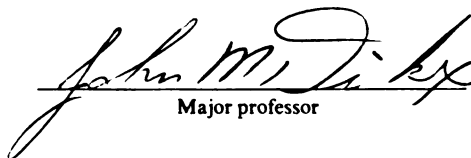
GREAT COOKS AS ADULT LEARNERS:  
THE LORE AND LURE OF THE KITCHEN

presented by

Charles Allen Baker-Clark

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**GREAT COOKS AS ADULT LEARNERS:  
THE LORE AND LURE OF THE KITCHEN**

**By**

**Charles Allen Baker-Clark**

**A DISSERTATION**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of Educational Administration**

**2001**



## **ABSTRACT**

### **GREAT COOKS AS ADULT LEARNERS: THE LORE AND LURE OF THE KITCHEN**

**By**

**Charles Allen Baker-Clark**

The field of adult education has been identified by a number of characteristics that are associated with adult learners. Among these is self-directedness. For the purposes of this study, self-directedness was conceptualized as a process in which adult learners identify goals, select resources and decide on criteria for success.

In addition to self-directed learning, mentoring has been viewed by many authors as being an important factor in ensuring adults' successful learning. In this study, mentoring was considered as an interpersonal process in which a person with more experience encouraged and assisted a protégé to embark upon a journey involving the acquisition of new knowledge and/or skills with the end result being some transformation of the protégé.

In this study, biographical information on three subjects identified as good cooks was used to develop an understanding of their learning processes. Data from the study showed that it was useful to examine self-directed learning projects over an extended period of time and that they might be part of an overall learning career. Information on mentoring suggested that the concept of a mentor needs to be expanded and that the behavior and attitudes of the mentor can have a considerable impact on a protégé.

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2001

## DEDICATION

In loving memory of QU

Father, friend, counselor

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been many people who have entered my life and have left indelible marks upon my soul. It is these people and countless others whose influence has shaped my thinking and feeling in such a way that this project became possible.

At this time, I wish to thank my advisor, John Dirkx and the rest of my dissertation committee whose input and encouragement have added depth and richness to my work.

I owe a great debt to the many other teachers in my life, especially the culinary faculty at Grand Rapids Community College. I also want to thank Chef Susan Spicer who acted as an extraordinary example of a chef dedicated to the perfection of her craft.

I have also been blessed by the many family members who have been examples of adult learning. My mother Jeanne returned to college after having nine children. The liberal arts college where she applied for admission was reluctant to admit her, but she prevailed and proceeded to obtain a masters degree and teach an entire generation of children challenged with learning disabilities. Mary, one of my siblings, put herself through law school while working full time at a supermarket. My sister Marguerite learned several foreign languages and how to negotiate the cultures of many different countries in order to work successfully with her European employer. Finally, I have been strongly influenced by two dear aunts, Elizabeth and Marguerite who have acted as role models, friends and surrogate mothers.

Perhaps the single most important influence in my life has been the person to whom I have been married for over 14 years. Susan Baker-Clark has shared her name and her life with me. On more than one occasion, she has set aside her own interests in order to permit me to pursue my dreams. She has been a coach, mentor and best friend. I will always be in her debt.

## PREFACE

I am a cook, a teacher and a writer. My life has, through many different paths, brought me to this point. In part, I have been shaped by important early life experiences. I am the oldest child of a large Catholic family. For my family, food and the sharing of meals were important parts of our lives. This was particularly evident at the regular Sunday dinners we shared at our maternal grandparents' large home in which members of three generations ate together. These large meals were punctuated by the foods prepared by my mother and her mother. They also featured conflicts, story telling and many other shared experience.

Much of the knowledge I developed from these gatherings was about our family's extended kin network. I heard my grandparents talk about the Chicago fire, the depression and of ancestors who fought in the revolution. One uncle spoke of commanding PT boats in the Solomon Islands during World War II, and a great uncle told us children about flying a bi-plane over France during World War I—something he called “a bathtub with wings.” I thus matured with a deep appreciation for the importance of a good story.

As I matured, I developed a love for food and its preparation. I also developed an appreciation for sharing of domestic tasks. My father, for example, would return home in the afternoons from his work as a high school guidance counselor. On the evenings that my mother attended night school, Dad would prepare our dinner, clean the house, and do one or two loads of laundry. He would frequently ask the children for assistance. He would say, for example, “Come on Charlie, help me strip the beds and fold some laundry.” My maternal grandmother would engage me in chores the same way, when she

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quietly and patiently showed me how to make a square corner as I helped her to make up the beds.

Years later, when I changed careers to attend culinary school, I still carried many of these values that were developed in childhood. Food and cooking remain paramount, but so too does the learning that occurs across the rich texture of adulthood and is imbedded in the narratives of our life stories. I continue to value the role of shared tasks and that our roles in life must be flexible. And I will always have a value for a great story. This is why I want to talk about a few great cooks and how their learning has enriched our lives.

*Bon appétit!*

Charlie

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

*Following the Path of Crafts draws us into the process of working in the present moment. On the Path of Craft we develop intense enjoyment in the moment-to-moment action of our work, turning even the most mundane task into a soulful meditation. On the Path of Crafts we don't just celebrate end results; we learn to enjoy the journey. (Klein & Izzo, 1999)*

Laurent Daloz (1986; 1999), in his books on mentoring and its impact on adult learners talks about the importance of stories as a way of making sense out of life's changes. He emphasizes the need to understand the stories that help to illuminate the journeys of adult learners. This paper is an attempt to understand, by the way of their life stories, how three individuals, James Beard, Julia Child and Elizabeth David, learned to become excellent cooks.

The lives of these cooks thus provide us with a source of narrative, or stories that help to illustrate the richness and complexity of learning in adulthood. In the case of Julia Child, for example, we can trace a path that lead Julia Mc Williams from viewing cooking as a drudgery to the production of her television series and her "try something new" smile that created an icon for at least two generations of ambitious gourmet cooks.

Laurent Daloz (1986; 1999), among others, insists that we have much to learn from stories such as these. By using stories from subjects' lives, we are able to develop knowledge about adult learning that is animated; these ideas become alive as they are illustrated in a territory that Donald Schon (1995) refers to as the "swampy lowlands" of practice. This is a territory where theory is not very precise, and causality, explanation

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and prediction are not clear-cut. We learn from our subjects' lives and their relationship with mentors, however, that the entry into unfamiliar territory can be as exciting and rewarding as it is challenging. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to forge a deeper understanding of informal learning in adulthood and the role played by mentors to facilitate this form of learning.

## Subjects

The fact that this study has an emphasis on informal adult learning directs the selection of subjects. Although some of the information in this paper has been drawn from Michael Ruhlman's experiences as a student in the Culinary Institute of America, this study is not designed to examine formal education in the culinary arts or any other setting. This is, instead, an examination of how adults learn outside the context of schools.

I chose three remarkable individuals who have been recognized for years as being representative of excellence in cooking. In addition these subjects have had a considerable amount of literature focused on their lives. This literature provides a rich source of information that details not only subjects' lives, but also the elaborate interpersonal and social factors that have influenced their learning.

There are, however, many others who have been recognized for their contribution to the craft of cooking. While this study has a focus on the three aforementioned subjects, a number of others have been included. These other ancillary subjects have also been recognized for their contribution to our understanding of food and cookery. The inclusion of these other subjects, however, is primarily to illustrate the data gathered from the lives of the primary subjects.

1. Georges Auguste Escoffier is widely recognized as one of the most famous chefs in Western cultures. He is credited with cataloging and organizing thousands of recipes associated with French cuisine. He also designed the brigade system in professional kitchens.
2. Henri Charpentier began his apprenticeship as a cook at the age of 10. During his career that spanned seven decades, he cooked for such notables as Queen Victoria and Marilyn Monroe. Charpentier has been credited with dishes such as *crêpes Suzette*, which he created at the age of 14. Toward the latter stages of his career, Charpentier's restaurant in California was so popular it was booked with reservations four years in advance.
3. Ruth Reichl is the author of the best selling book, *Tender at the Bone*, a memoir of her life bound up by her relationship with food and cooking. She is the editor in chief of *Gourmet* magazine and the editor of the Modern Library Food Series. Ruth is a former restaurant critic of the New York Times, as well as food editor and restaurant critic of the Los Angeles Times.
4. Richard Olney has been described as one of the best cooks of the twentieth century. He wrote a number of books related to food and wine. His book, *Simple French Food* (1974) is considered to be one of the best compilations of French recipes, as well as an excellent teaching tool. The strength in this cookbook, moreover, is its descriptions of the foods, and that it teaches far more than the ingredients and procedures needed in order to produce a particular item. Olney's teaching became well known throughout the culinary world. Despite the fact that Olney lived in a

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small home in rural France, many cooks such as Alice Waters traveled to this remote region to learn cookery from him.

5. Betty Fussell is widely known as a food historian. Although her doctorate is in English literature, Betty is known primarily for books such as *I Hear America Cooking* (1986), and *The Story of Corn* (1992). This latter book gained her a Julia Child Cookbook Award from the International Society of Culinary Professionals.
6. Michael Ruhlman has written several publications about the craft of cooking. In one book, *The Making of a Chef* (1997), Ruhlman describes his tenure as a culinary student at the Culinary Institute of America.
7. Madeleine Kamman is the author of seven cookbooks. She has been respected for decades as a culinary educator. In 1962, she began teaching French cuisine and pastry at Adult Education School in Philadelphia. She opened her own school in 1971. Madeleine has earned an honorary doctorate from Johnson and Wales University. She has also been awarded knighthood in France's *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*.

### Learning and Biography

The data for this study has been obtained from both biographical and autobiographical information that has been published about the subjects. While this is a rich source of information, the use of biographies and autobiographies faces certain challenges. A major difficulty in using biographies is that they are not primary data such as transcripts from interviews. The researcher utilizing these sources is “removed” from the primary data by an interpretive lens of the biographer. The reader, or researcher, therefore, is held at the mercy of the biographer who has a particular agenda or interest in a subject's life.



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This problem is demonstrated in the life of James Beard. One of Beard's biographers, Robert Clark (1996), has devoted a considerable amount of space in his biography, *The Solace of Food: A Life of James Beard*, to Beard's homosexuality. Clark, for example, discussed Beard's expulsion from college as probably being influenced by Beard's sexual preference. Clark also chronicles Beard's different relationships throughout the book. In his book, *Epicurean Delight: The Life and Times of James Beard*, Evan Jones (1990) hardly mentions Beard's sexuality. Regardless of the importance of this information, the reader does not usually participate in determining what information is and is not to be published. Biographers and their publishers typically make these decisions.

The risks in using autobiographical information are similar to those associated with biographies. True, the writer is providing information that is closer to the original source. The autobiographer may also have a particular agenda that intervenes between the reader and the original data. The writer of an autobiography may, for example, provide only information that is positive.

In order to address the challenges presented by this data, I have employed more than one source of information for each subject. In the case of Elizabeth David, for example, I have used two biographies as well as information written about her life in magazine articles. By combining different perspectives of the same subject, I hope to increase validity. The reader of this paper, however, needs to proceed with caution before drawing conclusions about the data.

Even though work with these sources of information has its challenges, the information they reveal is rich in its complexity. It is the mixture of stories about and by these three subjects that is at the heart of this study. The narrative information provided

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in this study helps us to develop an understanding of learning that acknowledges the intersection of cognitive, affective and motivational components of associated with adult learning (Rossiter, 1999). It also reveals the complex social context in which subjects learned and practiced their craft.

The rich tradition of biographical literature has provided information in the form of life stories about many different topics, including food and cooking. Memories of food and family from the Sicilian-American community in Brooklyn, New York have, for example, been the subject of Vincent Schiavelli's writing (1993; 1998). In a similar vein, Norma Jean and Carole Darden (1994) have written about African American family heritage and their traditional foods in their book, *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine*. In a book edited by Arlene Voski Avakian (1997), various women write about their families and the special meaning of cooking and food in their lives. The essays in this book, however, are not simply about food. They also address a special form of learning between women across generations of their extended kin networks. This knowledge, about learning across the span of generations can be understood as a relatively clear concept. However, a different form of knowing arises as we read stories such as the following written by Aurora Levins Morales (1997) .

...when I lift the lid from that big black pot, my kitchen fills with the hands of women who came before me, washing rice, washing beans, picking through them so deftly, so swiftly, that I could never see whet the defects were in the beans they threw quickly over one shoulder out the window. (p. 296)

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Morales provides us with a portrait of herself as an educated urban resident of California with her upscale lifestyle who is touched at a very deep level by the work of women who preceded her in her family and their devotion to cooking.

It is through the quiet voice of Elizabeth Ehrlich (1998), that we encounter a relationship between her and her mother-in-law Miriam. In this story, we appreciate the learning about cooking and many other important facets of her life that Elizabeth experienced through this relationship. It is, perhaps, through Ehrlich's words that we catch a glimpse of the rich descriptive qualities of life stories and their potential to teach us about our own lives.

When I am with Miriam in the kitchen, she speaks of the past. I listen, trying to imagine the world from which her cuisine came. I know gefilte fish tastes different if you chop it by hand; I'm sure the flavor is altered if you have lived Miriam's life. Yet serious cooking is an essentially optimistic act. It reaches into the future, vanishes from memory, and creates the desire for another meal. (p. xii)

From this reflection, we get a sense of the knowledge in understanding the nature of gefilte fish, as well as an appreciation for Miriam's life and a gift of their relationship—a deep understanding of cooking as a part of Elizabeth's identity. And it is we who also reach for the future in an attempt to write our own stories. It is also a matter of identity and its expression in narrative that Annie Brooks and Carolyn Clark (2001) suggest when they state that, as human beings we live storied lives.

How do these stories affect us to such a great extent? When we read about five generations of Mexican cuisine told in *Recipe of Memory*, a book by Victor Valle and

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Mary Lau Valle (1995), could our interest be fueled by the fact that their narrative parallels a way by which we give meaning to our own lives (Rossiter, 1999)?

The value for biographical information as a way to understand learning and meaning making has been described in an earlier paper that I wrote (1998). In this paper, I suggested that a major benefit from encountering biographies, especially those accounts of people different from the reader, is an exposure to human variety, and an appreciation of the lives of others (Erben, 1996). This increased knowledge can then provide an opportunity for us to create our own new life stories from an expanded reservoir of experiences.

One way by which the narrative nature of biographies informs us is that we can view learning in a context that is holistic. According to Annie Brooks and Carolyn Clark (2001), "Narrative includes the cognitive, affective, spiritual, and somatic dimensions of personhood." These writers point to the power of stories and their ability to appeal to our affect. A case in point is provided in Michael Pollan's poignant description of his learning carpentry in order to build his office—a place of his own. In this story, we observe Pollan as he works with a seasoned carpenter and while they are attempting to construct the building's frame, they discover that it is slightly out of plumb.

Joe [the carpenter] cocked one eye and looked at me darkly, an expression that made plain he regarded my hopeful stab at non-Euclidean geometry as an instance not of apostasy but madness.

"Mike, you don't even want to know all the problems that a building this far out of square is going to have. Trust me—it is your worst nightmare."

(p. 155)



What we discover from this interchange is more complete than the information about framing that might be readily available in a carpentry manual. We also learn about the strength of feelings associated with such themes in adult learning as failure and self-respect. We learn these as our spirits rise and fall with this writer's narrative.

Another example of the power of affect in teaching us about other's lives can be drawn from Patricia Hampl's (1981) book, *A Romantic Education*, which was devoted to her search for understanding about her Czech heritage. In the Afterword, written years after the original publication of the book, Hampl (1999) describes her return to Czechoslovakia to meet some of the people who she had written about in her book. During Patricia's visit, her Czech friends surprised her by playing a taped book. Hampl's mastery of the Czech language was still not very good. She sat quietly listening to the voice on the tape.

Then, like a spark ignited at the base of my skull, some fugitive riff or rhythm penetrated: I understood in an instant that these low purring sounds, these rises and falls of expression were—my words. It was a passage from *A Romantic Education* about my grandmother's Sunday dinners. I looked up, staring like someone who has seen a ghost. My friends were regarding me steadily, smiles spreading slowly across their good faces. Tears sprang to my eyes; their eyes were bright too.

"Potato!" I cried madly. "I heard her say potato!"

"It's a very good translation," Anna said. "Perfect."

We played the tape three times, and cried, and drank some more wine.

And then there was cake, after all. (p. 342)

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Even though one can come to an understanding of her heritage through the study of genealogy, the knowledge furnished by this passage gives a more human understanding of Patricia and what it was for her to experience her ethnicity and her connection to her Czech roots. We may even come to this knowledge as our eyes glaze over along with Patricia's.

These two stories direct our attention to the importance of life experience and its relationship to adult education. By engaging in an inquiry that emphasizes the interpretation of lives, we are able to find meaning in human experience (Weiland, 1997). This meaning, moreover, is close to us; it makes sense at a very deep level. And in this study, our understanding of the meaning created in subjects' lives is furthered because we are examining narratives that spring from many different perspectives. They are about *and* by lifelong learners.

The organization of information from the study presents a life story in chapters two, three and four. In each chapter, an overview of the subject's life story is presented. This overview presents a rich backdrop upon which we can understand the subject's learning. The balance of each of these chapters recapitulates each subject's life with an emphasis on learning the craft of cooking. The recapitulation of each biography with this focus enables the reader to develop an understanding of subjects' learning from a developmental perspective. The developmental perspective enables the reader to appreciate the complex and interrelated learning activities occurring around a single theme throughout a lifespan. Understanding the rich interpersonal web associated with learning and the equally rich and intricate social milieu in which subjects have lived further enriches this developmental perspective.

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## Data Analysis

From this biographical data, I have identified different important themes relevant to our understanding of adult learning. These themes have been narrowed to an examination of independent, self-directed learning projects and the nature of mentoring.

In order to analyze information from this biographical data, I have conducted a document analysis as described by Ian Hodder (1994, 2000) and David Altheide (1996). The review of data, therefore, consisted of a search for information through the analysis of the selected texts—biographies, autobiographies, articles, essays, and other written information by and about subjects. The form of inquiry to be utilized is described by Paul Atkinson and Amanda Coffey (1997) who utilize the term “documented realities” to describe the investigation into texts and other documents. David Altheide (1996) represents yet another view toward the use of documents and he uses the term ethnographic content analysis. These writers, as well as others such as Clifford Geertz (1973) underscore the use of documents as an important source of *primary* data.

These different sources of information combine to reveal interesting information about the nature of adult learning. One important aspect of adult learning illustrated by this study has been information regarding subjects’ development of their craft throughout the lifespan. This understanding furnishes a sense of the interrelationship of different types of learning centered about a particular theme; in this case, the craft of cooking. By examining learning that has occurred across the lifespan, it is possible to detect much more than a chronicle of learning. These subjects appeared to unfold as they learned, practiced and taught their craft. This process of unfolding might be considered as a form of career or lifelong project, but with existential overtones. These subjects did not simply

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learn cookery; it became an integral part of their selves. In fact, none of the three subjects embarked on a “career” in cooking at the onset of their learning the craft. It was as though the craft “chose” each of them. By the time James Beard, Julia Child and Elizabeth David recognized they were in a food-related occupation, they were deeply involved with the craft.

It is within the context of subjects’ personal development; we can begin to understand cooking as a craft that whose mastery places certain unique demands upon the adult learner. The craft of cooking, for example, is based upon a mixture of cognitive, psychomotor and sensory processes. This idea is illustrated by the good cook who, at one level of understanding, can explain how an egg yolk “binds together” the dressing for a Caesar salad. And at another level, this same cook possesses knowledge of the rhythmic beating of the fork as it mixes yolk with oil, the pungency of the dressing’s bouquet and its sharp taste possessed by the essence of raw garlic, Dijon mustard, anchovy, lemon and Tabasco.

It is the fusion of cognitive, affective, psychomotor and sensory processes that may make learning cooking as a craft a process that is unique to adulthood. Is it, for example, a coincidence that all three subjects embarked on their journeys into the craft during middle adulthood? I am not claiming that younger learners such as adolescents do not acquire cooking skills. However, it is feasible that the sense of taste needs to mature, in order to develop a critical understanding of food and cookery.

Perhaps yet another interesting aspect of the craft of cooking, is the importance of engaging in repetitive tasks. By creating a sauce many different times, the cook develops

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a “sense” for the way by which it is created but also how it might be made with a different ingredient or technique. This same principle applies to entire recipes or menus.

This repetition, however, must be qualitatively different from similar activities experienced by people involved with assembly-like work in quick service restaurants, for there is little to be learned while shoveling frozen hamburger patties into an automatic broiler. The differences between the work of a crafts person and an assembly line worker may contain subtle elements involving differing levels of skill and commitment. It is the understanding of these factors and others that signify the learning processes of great cooks that will be elaborated upon through a review of the lives of James Beard, Julia Child and Elizabeth David.

### Significance

The information developed in this study is rich in its complexity and full of life. Here resides a tension between two different ways of approaching knowledge. On one hand, knowledge generated by educational research can be viewed from a scientific standpoint. However, an alternative point of view challenges the “scientification” of life and suggests that a more qualitative approach is needed to understand a phenomenon as complex as lifelong learning.

The approach to education as a social science has a strong emphasis on factors such as validity and reliability. Through application of a scientific form of inquiry, frequently involving control over variables in order to test hypotheses, practitioners of this social science hope to develop a body of knowledge from which generalizations about theory and practice can be drawn. The emphasis in this approach to understanding is decidedly on prediction and control (Rossiter, 1999). A potential problem associated with the

application of methods of inquiry borrowed from the physical sciences to the understanding of human development is the risk of engaging in a form of reductionism that distorts reality in favor of control and prediction.

It is a narrative form of inquiry that proposes an alternative to the scientific approach. Even though the use of narrative forms of inquiry are challenged on the basis of control, prediction and generalizability, they still provide rich contextual understanding of human phenomena. By utilizing narrative inquiry methods, however, we capture a more complete understanding. The understanding provided by this methodology does indeed provide information, but it also attends to our emotions—it tugs at our hearts.

The social scientist, however, may respond that the information described as “contextual” and “complex” is simply extraneous. She could assert that in order to achieve a thorough, objective understanding of a given phenomenon, it needs to be broken down into manageable parts, analyzed and reconstructed. The distance between researcher and subject material created by this model, moreover, assures a semblance of objectivity.

It is by dissecting subjects such as adult learning, though, that they tend to lose their meaning and the resulting information, however accurate, has little or no value. If, for example, we combine flour, salt and water, press the mixture into shapes and allow it to dry, the result will invariably be pasta. We can then organize pasta by shapes—farfalle (bow ties), occhi di lupo (eyes of the wolves). In addition, we can describe how, in salted, boiling water, pasta should be prepared. This process, however, is but one way to understand pasta.

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Yet another way to understand pasta is through narrative. I was slightly older than 20 when I was sent by the U.S. Navy to work in the naval hospital in Naples Italy. Prior to my departure to Italy, my exposure to Italian food had been minimal—pizza, spaghetti and meatballs and lasagna.

A few days after I arrived at the naval base, a newly acquired friend asked me to join him and several other corpsmen for spaghetti at Giovanni's, a local bar and restaurant where the corpsmen from the naval hospital gathered. When the waitress delivered the plates of spaghetti to our table, I was surprised to see the pasta coated with olive oil and tossed with some fresh herbs and a few pieces of tomato. I tentatively took a small bite and immediately realized that prior to that very moment I had never really tasted spaghetti.

In reading my story, each person may take a slightly different approach to what happened. One person may read this narrative and claim that this brief story is about food, friendship and taking chances. Another person may suggest the story is about life in a different culture. This is not scientific, but it is not meant to be scientific. This is about meaning in life.

In choosing a narrative approach, therefore, I opted for a richer understanding over the greater control and prediction and generalizability offered by more quantitative methods. In part, my choice was based on the type of phenomenon to be investigated—adult learning in the context of the culinary arts.

It is, therefore, a qualitative design with a narrative focus that directs this study. This design has enabled us to further understand the nature of informal adult learning processes.

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What then, is the significance of this study? By using a rich narrative, I want to provide a life-like portrayal of adult learning—in the context of a craft that contains unique elements and may be specific to adulthood.

The focus on adult learning, however, does not diminish the importance of examining food and cooking. Food and cooking are integrally intertwined with our identities. The different foods we eat, as well as how they are prepared provide information about who we are as people, as well as the nature of our culture. In fact, the acquisition and consumption of food can be considered an important way through which cultures are organized (Neustadt, 1992).

The cultural importance of food is echoed by a variety of writers. Thelma Barer-Stein (1999), a food anthropologist, summarizes this sentiment. “There is no cultural group and no individual for whom at least one specific food – the memory, taste or smell of which – does not evoke a pang of loving nostalgia” (p. 14). In their seminal book on the anthropology of eating, Farb and Armelagos (1982) provide interesting examples of the cultural importance of food and eating.

Most notable in simpler societies, but in complex ones as well, eating is closely linked to deep spiritual experiences, as well as social ties. In North America and Europe, weddings and birthdays are celebrated with a cake, formal good wishes are offered with a glass of wine, the Christian rite of communion is celebrated with the distribution of bread and wine, and the Jews observe Passover by eating unleavened bread and bitter herbs. (p.97)

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Consequently, it might be proposed that many, if not most of our ceremonies, rites and rituals are defined, in part by the foods associated with them. A case in point is provided in New Orleans prior to Lent. At that time, it is traditional to serve collops (eggs fried on top of bacon) on the Monday before Ash Wednesday (Wolf, 1996). This dish is identified with the day, known as Collop Monday, because many people give up eggs and bacon for Lent.

The preparation of food also has strong cultural significance. Certain cooking methods have had utilitarian value for members of the cultures in which they are employed. In China, for example, the tradition of stir-frying arose from a need to compensate for a scarcity of fuel (Tisdale, 2000). Other forms of food preparation, however, have been more symbolic in nature. A dish from Chinese cuisine called beggar's chicken is commonly prepared in clay to recreate how the dish was originally created (Yee, 1975). When the dish is presented and the clay is cracked open, it is customary to sound a small gong or bell. Thus, the tradition of both preparation and consumption are intertwined. The dish, red fish *en papiote*, is another example of a tradition taken from the culinary heritage of New Orleans. This Creole preparation involves cooking fish and aromatic vegetables in a paper, heart-shaped sack. The heart shape originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a chef at Antoine's restaurant created the dish to commemorate the arrival of a famous French hot-air balloonist whose balloon was shaped like a heart. Both these dishes, beggars chicken and red fish *en papiote* use essentially the same cooking medium—steam. However, the cultural meaning for each is unique. It is interesting to note that the presentation of both dishes has utilitarian value. In each case, the dish is



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“opened” by a server, who allows the steam to escape in such a way so as to protect the unwary customer from being scalded.

Our vocabulary is filled with words and expressions taken from food. We know, for example, that a man is worth his salt. We also identify a respectable person by referring to her as “a good egg.” If something is of insignificant value, we refer to it as “small potatoes,” while if we can remember a dance called “the mashed potato,” we reveal information about the era in which we came of age.

The consumption of certain foods reveals interesting elements of power within society (Mintz, 1996). This too is reflected in our language. For example, living high on the hog is a term that reflects membership in different social strata. It originates from the Civil War in which officers were served the more desirable meat from the shoulders of the hog, and the enlisted men were provided whatever remained. A similar idea is also captured by the expression “upper crust,” and we celebrate lavishly by “putting on the Ritz,” an expression that emerged in nineteenth century England when Caesar Ritz, the consummate host at the Savoy, encouraged men and women to make dining out a social occasion. This broke with previous customs in which men “dined out” at private clubs with other men.

The significance of this study, therefore, is twofold. Through a close and personal examination of the lives of three great cooks, I have been able to develop a personal and true-to-life portrayal of learning in adulthood. This understanding of subjects’ learning also provides insight into the importance of food and cooking in our lives, as well as how a number of people developed to become great cooks.

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## **Chapter Two**

### **James Beard—The Dean of American Cuisine**

#### **Biography**

James Andrews Beard was born in Portland, Oregon in 1903. He was the son of Elizabeth and John Beard. Elizabeth had immigrated to the United States from England in her teens and had eventually settled in Portland. John Beard was born in Iowa. As a child, he had traveled across the country in a covered wagon with his family to the Pacific Northwest (Clark, 1996).

At the time of James's birth, Elizabeth had owned and managed a small hotel in Portland, the Gladstone. Much of Elizabeth Beard's work centered on management of the kitchen. It was not unusual for her to arise early in the morning in order to ride her bicycle nearly five miles to the market in order to conduct her shopping. Elizabeth subsequently sold the Gladstone and moved the family into a home on Salmon Street where she took in boarders, and continued to maintain a busy kitchen.

Life in Portland at the beginning of the twentieth century was a stimulating environment, and it had a significant impact on James Beard. Evan Jones (1990) describes the vitality of Portland during that era. "When Beard was born, just after the turn of the century, Portland had the appearance of unbridled energy, and was still drawing newcomers from the East along with European immigrants" (p. 27). Perhaps the most intriguing description of Portland is from Beard himself (1964, 1992).

Portland at the time was a rich city with magnificent houses and a tightly knit society composed largely of New Englanders, English and Scots. As the center of the shipping, lumber and fishing industries, it had the raw

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vitality that characterized large port cities of the era. Robust waterfront workers, successful madams, even more successful employees of madams (quite a few of whom eventually reached the social register), and operators of “sailors’ boardinghouses” were all helping to build Portland’s wealth. Meier & Frank had become established as one of the great stores on the West Coast, and a luxury-loving public enjoyed a continuous interchange with the East Coast and Europe. Good food abounded. The great houses maintained fine cooks, society matrons filled their day books with treasured recipes, and the ladies of Trinity Church, the plushy Episcopal house of worship in Portland, published the Web-Foot Cook Book, one of the best of all cookbooks in its genre, and today a collector’s item. (p. 12)

James Beard’s family was highly active in the social life of this stimulating and intriguing community. Their home was the site for many different social events. These gatherings were frequently highlighted by rich and elaborate meals prepared in their home by Elizabeth Beard and the family cook, Ju-Let. Beard (1964, 1992) describes the importance of the kitchen to the life of his family. “I grew up in a kitchen that was the hub of the house and the crossroads of the entire neighborhood” (p. 36). Evan Jones (1990) describes festivities at the Beard house on Christmas Eve.

For the annual “grand open house,” on Christmas Eve, Jim remembered running last-minute errands while his mother fixed food and his father beat dozens of egg yolks and whites with sugar for the frothy drink called Tom and Jerry. “We had a light supper, usually a dish of salt codfish made with a flavorful sauce of garlic, onion, tomato, ripe olives and olive

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oil.” The hot drinks were served early as the guests arrived. For them the buffet table was often laden with suckling pig, salad, sandwiches and crayfish in wine. There were homemade sausages—goose liver, blutwurst, cervelat, *weisswurst*—for the buffet. Sometimes there were cups of oyster stew made with Olympia oysters and cream, and crabmeat fritters or chicken patties. (p. 48)

Elizabeth, in particular, included James in many different cultural activities. According to Robert Clark (1996) “At home she [Elizabeth Beard] continued James’s cultural education, and he served as her escort at the opera, the theater, and in restaurants” (p. 40). At an early age, James became a sophisticated diner with a discriminating palate. And from early childhood, James was immersed in the complex social world of adults.

As James Beard continued to develop, he became increasingly interested in the theater and opera. He participated in high school and community theater productions. After less than a year at Reed College in Portland, however, Beard ended his formal education (Clark, 1996; Jones, 1990). Elizabeth agreed to subsidize his education in the opera and the two of them agreed that James needed to get out of Portland and study in Europe under the tutelage of a professional voice coach.

James Beard subsequently embarked on the *Highland Heather*, a freighter bound for England in pursuit of a career in the opera. It was 1922, and the trip was memorable. James first encounter with an international marketplace occurred during the trip when the ship docked at the island of St. Thomas. He also experienced one of the most unforgettable meals of his life when he disembarked from the ship (Clark, 1996). “On



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arrival in Southampton, James gorged himself on pea soup, lamb cutlets and potatoes in their skins at the station restaurant while waiting for the train to London” (p. 69).

In London, James Beard trained as an opera singer under the direction of Gaetano Loria, a voice coach (Jones, 1990) who had once worked with Caruso. Perhaps the most significant culinary learning of this stage of his life was Beard’s exposure to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of London and Paris and their markets. He returned to the United States in 1924, upon the insistence of his mother who was unwilling to provide additional funds for James to remain in Europe.

Instead of returning to Portland, Beard traveled from England to New York City. He attempted to obtain work as an actor and subsequently returned to Portland. In Portland, he was able to secure employment with a theater company. He also worked for a radio broadcasting company. In 1927, James traveled to Hollywood and was able to earn minor parts in several films including De Mille’s *King of Kings* (Clark, 1996).

After several years of attempting to find steady employment in the film industry, Beard returned to the Northwest. He stayed in Seattle until 1931 and then moved back to Portland. In Portland, James lived with his parents. He again found steady work as a radio performer and earned major roles in several plays including the production of Rice’s *The Adding Machine* (Clark, 1996; Jones, 1990). Throughout this stage of James Beard’s life, he continued to develop his cooking skills and was able to use them to meet people and form social alliances. A case in point is when Beard cooked for the De Mille family. He was also able to parlay his cooking skills into income from providing cooking lessons (Clark, 1996).

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In 1937 James Beard returned to New York for a final attempt to establish himself as an actor. He also attempted to find work backstage in costume and set design. While Beard continued to experience frustration with his attempts to establish a career in theater, his cooking skills continued to develop. Evan Jones (1990) provides some insight as to how Beard was able to capitalize on his cooking skills.

Sometimes, Hattie said, the friends would pool their money, and Jim would do the cooking. One night, she remembered, as they turned the corner under the Sixth Avenue El and started up his brownstone steps, Beard saw a big basket of field mushrooms outside the basement grocery that spilled out onto the sidewalk. “Jim transformed them into enormous plates of mushrooms and toast—oceans of both.” In addition, there were those times, as his social circle expanded, when Jim “sang for his supper.” As he had in his first New York stint, he concocted feasts for new acquaintances, who, taken by his companionship, began to include him on their guest lists. (p. 85)

It was through James’ expanding social contacts that he was able to make the acquaintance of Bill Rhode and his sister Irma (Beard, 1964, 1992; Clark, 1996; Jones, 1990). Together, they developed a catering business, *Hors d’ Oeuvres, Inc.* This business was designed to provide food for the numerous cocktail parties that occurred daily in Manhattan (Beard, 1964, 1992; Clark, 1996; Jones, 1990). This development proved to be an important episode in Beard’s life. It was not simply a way for him to express his creativity in designing different hors d’ oeuvres. James was involved with every aspect of the business including menu design, recipe development, purchasing,

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production, delivery and probably a considerable amount of problem solving. The business was an immediate success and was given a favorable review by Lucius Beebe in the New York Times (Jones, 1990).

As the popularity of Hors d' Oeuvre, Inc. expanded Beard's social network, he met Jeanne Owen, a prominent member of the food scene in New York. Owen groomed James as a sort of protégé (Clark, 1996). She greatly expanded Beard's culinary repertoire by instructing him in the theory and practice of French cuisine. Evan Jones (1990) described Owen as being Beard's closest friend in New York and quoted him as saying that Owen taught him the most about cooking. Jeanne also taught Beard about wines. Together, Beard and Owen visited many different restaurants. She became even more prominent as his mentor in 1940 after Elizabeth Beard died (Clark, 1996).

It was Beard's connection to Jeanne Owen that facilitated the publication of his first book, *Hors d' Oeuvres and Canapés* (1940). This book has experienced a lasting following and remains in print today. In 1944, Beard published *Cook it Outdoors* (Beard, 1942). This was followed in 1944 by *Fowl & Game Cookery* (Beard, 1944).

During World War II, James continued to expand his knowledge of food and cooking. He worked as a roving manager of clubs for sailors in the merchant marine. In this capacity, Beard had to hire cooking staff and designed menus. At times, his work involved training staff and this continued his education. Since most of these clubs were located overseas, his position provided him with an opportunity to learn about different products and cooking techniques.

After the war, James had an opportunity to audition for a role on a television program that was broadcast in New York. His acting and radio experience provided Beard with

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the requisite skills for providing a regular cooking segment on a program called *For You and Yours*.” Beard’s segment was so popular that NBC designed a show for him, *Elsie Presents James Beard in ‘I Love to Eat!’* This show ran from August 1946 through May 1947. Robert Clark (1996) cites a lack of sponsorship of the new medium as the primary reason for the relatively rapid cancellation of Beard’s show.

James Beard’s popularity continued to grow throughout the 1950’s He continued to publish books. In addition, he began to write columns for many different periodicals including *Mc Call’s*, *Ladies Home Journal* and *House & Garden*. Beard’s expertise in cooking, moreover, was not limited to writing for women’s magazines. His understanding of outdoor and game cookery made him a popular writer for men’s magazines such as *Argosy*.

A significant development in Beard’s career during the 1950’s was his establishment of a cooking school in New York. The school was featured in a New York Times article (Clark, 1996). It also received a favorable nod from Sheila Hibben in *The New Yorker*, who focused on the authoritative and relaxed style of the two instructors, one of whom was James Beard.

In the 1960’s Beard became popular as a spokesperson for food and appliance manufacturers. The cooking school was named after him. His publications increased considerably. It was during this decade that James’s health began to fail.

Despite his health problems, Beard continued to cook and teach throughout the 1970’s. He also kept up with a demanding writing schedule. Some of the books published under Beard’s name in the 1970’s included *James Beard’s American Cookery*



(1971), *Beard on Bread* (1973), and *James Beard's Theory & Practice of Good Cooking* (1977).

By the end of the 1970's Beard's continued failing health limited his travel and teaching. On January 23, 1984, he died at the age of 81. It is apparent that James Beard, who wrote and published over 20 books on food, wrote numerous articles and taught countless aspiring cooks earned the title "Dean of American Cuisine." Beard's biographer Robert Clark (1996) summarizes his impact.

Today it is clear that in a number of ways he moves among us, both in the works he left behind and as a presence not so very different from what he was in life. Of his twenty-two books, at least half remain in print, and many continue to enjoy significant sales. Restaurants and food purveyors still advertise endorsements or mentions he made of them a decade or more before. People frequently express surprise to hear he is dead; close friends and colleagues slip effortlessly and nearly without notice from past to present tense when they discuss him. (p. 330).

Perhaps James Beard's lasting legacy is that he discovered something in life that he truly loved. He affected his students, readers and colleagues by his ability to both learn and teach, and by sharing his devotion to the craft of cooking.

#### **Learning to Cook Throughout Life**

In the later years of his life, James Beard remarked (1977, 1999) that the secret of good cooking is a love for it. Surely, James Beard demonstrated a love for food and cooking throughout his life. Undoubtedly, this love had its origins in Beard's immediate family. Robert Clark (1996) describes the attitudes of this family towards food. "The

Beards were better off than most comparable families. Elizabeth knew where to shop, how to cook and had catholic tastes based on travel and experience” (p. 32).

When we think of Beard’s early experiences with food and cooking, three individuals become prominent in his early years. These are his parents and a family cook, Jue-Let. Each of these individuals cooked and expressed pride in her/his recipes and cooking. Beard’s own words reveal his perception of the influence of these individuals. “The two [his mother and her cook Jue-Let] still had their battles—and continued to produce food wonderful beyond belief. And with my appearance, they developed a new pride in the mastery of their art. Both wanted to instill in me a love of food...” (p. 29). At an early age, therefore, Beard learned as much from the behavior of significant people in his life as he did from their words.

Much of Beard’s love of cooking may have arisen from food’s place in the subtle rhythms of the Beard household. Evan Jones (1990) notes that Beard’s memory of cooking in the family also acknowledged the contribution of his father. Jones describes John Beard’s careful attention to the production of Sunday breakfast.

His routine started with the hand-slicing of bacon which he cut into thin strips; “don’t think for one minute that sliced bacon was ever allowed in his house.” He cooked the bacon strips over a low fire, so they became crackly, and left the pan with almost a quarter inch of hot fat. Into the fat he put chicken pieces dusted in flour, searing them quickly and turning them to make sure each was equally browned. After the pieces had simmered about 15 minutes, his son reported, John Beard would remove

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the pan's cover and let his work of art acquire just the right crispness and color. The making of chicken gravy was the final rite. (pp. 31-32)

Words such as "work of art," and the care that John Beard applied to his work reveal recognition that the process of cooking was as important to that family as the final products that were consumed.

A deep appreciation of food and cooking is what Beard developed very early in life. However, he needed to develop a complex set of skills as part of his craft. His early lessons in cooking may have developed as a result of his permission to explore and experiment in the kitchen from a very early age. He was also furnished with many opportunities to observe the various family cooks. As an infant, he was permitted to crawl around the kitchen. In his memoir, Beard (1964, 1992) relates a story about his early childhood in which he got into the larder and consumed an entire onion. His biographer, Robert Clark (1996) portrays the young Beard as waddling through the kitchen and exploring every aspect of it.

Beard's childhood explorations in food and cooking occurred in many different circumstances. He spent a considerable amount of time at the beach. The family often cooked at the beach and James would frequently hunt razor clams for his mother to sauté. Later in childhood, James taught other children the art of capturing those same clams that could burrow rapidly beyond reach in the wet sand. James (1964, 1992) discusses his childhood gastronomic exploits at the beach.

Once in a while I would go off on my own with one or two of my friends for an all-day jaunt to the beach, and we would carry food to be eaten there. We made many experiments. We tried grilling small fish we had

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caught in the rivers around us. The first attempt was a total failure; with the next, we at least achieved edibility; and finally we learned the secret of slow cooking—undercooking almost. Fortunately we had frankfurters along with us during the period of trial and error, so we didn't starve. (p. 248)

While this example illustrates the importance of James's license to experiment, it also shows that there were many factors involved with his learning, and that they were interconnected. For example, this brief vignette also illustrates the need to be able to deal with failures and treat them as a form of learning. The way Beard learned to deal with failures in cooking probably influenced the way he taught novice cooks later in life. These experiences also reinforced the social aspects of cooking and eating.

Experiences such as this, as well as the knowledge James received about cooking from these three influential people in his family again reveals an interconnected nature of factors involved with James Beard's early culinary education. Certainly, his parents modeled attitudes toward food and cooking. In addition to their passion for the craft of cooking, John and Elizabeth demonstrated a strong value for quality cooking. Evan Jones (1990) illustrates the strong value this family had for excellence in cooking. "There was little tolerance for anyone who didn't understand that food was worth creative effort from cooks. Jim, even as a small boy, learned to recognize the cooks in the family who didn't care" (p. 33). Later in life, Beard discussed his early development of a value for quality food with Jones (1978). "Maybe I was precocious in that way [cooking]—I got pleasure in blending satisfying flavors, and with a family that liked eating in restaurants. I soon grew intolerant of food that had no more than mediocre

taste” (p. 30). James Beard’s learning arose from his relationship with different people, but we can detect the existence of complicated emotions—the thrill of adventure, pleasure, satisfaction, passion and even intolerance—that were associated with his learning.

Aside from modeling important attitudes and values, James’s family promoted specific skills. His mother, in particular, provided many different lessons regarding the importance of shopping and understanding products used in cooking. For example, she constantly emphasized the need for quality foods. In fact, she was relentless in the pursuit of good foods. Her standards became legendary as illustrated by the following story (Beard, 1964, 1992).

I particularly remember one very early visit to the market in the company of my nursemaid. We had just been to the doctor’s and on the way back stopped to buy a few things for my mother. When they were wrapped and handed to the maid, she said quietly, “Please charge them to Mrs. Beard.” The clerk blanched and said, “For God’s sake, give me that package. If I sent that to *her*, she’d kill me!” (p. 49)

Beard (1964, 1992) later discussed the importance of his visits to the marketplace.

Thus it was that I learned as a child to enjoy many vegetables considered outlandish by most other people—cardoons, broccoli, eggplant, zucchini, mustard greens, baby turnips, fava beans, varieties of shell and snap beans, and every type of melon one could dream of. (p.42)

We can detect in his words that the knowledge Beard gained in the marketplace was manifested in different ways. He did learn to recognize different products, but his

knowledge was also sensory. Beard began to develop, for example, a trait he would later refer to as taste memory. In an interview with Evan Jones (1978) James described his development of “taste Memory” as a “God-given talent” and that he could remember many meals as long as 40 years after they occurred. In this example, we begin to appreciate the complexity of cookery as a subject of learning.

Beard (1964, 1992) learned from his mother’s work at the marketplace later reflected on the importance of the marketplace as a source of important learning. “I felt at home in the marketplace [St. Thomas, age 20], as crude as it was, and it was there I first discovered my affinity for market folk and first sensed the character of a country through its food” (p. 58). We can see in his quote that he also discusses the importance of the social component of the market.

The use of many different food products suggests a degree of daring. Beard (1964, 1992) demonstrates this in his description of his first encounter with fresh morels in the marketplace. “One could even find morels in the market. I remember the first time I saw them. I was quite shocked by their appearance. To me they resembled dried-up brains (they still do) and I couldn’t imagine what they were” (p. 49). This set of experiences with different marketplaces also influenced Beard’s later teaching. For example, in another publication (Skow, 1966), Beard insisted that cooks need to be open to new products and experiences. “You have to be venturesome, and the thing to remember is to eat seasonal food in season and regional food where it is grown. If you insist on lobster in Kansas, you’ll get it, and you’ll deserve it” (p. 30). His words also reveal a need for cooks to be practical and to use products that are fresh and available.



Elizabeth Beard also demonstrated to her son that there is far more to purchasing produce and other foods than having an understanding of products and an appreciation for quality. Purchasing also entailed the development of mutually beneficial relationships. In his autobiography, James (1964, 1992) discusses his mother's relationship with a local vegetable purveyor.

Delfino grew great quantities of sweet basil, and he would bring us armloads of it. Mother learned from him how to use basil in *pesto*, the wonderful green sauce made with this herb, olive oil, garlic, grated cheese, salt and pepper and sometimes pine nuts; and she learned another heavenly sauce which was simply a blend of tomato, basil, salt and pepper and a touch of garlic. She was taught to put the herb to still another use by adding strips of it to a tomato salad, giving it a glory it had never known.

(p. 46)

This example illustrates different lessons that were available to James. One such lesson is the need to search for knowledge from many different types of relationships. Another is that by understanding different techniques, the knowledge of a specific product can be applied to many different foods. Foods can also be paired in different ways. An example of pairing foods in different ways is provided in the quote. Here, Beard discusses the use of the herb, basil, in a salad. Another example came from his mother who occasionally cooked new potatoes with tender peas from the garden and lettuce leaves. Beard remarked that the combination of flavors in this dish was wonderful, yet the dish is very simple to produce.

The development of relationships with food purveyors provided additional benefits to the Beard family. Beard (1964, 1992) describes his recollection of their relationship with a local dairy. “Sometimes unusual types of cheese would arrive at La Grande Creamery, and we were sent bits to sample, for, after all, we were pretty good customers, in or out of the hotel business” (p. 51).

An understanding of the marketplace and the many different types of available foods it offers represents an important set of lessons modeled for James by his parents and Jue Let. They also provided James with a deep understanding of different cooking techniques. Evan Jones (1990) shows how James learned grilling from his mother. “It was then that Beard learned his mother’s knack for grilling salmon over glowing coals brushing the fish with bacon fat or butter; and her patience in broiling a steak to perfection” (p. 19). James (Beard, 1942) later drew from these early experiences when he wrote and taught about the art of grilling.

Frequently, the same food was prepared in different ways by different role models. Beard described how members of the family baked bread. “Our daily bread varied. Let made a bread that was best eaten fresh. Mother made a more stalwart bread.” (p. 30). He also discussed different types of rolls that were produced in their kitchen. “Very early in life I came to adore the smell of good things baking. In the morning there were the light rolls made by Let. My father’s roll was always baked in a one-pound baking powder can and blossomed over the top” (p. 29).

The techniques James learned from different family members, however, did not have to be complicated in order to be useful. Beard (1964, 1992) suggests that much of the craft of cooking may be build upon mastery of different simple techniques such as the

one illustrated in the following example. “Let had been taught to soak the currents well before folding them into the dough [for currant bread]. What a flavor this gave, and how it puzzled many of the friends who came to tea and tried to uncover this simple secret” (p. 36). Perhaps the greatest “secret” Beard and other cooks have learned is that many useful cooking skills are quite simple.

Through these different influences, James Beard had become an accomplished cook at a very early age. Robert Clark (1996), for example indicates that Beard had mastered baking bread by the age of eight.

When James Beard left his parents’ home for London (Clark, 1996; Jones, 1990), it is highly probable that his culinary education continued unabated. While in London and when he visited Paris, Beard reports (1964, 1992) that he frequented the great marketplaces of Covent Garden and Les Halles. In remarking about Covent Garden, Beard discussed the surprising variety of available products. But he also talked about how he learned by simply observing the way business was conducted at the market.

It is rewarding to watch the buyers—the middlemen for producer and consumer—choosing food for their particular clientele or district. And it is equally rewarding to listen to the conversation of the men in the market who have a hearty, coarse quality about them. (p. 58)

In a similar vein, Beard (1964, 1992) discusses the Paris marketplace, Les Halles. He talks about Les Halles as a nexus of ideas regarding cooking. “I have had the experience of going to market with a number of restaurateurs and have observed them making a first round to collect ideas while they kept close watch that no one else got something he wanted at a lower price” (p. 95). Once again, Beard acknowledges the importance of the

social elements of the marketplace—its culture. He also expresses interest in the wide assortment of products that were available, and he commented on the great range in the quality of particular products. This is true not only of vegetables and fruits but of fish, fowl, game and meat as well. We can see how these experiences deepened Beard's knowledge of different foods.

Later in that same chapter, Beard discusses the lure marketplaces have for him. "No market is too small to captivate me. In each I discover new foods, new challenges" (p. 59). Beard's affinity for marketplaces became a lifelong passion. The strength of this source of information is underscored by Evan Jones (1978) who states that Beard's understanding of American cuisine was strongly influenced by his habit of investigating wholesale sources of produce wherever he traveled.

It is in the context of the marketplace that we can observe different ways by which subjects in this study learned the craft of cooking. James Beard, for example, learned about many different foods when he visited the marketplace. He probably also learned about various cooking techniques. The way by which he learned about foods and techniques was through use of different senses—touch, taste, smell—and through socializing with vendors and customers. This socialization included the communication of information, but Beard's words also suggest the importance of sharing an interest in foods—a form of camaraderie.

Perhaps meeting life challenges was another way by which James Beard learned and refined his cooking skills. One such challenge was James's financial situation in London. While his mother did provide James with a stipend, it was just enough to support a Bohemian style of existence; and Bohemian was not James's preferred lifestyle which

was more refined (Clark, 1996). It is probable, therefore, that James did a lot of cooking for himself, as well as for others. James's ability and willingness to cook for others helped him considerably through later financially challenging times.

The problem-solving process, however, became as much an opportunity to learn as it was a way to deal with financial stress. We can assume that Beard engaged in a process in which he identified a problem such as financial constraints. He reviewed resources available that could be applied to a possible solution and decided on a course of action. It is highly likely that Beard's initial solutions were not always successful, and he would have to reformulate.

This process of trial and error is a simple model. As applied to Beard's circumstances, however, it can be complex. By identifying cooking as a way to alleviate his financial stress, Beard would have to select people for whom he could cook. He would also have to determine what foods would appeal to people, procure products and tools and finance any purchases. Beard might have even engaged in bartering as a form of finance. In this example, it is evident that James learned about many aspects of the culinary arts.

At various times during his stay in England, he received some additional support from others. Tano, Beard's voice coach in England, and Tano's wife would frequently take Jim out to dine with affluent friends out to the countryside in order to harvest wild greens for salads (Jones, 1990). Tano the voice coach became Tano the mentor, and James Beard's culinary education continued. This relationship illustrates the potential of mentoring relationships, and that the mentor need not be highly experienced in the subject of interest to the protégé.

After James's return to the United States, he continued to cook for others. We might see this as a series of projects in which Beard relied on his expanded culinary skills to further his interest in the theater. But as roles became more difficult to obtain, Beard relied more on his culinary skills. Robert Clark (1996) indicates that in 1928 Beard began to cook for cast members of a theater company in Portland. His cookery thus continued to be bound up with a complex set of interpersonal relationships. These relationships provided Beard with opportunities to teach and learn cookery.

By the time he was in his early thirties, Beard had an opportunity to teach cooking, and this became another opportunity to learn. Clark (1996) describes Beard's relationship with Agnes Crowther, a Portland interior designer.

The people Crowther decorated for were keen not only to live but to eat in style, and she and James devised an arrangement whereby James could do for their dining tables what Crowther was doing for their upholstery and drapes. Cooking came instinctively to James, so too, did teaching, and by late 1932 he was supplying cooking lessons to Crowther's clients on a regular basis. (p. 88)

It is likely that Beard learned quite a lot during his brief stint as a cooking instructor. I know from experience that the planning involved with teaching even a simple menu can be substantial. Food has to be purchased. Tools and food have to be set up in the kitchen so that they are available as the demonstration progresses. Some foods may need to be partially prepared in advance, and students invariably expect copies of recipes. The process becomes even more complicated if students engage in "hands on" learning. Hands-on experiences in the kitchen demand close supervision for some learners and less

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for those that are more experienced. In this example, we see yet another way by which repetitive activities become a way to learn cooking skills. Beard undoubtedly taught the same lessons repeatedly, and each time his understanding of the subject deepened.

When he returned again to New York, Beard's cooking skills continued to provide him with a way to support himself. If anything, his ability to cook furnished Beard with a reliable source of meals. According to Robert Clark (1996),

James himself cooked for some or all of the group [a circle of friends in New York] at least one a week, either informally—as when mushrooms from the corner grocery store would surface grilled on toast—or in a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby a friend would supply the kitchen and groceries (usually a chicken) and the habitually impoverished James would cook in return for a seat at the table. (p. 102)

As Beard's social connections expanded, he made the acquaintance of Bill and Irma Rhode. This proved to be an opportunity for James to enter the world of commercial food production. According to Robert Clark (1996), the meeting between Beard and the Rhodes sparked their creativity.

By the party's end, Beard and Rhode had fallen into rapt conversation, went back to Rhode's apartment, and, together with Rhode's sister Irma, talked late into the night about food. By the end of the evening they had convinced themselves that—with well-to-do New Yorkers still scrambling to make up for drinking time lost during prohibition and some 250 cocktail parties being held each day on the upper East side alone—there was money to be made providing food to Manhattan's higher social echelons.



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In particular, an hors d'oeuvre catering business offering an alternative to "doots" [dips and other foods typically made available with alcohol] could make a killing. (p. 106)

Aside from the publicity and increased income, the catering business offered James Beard a very practical way to improve his culinary skills. The improvement of James's culinary skills undoubtedly occurred as a result of his involvement with many different activities associated with the management of Hors d'Oeuvre, Inc. In this business, James was undoubtedly involved with menu design, recipe development, research, and food production. His learning, however, probably extended beyond learning the business of cookery. We can hypothesize that James learned considerably from a community of people involved with food—cooks, writers, waiters, restaurateurs, etc.

While it is important to recognize Beard's involvement with many new and varied activities as a form of learning, it is also useful to consider his learning from engagement in repetitive tasks. With respect to the catering business, we might wonder how many times that Beard made the same hors d'oeuvres. This is a way by which cooks and other artisans learn their craft. Escoffier, the famous French chef is, for example, credited with saying that a cook needs to prepare the same cut of meat at least one thousand times in order to really understand its properties. This form of learning is also reflected in the words of an accomplished potter Sara Culberth (2000). "After 20 years, when I sit down with a lump of clay, my hands and brain work so well together, I do not have to stop and think of what I am doing" (personal correspondence). Later, when Beard would demonstrate different cooking techniques, he would exhibit the effortlessness alluded to by Culberth. This is illustrated in an article by John Skow (1966).

Then he [Beard] announced that the class would review omelet making.

He worked very fast for about 30 seconds, all while holding his omelet pan as if it were a dagger, so that at the end there was no wasted motion as he rolled the finished product onto a plate.

“Someone better eat this,” he said looking at his omelet with unsurprised pride.

“Well, if no one else wants it,” I (Skow, ) said, grabbing savagely. It was an omelet’s omelet. (p.30)

With the popularity of Hors d’Oeuvre, Inc. came new important connections for James Beard. One such connection developed from a telephone call he received from Jeanne Owen, a prominent and well-known member of the New York food scene. This developed into an important relationship and Beard would later comment that Owen was instrumental in helping James to continue to refine his culinary skills. She also assisted in furthering Beard’s career through her numerous connections in the food world. Robert Clark (1996) describes this vibrant and stimulating relationship—a relationship that was also characterized by Owen’s possessiveness.

Meanwhile, Jeanne Owen—whose constant phone calls and monitoring of his activities made her interest in James almost literally proprietary—began his formal education in food. James’s approach to cooking and food, however inherently sure, was largely instinctive: What he had learned from Elizabeth, who disliked company or interference in the kitchen, was not so much taught as picked up through observation and furthered by his own experiments and colossal memory for both facts and

flavors. Although Owen did not extinguish James's reliance on the American flavors of his childhood as the wellspring of his culinary sensibility, she gave him a French sense of theory and system—the principles of cooking technique and the repertoire of ingredients and dishes—that made cooking codifiable and therefore communicable to others. She taught him to write and research recipes, and to cook efficiently and with consistent quality—to make sense of what heretofore had been largely sentiment. To what would ultimately be her own chagrin, she also turned him from a student to someone who was all too ready to be a teacher. (p. 110-111)

If we refer back to Skow's (1966) description of Beard's omelet, we might detect the influence of Jeanne Owen—the ease of Beard's production and perhaps his ability to communicate the theory behind cooking an omelet. This theory would involve understanding and communicating principles of heat conduction, the properties of an egg, and the sauté method, as well as a set of standards of quality for an omelet. And it is useful to recall that Beard engaged in these teaching activities on numerous occasions.

The influence of Jeanne Owen on James Beard, to say the least, was substantial. In a way, Owen replaced Beard's mother as his mentor in 1940, after Elizabeth Beard's death. She and James visited many different restaurants together in a way similar to that in which James had accompanied Elizabeth when they dined out. However, Owen's teaching of more formal cooking theory and skills built upon and extended the knowledge James had gained from his mother.

Beard's work in food continued to develop as he wrote and briefly appeared in a television series on cooking. Beard also worked extensively in managing foodservice operations during World War II. In this episode of his life, James had to travel extensively as part of his employment. This travel meant exposure to different cultures and their markets. Beard's work also engaged him in training staff. Again, this meant repetitive work with knowledge associated with cookery, but in new and perhaps more challenging contexts.

It was after the war, in the 1950's, that James Beard became intensely involved with teaching cookery. A significant way to learn is to engage in the practice of teaching, and James Beard's potential as an effective teacher of the culinary arts began to become apparent during that period. In fact, toward the end of James Beard's life, the food historian Betty Fussell (1983) wrote that Beard had taught cooking to professionals and amateurs for nearly 30 years. If we consider his work with Agnes Crowther in Portland, Beard's experience in teaching the craft was even greater than that. However, it is important to note that Fussell recognized that Beard's cooking *and* teaching cooking had made him a "genuine folk hero" (p. 80).

It is challenging to describe how Beard taught cooking. Beard never wrote much about how cooking is learned or taught. There is, however, information about his cooking school. This makes an understanding of the learning he experienced while teaching even more difficult.

James Beard's teaching has been described by a number of different writers who were journalists, students or colleagues. Some of this information is also captured in Beard's own words—in memoirs and interviews. We can also glean information about Beard's

approach to teaching by reading the advice he provides to cooks through a variety of syndicated articles, as well as his cookbooks.

James Beard founded his cooking school in 1955 in conjunction with André Surmain. By 1957, Beard had separated from Surmain (Clark, 1996) and the school was named the “James Beard Cooking School” (p. 179). The school was then located in Beard’s townhouse in New York City. Over a period of nearly 30 years, small groups of students (Skow, 1966) learned from Beard’s lectures and demonstrations, and through hands-on experience. The students who took classes with James Beard became devoted followers, and many of them enrolled in his classes year after year (Fussell, 1983). We may hypothesize that Beard’s following was based on more than his knowledge of cookery. Perhaps the social elements of cookery that Beard learned in marketplaces and other contexts also played a role in this process. James Beard’s kitchen-based teaching was also not limited to work in the James Beard Cooking School. As he traveled, Beard taught in a number of different settings such as in other schools as well as cookware stores.

It appears from reviewing the literature about James Beard that he valued qualities in teaching that Carl Rogers (1969) referred to as a set of conditions that facilitate learning. In his book, *Freedom to Learn* (1969), Carl Rogers discusses establishing a climate of trust in which learners feel free to explore new ideas and ask questions. He also refers to the role of teacher as that of a facilitator. Beard (1977) alludes to similar factors in his book, *James Beard’s Theory and Practice of Good Cooking*.

As a student absorbs the answers to these continual questions, his understanding deepens and is reflected in the more experienced way he

uses his cooking hands, can tell by touch when something is done to perfection, can identify flavors and compare dishes, knows exactly what to do at the market. At that point the student is on his own. (p. xi)

In another passage, Beard discusses his attitude toward the way cooking can be taught and learned.

In my twenty-five years of teaching I have tried to make people realize that cooking is primarily fun and the more they know about what they are doing, the more fun it is. I love having them ask questions because that's the only way they are going to understand a term or technique. When I spot a student who is hungry to know all the whys and hows and wherefores, I try to encourage his or her inquisitiveness, knowing that this is the first sign of a creative cook. (p. xi)

In each of these quotes, Beard discusses the process of asking questions as a way to deepen the understanding of cooking. It is important to note that instead of citing a body of information to be mastered, Beard cites inquisitiveness as the initial sign of a good cook. The challenge is how to establish conditions that promote inquisitiveness and the sense of creativity that Beard appears to promote in his writing.

This approach thus appears to reflect a theme associated with James Beard's learning cookery. As a small child, he had free run of the kitchen and it became a place for fun and adventure. He played and cooked at the beach. Cooking then became a form of socialization, and perhaps a part of Beard's identity.

In *James Beard's Theory & Practice of Good Cooking*, Barbara Kafka (1999) also writes about Beard and his approach to teaching how to cook. At different times, Kafka

also taught with Beard. She indicates that “Teaching was what Jim loved best” (p. ix). She also refers to Beard’s capacity to establish rapport with students, his passion, knowledge, and the orderliness of Beard’s thinking as contributing to the learning that occurred in Beard’s kitchen. It is likely that Beard owed a degree of this organization of culinary knowledge to his relationship with Jeanne Owen. The ability of Beard to build rapport and organize information for students must also have had a considerable impact on the learning atmosphere of the kitchen.

As James Beard developed his skills as a cook and a teacher, he began to emphasize the role of the emotional aspect of learning to cook. In different interviews and publications, James Beard emphasized the need to think of cooking as being fun. In fact, in one interview, he challenged the notion that cooking is toilsome (Skow, 1966). “If you’re convinced that cooking is a drudgery, you’re never going to be any good at it, and you might as well warm up something frozen” (p. 30). This stance demonstrates that Beard had traveled considerably since his days as a protégé of his mother and Jeanne Owen. It is the emotional component of Beard’s learning and teaching that comes to the forefront on many occasions. Perhaps it emotionality that, in part, explains Beard’s dedication to the craft.

Another affective component of Beard’s teaching was his use of humor. Perhaps Beard’s humor and his emphasis on the fact that cooking can be fun was an attempt to put learners at ease and gain their attention. Julia Child (1999), in her Introductory Note to *James Beard’s Theory and Practice of Good Cooking* stated that James was “An endearing and always lively teacher, he loved people, loved his work, loved gossip, loved to eat, loved a good time” (p. vi). This statement resonates with Beard’s remark that he



wanted to convey the notion that cooking is enjoyable. The idea that cooking is fun and that positive interpersonal activity in the kitchen are important for learning cooking is illustrated by John Skow's observation of Beard's teaching.

Deep diagonal furrows appeared above his [Beard's] eyebrows as he looked slyly from one student to another and said, in a voice that echoed up from the cargo-carrying recesses of his hull, "I'm hungry." Beard's rumbling announcement made everyone else hungry. The remark seemed, and still seems, one of the most profound things anyone ever said about food. (p. 30)

Beard wanted to teach well and his effectiveness as a teacher may have been due, in part, at his theatrical abilities. In a similar vein, we can detect a sense of playfulness in Beard's facial expression in a photograph from an article written for *Life Magazine* written by Jane Howard (1973). In this picture, Beard appears poised to pour egg whites from a bowl as several students clad in aprons observe his demonstration. This is, perhaps, Beard the performer on stage as well as Beard the culinary teacher, but the result seems to be a relaxed atmosphere in which students have fun and learn. Evan Jones (1978) furnishes a telling description of a class Beard taught in Oregon.

Teaching old, or young, cooks new tricks is only one of the myriad gastronomic acts that Beard performs, but when he does it, a pleasant madness emanates from his classroom. Buzzers buzz and oven doors fly open. Cooks cluster in twos and threes, mixing brioche dough, lining a fish mold with cucumber "scales," dolloping whipped cream on a cake. In

the corner, a pâté maker says, “This mixture needs more brandy. I’ll give it Jim’s measurement—glug, glug, glug.” Everyone laughs. (p. 29)

In various interviews and publications Beard also emphasized the adventurous nature of cooking. In a *People* interview (Stewart, 1981), Beard indicated that a sense of adventure meant being willing to try unfamiliar ingredients. “If I have a class and prepare certain foods, such as kidneys and tripe, people will say, “Oh, no, I can’t eat it.” That was probably instilled in them in childhood, just as some people won’t touch calf’s liver or beef tongue because of prejudice” (p. 64). But Beard also pointed to the importance of being adventurous and trying new ideas. This is exemplified in an article Beard wrote about liqueurs (1964). “In the kitchen, try new tricks with liqueurs. Baste pork with an orange liqueur or crêpes with a raspberry liqueur” (p. 126). Surely, Beard’s learning to this point reflected the Chinese proverb stating that for one to eat well, one must possess an adventurous spirit.

Much of the learning associated with James Beard’s teaching was experiential. For example, he frequently taught lessons that involved the use of the senses. Beard wanted learners to develop a discriminating sense of taste as he had. In an interview with *House & Garden Magazine* (Erwitt, 1981), Beard discussed the need for students to develop their sense of taste. “Barbara Kafka and I give classes on taste and the results are fascinating. Students sniff and taste ingredients raw then cooked by different methods. The new knowledge makes them more sensitive, better cooks” (p. 151). In another article (Fussell, 1983) Beard is quoted as telling cooks to be bold and taste things for themselves. “Taste things half done, done and overdone...” (p. 80). Here is evidence of the interaction of sensory knowledge with the process of trial and error.

Another experiential method utilized by Beard was his emphasis on the physical nature of cooking. Accordingly, he stressed the importance of cooks learning to use their hands as tools. In *James Beard's Theory & Practice of Good Cooking* (1977), Beard refers to the hands as a cook's best tools. In an interview with Evan Jones (1978), Beard expressed his irritation with people who refuse to use their hands to touch food. "I can't stand prissy people who think there is something dirty about sticking fingers in food" (p. 30). Beard continues by emphasizing the role of touch as a way to learn. "If you learn to fold egg whites into a mixture by using the side of your hand to cut down and the open palm to bring the mixture up, you quickly grasp the real technique of light, swift folding that doesn't deflate egg whites" (p. 30). The development of touch, according to Beard, can be applied to many different cooking methods. For example, he insists that proper roasting is based, in part, on a cook's practiced eye and sensitive finger (1965). This narrative suggests that another element to learning cookery is kinesthetic. Good cooks learn through performance of tasks. It is also likely that repetition also plays a role in this form of learning.

One goal Beard had for beginning cooks was for them to learn how to work "beyond" the use of recipes. In a *People* interview (Stewart, 1981), Beard was asked if cooks should "slavishly" follow the directions of a recipe. "People ought to do something the way its written once, and then branch out..." (p. 67). Thus, it seems that Beard wanted cooks to use recipes as guidelines or perhaps as starting points. In fact, in a later interview with U.S. News & World Report (*Discovery of America Changed the Diet of the World: A Conversation With James Beard*, 1983), Beard insists that recipes that are too specific have "killed" the adventure associated with cooking. By

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encouraging novice cooks to go beyond recipes, Beard also prompts them to experience a sense of trust in themselves. Considering the need to use the self—senses, imagination, information—in learning to cook, this prompting may be a *tour de force* of Beard's teaching.

James Beard also stressed the potential for learning from mistakes in the kitchen. In an article written by the food historian Betty Fussell (Fussell, 1983), Beard is quoted as emphasizing that mistakes are sources of learning and should not be pined over. Beard seemed to be able to use mistakes in such a way that students learned without being blamed. Evan Jones (Jones, 1978) observed Beard providing student cooks with feedback. Beard commented on a hash that had been prepared by students. "But this corned beef hash is drier than it should be. Does anyone disagree?" It is important that Beard focused on the taste and attempted to provide a standard for this dish. He continued by discussing possible reasons for the dish's dryness, and suggested a possible remedy for the problem—additional cream. It is important, however, to emphasize the role of creating a social atmosphere that encourages experimentation and does not punish learners for committing mistakes.

Throughout adulthood, James Beard continued to forge different alliances as he wrote about and taught cooking. It is highly probable that Beard's continued learning resulted from collaboration on different projects such as the books he wrote. In all, Beard published 22 books and wrote several syndicated columns.

The work associated with a career as a food writer must have created numerous learning opportunities for James Beard. His research included many different topics. Beard also researched products that he endorsed, and he continued to travel extensively

up to the very end of his life. In fact, Beard had been on a cruise in the Pacific Northwest just several weeks before his death. On the cruise, he was preparing to teach yet another group of aspiring cooks.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Julia Child—America's Favorite Cook**

#### **Biography**

Julia Child has been an American icon for decades. Considerable information has been published about and by her. She is the subject of a major biography by Noel Riley Fitch (1997), and, along with M.F.K. Fisher and Alice Waters, is a subject in Joan Reardon's (1994) book celebrating the pleasures of the table. Much of the information in this chapter draws from these two substantive resources. In addition, I have added information from journals, magazines and newspapers articles written about her. Finally, I have sought information from Julia's own writing.

Julia Child (nee Julia Carolyn Mc Williams) was born on August 15, 1912 in Pasadena California (Fitch, 1997). She was the first born child of John and Caro Mc Williams. John Mc Williams was born in Illinois and Caro Weston grew up in Massachusetts. John and Caro met in Chicago. Both parents came from families that were well heeled with ample resources. Their courtship lasted for over eight years and in 1911, they were married. After their marriage, John and Caro moved in with John's parents who had settled in Pasadena.

After a period of time with John's parents, the Mc Williams moved into their own home in Pasadena. They later moved into a large, rambling frame home on Pasadena Avenue, and it is in this home that Julia Mc Williams grew up.

Julia's parents, like James Beard's, were socially active (Fitch, 1997). Their lifestyle included membership in a variety of private clubs. The family dined out frequently, and

Julia can remember a dinner they had in Tijuana in which she watched Caesar Cardini, the inventor of the Caesar Salad, prepare a salad at their table.

Even though the family ate well, Julia's mother did not cook often. Usually Caro limited her cooking to the maid's days off (Child, 1999b). Julia described the food her family consumed as being good, plain New England food. She also commented about her mother's cooking (Coffey, 1988). "...but all she knew how to cook was baking-powder biscuits and Welsh rarebit" (p. 97).

Julia's formal education began when she was enrolled in Montessori school. She then attended Polytechnic school through grade nine. In high school, Julia went to the Katherine Branson School, a boarding school. She then completed a college prep education at the Branson School. While at Branson, Julia exhibited an interest in the theater and writing.

After high school, Julia enrolled in Smith College, her mother's alma mater. In college, she was sociable and physically active. Her original intent to attend college was to learn to write—the great American novel. Julia graduated from Smith in 1934 with a degree in history.

During the year after graduation from Smith, Julia lived with her parents in Pasadena. In 1935, however, she subsequently moved to New York City. She rented an apartment and obtained a position in a retail store as a personal shopper. Julia returned to California in 1937, however, to help care for her mother who had become severely ill. Caro died later that year.

While in California, Julia worked for *Coast*, a Los Angeles-based magazine (Fitch, 1997). Julia researched and wrote pieces on fashion for the magazine. Through the



Junior League, she remained active in community theater. Membership in the League furnished Julia with an additional opportunity to publish, and she wrote a number of essays for the *Pasadena Junior League News* (Fitch, 1997). After four years of living at home, Julia moved to Washington DC to work for the war effort in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In 1943, after being promoted to the position of administrative assistant, Julia seized upon an opportunity to work overseas and volunteered to be stationed in India. Thus, early in adulthood, Julia, as did James Beard, set sail to explore the world beyond her own culture.

On March 8, 1944, Julia Mc Williams and eight other women boarded the SS *Mariposa*, a troop ship bound for India (Fitch, 1997). They were the only women on board with over 3,000 men. Thirty-one days later, the ship dropped anchor at Bombay. After a long train ride across India, Julia reached Ceylon where she began work in the headquarters of British general Mountbatten. The journey from the United States had taken two months.

It was in Ceylon that Julia first met Paul Cushing Child (Fitch, 1997). Paul was nearly 10 years older than Julia was. According to Noel Riley Fitch, Julia Child's biographer (1997), Paul "...had lived in Paris in the 1920's and was a gourmet....He worked on freighters, traveled the world, and taught French and art at Avon Old Farms School in Connecticut in the 1930's" (p. 101). In Ceylon, Julia and Paul began to spend time together on a regular basis. They dined out and spent a considerable amount of time in conversation. Frequent topics of their conversation included Paul's experiences in Paris with American expatriates during the 1920's and food.

In the following year, both Julia and Paul were transferred to China with other OSS staff. By the time Julia had settled into a routine in China, her preference in foods had evolved considerably, thanks in part to Paul's catholic taste. Fitch (1997) describes Julia's exposure to Chinese cuisine.

She [Julia] relished the pleasure the Chinese took in dining, "making these great swooping slurping noises as they ate." She also preferred small portions of a great variety of food: "nuggets of chicken in soy sauce, deep fried or in paper, always rice, pork, sweet-and-sour soup. The duck was always good and everyone had a good time." (pp. 114-15)

In that same passage, Fitch describes Paul's influence on Julia. "Spending time with Paul meant more adventurous hunting for food..." (p. 115). As Julia came in contact with many new and different foods, her relationship with Paul deepened. And Fitch succinctly illuminates Paul's impact on Julia's palate. "For a girl who grew up thinking of the kitchen as a "dismal place," Julia found revelations in the local Chinese cuisine and Paul's food talk" (p. 116).

As the war ground to its finale in August of 1945, Julia and Paul's relationship continued to flourish. They parted briefly upon Julia's return to the United States. Once again, Julia found herself having to endure a lengthy voyage across the Pacific Ocean. Upon return to the United States, she returned to Pasadena and waited for her reunion with Paul.

It was while living again in Pasadena with her father that Julia embarked on her first cooking lessons (Fitch, 1997). She and a friend, Kathy Gates, traveled "three times a week to Beverly Hills for cooking classes at the Hillcliff School of Cookery, taught by

Mary Hill and Irene Radcliffe” (p. 130). It is interesting to note that Julia purchased her first cookbook during this period—Rombauer’s (1936) *The Joy of Cooking*.

Julia kept in touch with Paul via mail during this period. He had also returned to the United States and was staying with his family on the east coast. In July of 1946, Paul traveled to California. Together, he and Julia drove back across the country for their planned wedding. The two of them were married in a civil ceremony on September 1, 1946 (Fitch, 1997).

Shortly after their marriage, Julia and Paul Child settled in a small home in Washington DC (Fitch, 1997) where Paul was employed with the Department of State. During this period, Julia worked to hone her cooking skills to please a new husband with discriminating tastes. The two of them were also hosts to numerous social gatherings held in their home.

In 1948, when Paul was reassigned by the State Department to France, he and Julia departed from the United States on board the *SS America* (Fitch, 1997). They arrived in France five days later and, according to Fitch (1997), Julia consumed a meal she would later describe as her gastronomic epiphany.

Briny oysters portugaises on the half shell and a bottle of chilled Pouilly-Fuissé awakened their palates and hearts. The ritual of an expectant welcome, white tablecloth, formal wine presentation, and incredible tastes brought time to a worshipful standstill. *Sole meunière*, sputtering hot and browned by "golden Normandy butter," followed. Then a green salad, crème fraîche, and finally *café filtre*. All at a reverential pace. Julia

savored each dish as if it were the first food she had ever tasted. In a way,  
it was. (p. 155)

The meal was indeed an experience far removed from Julia's earlier life in which she learned to view cookery as drudgery. She now could understand that cooking could truly be a form of art—an art that could be developed and refined through dedication and hard work. It was still post war Europe with the rubble left from the conflict and continued rationing of different items such as gasoline, but the Parisians still had fresh bread available three times a day (Fitch, 1997). The taste of this bread alone must have been an educational experience for a young women who, in her later years, asked how American society could call itself cultured when its bread tastes like Kleenex.

It was into the Parisian cosmopolitan life that Julia Child became immersed. According to Fitch (1997), it was a place Julia never wanted to leave. "Julia loved the chestnut vendors, the white poodles and white chimneys, the fishermen on Ile St. Louis, the gentle belches after eating escargots, and the lengthy walks around Paris with Paul" (p. 159). It was in this place that Julia Child began a lifelong love of France's grand cuisine and perhaps a lifelong love of learning.

While in Paris, Julia Child also encountered the great marketplace, Les Halles where James Beard was so impressed by the different foods and by the frenetic pace of business. Noel Riley Fitch (1997) describes this marketplace. "Across the river was Les Halles, the belly of Paris, a living organism of fruits, vegetables, and fowl where every restaurant in Paris bought its produce" (p. 167). Julia learned from her forays to Les Halles and other markets. She continued to cook for Paul and for their guests.

Julia's culinary education continued when, in October 1949, she entered the Cordon Bleu Cooking School. It was in this school that Julia encountered her first culinary mentors, one of whom was Chef Max Bugnard (Fitch, 1997). She attacked the rigors of culinary school with enthusiasm. Typically, she would learn a new dish at school and practice with Paul. Julia's rapid increase in expertise certainly did not go unnoticed by Paul, as he portrayed her skills with a knife (Fitch, 1997). "And you ought to see that Old Girl skin a wild hare—you'd swear she'd just be comin' round the mountain with Her Bowie Knife in Hand" (p. 178).

Paul Child became a stalwart supporter of Julia's culinary education. During this time, Paul had joined a men's gastronomic society and began a lengthy study of wine. He frequently shopped with Julia and said nothing when she began to acquire numerous kitchen gadgets and tools. It is difficult to overstate Paul's continued support and encouragement for Julia and her cooking. In an interview late in their lives (Coffey, 1988), Julia remarked that the public Julia Child really was an embodiment of herself and Paul.

In Paris, Julia and Paul's social circles continued to expand, and in 1951 Julia began to attend meetings of the *Cercle des Gourmettes*, a club of women who were dedicated to French gastronomy (Fitch, 1997). It was at these meetings that Julia began to socialize with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle. Julia also began to cook and share recipes with the other two women.

These three women, Julia Child, Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle subsequently collaborated to form their small, informal cooking school, L'Ecole des Trois Gourmandes. They gave their first class in January of 1952. Classes were held in Julia's

kitchen. Julia later described their work in the cooking school (Ferretti, 1995). “We cooked pleasant and elaborate haute cuisine—it was French cooking in a French atmosphere” (p. 72).

Prior to their meeting Julia, Simone and Louisette had acted jointly to produce a cookbook and were interested in working with an American in order to adapt recipes to American methods and foods (Fitch, 1997). In 1954, when Julia and Paul were transferred to Marseilles, she had already been working on their book.

According to Noel Riley Fitch (1997), Julia’s belief was that the book on which she and her colleagues were working would amount to a precedent-setting publication. She continued to work on recipes and labored to translate the French into English. The translation was particularly challenging because, at times, the French culinary vocabulary was difficult to express in English. At times, Julia was forced to spend time during visits to the United States to investigate American products such as cream and cookery tools such as meat thermometers (Fitch, 1997).

The Childs were reassigned once more. This time, they moved to Germany. By 1956, however, they were bound for the United States. They returned to their home in Georgetown. Julia and Paul missed Paris, but this move permitted Julia to continue her research on the cookbook using ingredients that would be available to American readers. Julia managed to maintain a high level of communication with her two collaborators despite the distance that separated them.

In 1959, Paul’s work took the Childs back to Europe. They moved to Oslo Norway in 1959. While the Childs were stationed in Norway, Julia and her partners learned that

Knopf would agree to publish their book (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). Julia also continued to offer cooking lessons.

Julia was busy with various editorial tasks when the Childs returned to the United States in 1961 after Paul's retirement from government service. Promotion of the new book consumed much of Julia's time. This included a number of television appearances. A seminal appearance for Julia occurred when she and Simone Beck demonstrated baking a chocolate cake (the Queen of Sheba) in front of an audience in Chicago. According to Fitch (Fitch, 1997), "The audience fell in love with the warm cake with its creamy center, and with Julia" (p. 273).

In 1962, after an interview broadcast on educational television, Julia was asked to consider collaborating to create three pilot television programs dedicated to cooking (Fitch, 1997). This was the beginning of *The French Chef* series. According to Fitch (1997), the first pilot show, *The French Omelet*, was filmed on June 18. With her engaging style and casual approach to food and cooking, Julia won the hearts of television audiences. Fitch describes an initial reaction of television audiences to *The French Chef*. "The great American fear of being outré and gauche was diminished by this patrician lady who was not afraid of mistakes and did not talk down to her audience" (p. 293). The first program of her initial series was broadcast on January 23, 1963 (Fitch, 1997). Ultimately, Julia Child taped 119 half-hour programs.

According to Noel Riley Fitch (1997), Julia Child had a significant impact on cooking during the 1960's through her book and her television shows. "...she celebrated her appetite, the joy of the kitchen, and the pleasure of food, a pleasure conveyed in the way she patted the bread dough and caressed the chicken" (p. 301).

As distribution of *The French Chef* expanded, Julia's popularity surged. The show began to take on the proportions of a cult phenomenon prompting Joan Bartel's commentary (Fitch, 1997).

...educational TV's answer to underground movie and popop cults—the program can be campier than 'Batman,' farther out than 'Lost in Space' and more penetrating than 'Meet the Press' as it probes the question: Can Society be Great if its bread tastes like Kleenex? (p. 308)

Julia's popularity propelled her into other media. In 1967, she was featured in an article in *Ladies Home Journal* (Fitch, 1997). *Time* magazine also ran a cover article on her. The public attention toward Julia Child had become so formidable that she and Paul were guests at a state dinner in the White House in 1967 (Fitch, 1997).

Through this period of increasing public attention directed toward her, Julia began collaboration with Simone Beck on the second volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. One of the features of the second volume was a recipe for French bread that could be produced in American kitchens. This single recipe reflects the amount of time Julia spent learning her cooking skills. Noel Riley Fitch (1997) provides insight as to the scale of research that Julia and Paul Child underwent for the baking section of this publication.

In 1967 alone, Julia and Paul used hundreds of pounds of white flour experimenting to find the best techniques for making brioche, croissants, *pain de mie* (sandwich bread, which did not interest Julia), a variety of pastry doughs, and—the most significant and challenging—French bread



in all its various shapes (*baguette, bâtard, champignon, boulot*, etc.). The ingredients never changed: yeast, water, flour and salt. (p. 326)

The second volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was published in the early 1970's. This, along with increased distribution of *The French Chef* fueled Julia Child's increasing popularity with the press and the public. Paul Child began to call her fans "JW's" or "Julie watchers with cameras" (Fitch, 1997, p. 373). Julia was even parodied on an episode of the television show, *Saturday Night Live*, in which Dan Akroyd played the role of Julia. Fitch (1997) relates Akroyd's performance.

This parody and the apocryphal stories of her dropping chickens and ducks on the floor and swigging wine (the latter she resented strongly), were part of the lore of a beloved television figure. The accidental cutting off of Akroyd's thumb at least had a semblance of basis in fact. Paul's letters record her tripping on the way to the table and spilling the salad for six people all over the tiles in La Pitchoune [the Child's home in Provence]. At least three times she broke her toe. Several times she cut her hands and had to see a doctor.

In the 1970's, Paul Child's health began to fail. Despite this dilemma, Julia continued with a heavy work schedule. She wrote *From Julia Child's Kitchen*, which was published in 1975. In 1977-78, Julia filmed the television series, *Julia Child & Company* and *Julia Child & More Company* in 1979-80 (Fitch, 1997). These series were accompanied by their respective books. In 1981, Julia and a number of American food professionals founded the American Institute of Food and Wine (AIFW). The mission of this organization can be found on its web site (Food, 2001).

Founded on the premise that sharing quality food and drink is essential to the quality of human existence, The American Institute of Wine & Food is a nonprofit educational organization with membership open to all. The AIWF is dedicated to promoting the message of health and well-being through the enjoyment of good food and drink and the fellowship that comes from eating together around the table.

Julia was involved with both planning and fund raising for this organization and worked with individuals such as Robert Mondavi to further its cause.

In addition to her support for the AIWF, Julia again became involved with teaching cooking. This included a three year series of classes known as the Great Chefs Series that were held at the Mondavi vineyards (Fitch, 1997). Julia's teaching included completion of a series of six one-hour videocassettes—The Way to Cook. This series later became the basis for a book with the same title, which was subsequently published in 1989.

Julia Child turned 80 in 1992. Her birthday celebration consisted in a number of major culinary events across the United States. Guests in New York, for example, paid \$200 each to attend and Los Angeles served 500 people at \$350 each in the Ritz Carlton.

In 1994, Paul Child died of coronary heart disease. Later that year, the family gathered with Julia at the family home in Maine. After a memorial service, they scattered Paul's ashes into the sea.

Since Paul's death, Julia Child has remained active. She has continued to teach and considers herself to be primarily an educator, cook and food historian (Fitch, 1997). She

remains active and looks forward to her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, which will occur in 2002.

#### Julia Child's Awards

- 1965 George Foster Peabody Award for distinguished achievement in educational television
- 1966 *The French Chef* became the first educational television show to receive an Emmy
- 1967 The Chef's Association of the Pacific Coast awarded the Careme Medal in 1974. Julia was the first woman to receive this award

#### Learning to Cook Throughout Life

For Julia Child, the process of learning to cook began primarily in her adulthood. In fact, she once said that she rarely set foot in a kitchen until she was 35 (Whitcomb, 1980). The biographer Joan Reardon (1994) comments on Julia's childhood in California.

Kitchens have not always been Julia Child's mise-en-scène. In fact, her recollections of the one in the big, brown-shingled house on South Pasadena Avenue where she grew up in the 1920's remain as faded as the taken-for-granted meals of overcooked beef, gray lamb, and Sunday codfish balls prepared and served by the family's maid. (p. 113)

Perhaps the experiences that came closest to instilling an interest in food and cooking were the times when Julia dined out with her family or when her parents entertained guests.

It appears that it was not until Julia met Paul Child in India that her interest in food and cooking was kindled (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). Joan Reardon (1994) relates Julia's initial reaction to Paul.

Widely traveled, fluent in several languages, a self-taught artist and photographer, ten years her senior, and a bachelor, he represented what she had felt was lacking in her life. She confessed, "I was a real hayseed, having never been outside of the USA except for Tijuana." (p. 119)

During the early phases of their relationship, Julia Mc Williams and Paul Child spent a considerable amount of time together exploring Indian and Chinese cuisines with a variety of mutual friends. Joan Reardon (1994) describes their group of culinary explorers.

...and it was not long before Gregory Bateson, Cora Du Bois, the ornithologist, Dillon Ripley, the journalist Theodore White, Paul Child and Julia escaped bad army food and became passionate devotees of the many regional varieties of Chinese cuisine. (p. 119)

If we think of cooking as a craft containing many different sensorial facets, we can understand how Julia's dining excursions were a stimulus for her learning. We can also consider dining experiences as providing a real-life context for the theory and structure of a culinary education. The real-life application of knowledge is also an important way by which adults learn. At the same time, however, Julia was developing a sense of passion for food and cooking. She was also learning with her senses. In this case, we might hypothesize that Julia was developing a more sophisticated sense of taste that was identical to what Beard described as taste memory.

After the conclusion of the war, Julia returned to her home in California and maintained a relationship with Paul who was back on the East Coast. It was at this time that Julia made her initial attempt to learn cooking (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). In an interview with *Modern Maturity* (Goodman, 1994), Julia described her initial involvement with food. “I didn’t really start cooking until I met my husband, Paul. He had grown up with good food, so I realized I would have to learn something about it” (p. 58). Thus, Julia’s enrollment in a private cooking school in Beverly Hills was to prepare herself for marriage with Paul (Reardon, 1994). According to Reardon, Julia’s training in cooking was less than positive. “Her béarnaise sauce congealed because she used lard instead of butter, and a duck caught fire in the oven because she failed to put it in a pan” (p. 120). Undaunted by failures, Julia continued with culinary education.

After marriage, Julia’s culinary education continued. She purchased Rombauer’s (1936) *Joy of Cooking* (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994) and a number of cookbooks and magazines. Cooking for Paul, as well as entertaining, provided her with a number of opportunities to improve her culinary skills. But cooking did not come easily to Julia Child and her husband later related that dinner was often served at nine or ten o’clock in the evening by an exhausted Julia (Reardon, 1994). Julia persisted in spite of her difficulties with the craft. It is important to note that Paul was encouraging and supportive of Julia’s culinary experiments, and that Paul’s support continued throughout the extent of their marriage.

In 1948, Julia and Paul Child moved to France. In Paris, Julia Child’s exposure to a world of food that she had never before encountered prompted her enrollment in a six month course in professional cooking at the Cordon Bleu (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994).

Julia's typical daily routine at this time was to work in school in the early morning and then return home to cook the same food for Paul later in the day. This was challenging for Julia and not without failures. Her sister later commented about her visit to Paris and the food she was served by Julia (Reardon, 1994). Dorothy wrote that Julia's unremitting diet of butter soaked experiments had sent her [Dorothy] to a doctor who prescribed a complete change of diet. And still Julia persisted with her culinary education.

While at the Cordon Bleu, Julia must have benefited from the social aspect of her education. She was enrolled along with a group of American ex-servicemen who were receiving their culinary education through the GI Bill. Julia has not said much about her fellow classmates, but she would have worked with most of them in the kitchen. This social element is important to adult learners (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998), and we can see further evidence of it in Julia's subsequent learning and teaching.

Another significant social component of her education at the Cordon Bleu was Julia's connection with two instructors, Max Bugnard and Claude Thillmont (Reardon, 1994). Both chefs were in the later stages of their careers. They were supportive of Julia, and also provided her with a sound education in the *fonds de cuisine*—the fundamentals of French cooking. Perhaps aspects of Julia's relationship with these older men contained elements that were similar to her relationship with her husband, Paul. While Paul introduced Julia to a world of new foods and tastes, these instructors also introduced her to the structure and theory of French cuisine. They also shared with the students their passion for the craft, as well as their connections with other members of France's gastronomical culture. In fact, it was through these instructors that Julia eventually met Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle (Fitch, 1997).

The relationship between Julia Child and these mentors resonates with ideas proposed by Laurent Daloz (Daloz, 1986, 1999) who says that the mentor has a foot in each of two different worlds—the learner’s present reality, as well as what she might become. As her mentors helped her to cross a veritable threshold into a new and promising world, so too would Julia Child mentor an army of aspiring cooks.

It is not surprising at this time that Julia began to demonstrate a shift in her attitude toward cooking. Later in life, she commented about this period (Reardon, 1994). “Until I got into cooking I was never *really* interested in anything” (p. 122). Her statement reveals an important affective component to her learning process. This statement may also reveal why Julia persisted with many culinary projects; she felt passionate about the craft.

While Julia Child was increasing her skill in the arena of cooking, she was also developing a set of ancillary skills. She was involved with marketplaces such as Les Halles. Here, we can see Julia involved with the same marketplaces that inspired James Beard. This involvement must also have included that many different opportunities to learn that Beard experienced.

During this period, Julia continued to devote time cooking and serving food to guests when she and Paul entertained. And with Paul’s involvement in the U.S. State Department, entertaining was a substantial endeavor.

Her deepening involvement with the craft of cooking brought Julia Child into closer contact with people who had similar interests. Through her involvement in Le Cercle des Gourmettes, Julia met a number of women interested in food. However, she also met Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle at about the same time. The three women worked

together to help prepare a meal for the society with a guest chef (Reardon, 1994). Julia later remarked that she had learned a great deal from cooking with other people.

At this stage of Julia Child's life, we can apprehend a social element to her learning that is, in certain respects, similar to that of James Beard. This element might be best described as a web of connections in which Julia and James shared knowledge and an emotional attachment to food and cooking with others. In fact, this is something they shared with Elizabeth David, and these three cooks often exchanged information with each other and mutual acquaintances, such as Richard Olney.

It was not too long into their friendship that Julia Child, Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle decided to open a small, informal cooking school, *l'Ecole des Trois Gourmandes* (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). Lessons were held in the Child's apartment. At first, classes were scheduled intermittently with an enrollment of five to six students. Many of the students were American friends of Julia or were sent from the American Embassy. The typical class ran through the morning with students engaged in preparation work and cooking. At noon, students and instructors would eat what had been prepared in a communal-style lunch (Reardon, 1994). Thus, in the manner of James Beard, Julia Child's teaching and learning became enmeshed with a complex array of interpersonal relationships.

The shift from student to teacher did not appear to dampen Julia Child's learning at all. She continued with lessons from Max Bugnard and Claude Thillmont (Reardon, 1994). She also collaborated with the two chefs on certain projects. In addition, her widening social circle provided Julia with opportunities to meet many influential members of France's food scene. Among these were Churnonsky and Aimée Cassiot



(Reardon, 1994). Julia and Paul were also invited to a variety of exclusive wine tastings. The involvement of Julia and Paul in these activities underscores the importance of involvement with different overlapping social circles as a form of learning. Julia was, for example, involved with her instructors and fellow students, Simone and Louisette, students, and members of different gastronomic societies.

Part of Julia and Paul's social involvement included regular meals in good restaurants, through which they were exposed to some of the finest cooking in Paris. Dining out thus continued to be a source of pleasure and lifelong education for Julia Child. This is evidenced by an article about her in *Gourmet* (Ferretti, 1995). "Following a salad of greens and tomatoes, Julia was served a fillet of turbot dressed with a Savoy cabbage leaf in a light tomato sauce, which she ate between tastes of the foods of others at the table..." (p. 99). Once again, we see in Julia Child's life a tendency to turn knowledge about food into a social process—to be shared in a casual format such as a luncheon with friends. Here, we see evidence of learning occurring in many different aspects of life.

Perhaps the most valuable learning Julia experienced during this period was the teaching she conducted in *l'Ecole des Trois Gourmandes*. In this operation, Julia was involved with writing lesson plans and menus. She had to be involved in purchasing food for classes. Her teaching activities in the kitchen must have been highly complex, involving demonstrating, motivating students to try new techniques and products, coaching, and problem-solving. These tasks were certainly complicated by the fact that students entered the kitchen/classroom with widely differing skill levels.

Julia's next, and perhaps most ambitious learning project arose when she agreed to collaborate with Beck and Bertholle in the publication of a book on French cooking for

the US marketplace in 1952 (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle had already written a book entitled, *What's Cooking in France*, but the book had met with limited success in the United States (Reardon, 1994). The work on what would become *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I*, would last nearly ten years.

A major portion of Julia's work on their cookbook was to translate information into English and to help create recipes that could be successfully utilized by the average amateur American cook. A major task in this endeavor was adapting French recipes to the American market.

The transposition of French recipes for American cooks became a staggering job. This was not limited to simply making information accessible to American cooks. Indeed, Americans had developed a different attitude toward food and cooking from the French, and it might be said that the scientific revolution in America fostered the notion that all problems could be solved through scientific and technical advances. The emphasis on science and technology included the challenges of food preparation. This was evident in the popularity of inventions such as the frozen TV dinner that was developed in America in the 1950's. The development of this product resulted from scientific advances, but it was also developed in response to years of messages to American wives. Years later, this attitude was expressed in a popular animated television show in which a futuristic mother simply inserted pills into a piece of equipment that immediately produced elaborate meals. These messages told people that cooking was a drudgery (Hess & Hess, 2000; Tisdale, 2000) that had to be avoided at all costs. And for

many women, cooking was simply an unwelcome, unrewarded and unrecognized chore like cleaning toilets (Lehrman, 1997).

In order to create a book that would appeal to Americans, therefore, Julia and her colleagues had to present readers with foods that were not too complex. In addition, they had to contend with drastic differences between American supermarkets and the grocery stores in France. In America, for example, supermarkets promoted frozen foods and other convenience items. Thus, there was little motivation for American cooks to shop outside the middle aisles of their grocery stores (areas where dried, bottled and canned foods are kept). As a result, supermarkets had little or no reason to provide the variety of fresh foods that were available in markets such as Les Halles—foods that were considered staples by the French. So, Julia Child and her co-authors had to deal with significant differences in products that were available to American cooks as opposed to those that could be readily purchased by the average French cook.

The dilemma that Julia faced with converting French recipes to be used in American kitchens was also complicated by differences in the composition of many available ingredients. A case in point is butter. American butter contains a greater percentage of water than butter that is produced in France. A typical French recipe cannot be adjusted by simply increasing the quantity of butter to equal the amount of butterfat in the French recipe because the amount of water would also increase. The solution might be to decrease some liquid in the recipe in order to make it work. This problem was multiplied by the large number of French recipes containing butter, and was especially applicable to the baking section of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* because of the need for exact measurements in bakery and pastry work.

The production of their cookbook demanded an enormous amount of research in the kitchen. Betty Suyker (1970) describes how different family members were enlisted in helping Julia and Simone in their culinary research.

Both of them [Julia and Simone] had to scrounge in the PX's and U.S. Embassy commissaries for the American ingredients so necessary to their experiments. Friends were enlisted to run flour. Simca's husband, Jean, ate *gratin dauphinois* for fifteen consecutive days, comparing each new gratin with the previous day's leftovers. Paul had *blanquette de veau* for eight days running, until it was declared perfect. (p. 112)

In this quotation, we become aware of how complex the learning processes of an adult can become as she works on a project. These experiments required Julia to prepare the same dishes repeatedly. We can envision how this process of learning would affect Julia's sensory understanding—color and aroma. It would also influence her coordination. If, for example, she experimented with crêpes, she would become aware of the tiny bubbles that appear on the surface of the batter as they cook in the pan. She would become attuned to the aroma as they browned on one side, and after dropping more than a few on the floor, Julia would master the ability to deftly flip a crêpe in a small pan. Once again, we can observe the interaction of repetitive activities with the sensory processes engaged in learning to cook.

If we press Julia's involvement with the production of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* further, we can detect the deeper form of understanding that she developed. A case in point is the conversion of flours from French to American. If American flour has more protein than French flour, Julia needed to develop a grasp of the role of protein in

the formation of gluten. In baking, gluten needs to be developed in dough in order to produce bread. Too much gluten can add toughness to pastries and other delicate products. This problem is made more complicated when we consider the fact that flours differ in other characteristics. Flours, for example, will vary in terms of the amount of liquid they absorb. In addition, flour must work in concert with other ingredients in a recipe.

An example of this challenge is a rich yeast dough, brioche. This is yeast risen and needs some gluten. However, it is also a soft, tender product. From the starting point of a French recipe, Julia needed to approximate how an American flour or a combination of flours might work. She did have, however, other options. One such option would be to add tenderness through the use of another ingredient such as eggs. But as with the example of American vs. French butter, she would have to adjust the liquid measure if she were to increase the quantity of eggs. Another option might be to modify the procedures of the recipe. For example, this might involve changing the amount of kneading or the time spent rising.

In addition to the fact that Julia engaged in a considerable amount of time transposing recipes for American cooks, she also needed to come to an understanding of how to teach the information to these cooks. Certainly there was the need to translate the vocabulary of French gastronomy for her readers. This is illustrated by the fact that the average French cook may readily understand that anything prepared *a la Provençal* would include chopped tomatoes sautéed in garlic with parsley and some herbs. This might need to be explained to an American cook. In the same manner, an American cook might have to be prompted as to what is a ramequin.

Another important concept to be communicated to American cooks was the way to organize their work. The concept of *mise en place*, having everything ready up to the point of preparation may not be obvious to many American cooks. But this is an important element of cooking. Julia had probably learned about *mise en place* at the *Cordon Bleu*, but it was her husband Paul who helped Julia appreciate the organization of a kitchen as described by Joan Reardon (1994).

Since her days at the Cordon Bleu, Paul had applied his former war room expertise to the task of hanging all her measuring cups and spoons, pots and pans, molds, forms, rings and other utensils on a kind of pegged board, and, as they moved from one home to another, this mode of organization became the distinguishing feature of their kitchens. (p. 127)

Here, we see how the application of a principle such as *mise en place* can have meaning for an adult learner when it is applied to a problem, and how valuable collaborative learning can become. Later, while finishing the manuscript of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Julia had to utilize a sophisticated form of organization of information when she created an index for the book. In this task, Julia had to determine what information would be important to American cooks.

It was while Julia was working on *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* that she and Paul returned to the United States. In the U.S., Julia once again had the opportunity to teach cooking. This time, she gave cooking lessons to a group of women who met on Mondays to prepare lunch for themselves and their husbands. Once more, Julia involved herself in a highly social setting in which she taught cookery. Later, when the Childs were sent to Oslo Norway, Julia was able to continue to provide lessons.

The cooking lessons furnished Julia with still more opportunities to learn. These learning opportunities, moreover, dovetailed with the work she was conducting with the cookbook. Joan Reardon (1994) depicts the interrelationship between Julia's teaching and her work on their cookbook.

Planning and shopping for the lessons kept Julia busy on teaching days, and the hours spent with her students also kept her aware of what procedures worked and what didn't. In her correspondence with Simca [Simone Beck], she continually focused on what could be learned if good students not only were taught good techniques but actually prepared the dishes and enjoyed them later. (p. 144)

Reardon also comments on Julia's emphasis on the need to understand techniques, and this reflects the extensive learning Julia underwent as she tested recipes over and over again. Here again we see a parallel between the lives of Julia Child and James Beard. This similarity is found in the repetitive nature of tasks they undertook as they moved along the path from novice to expert.

Throughout this period of Julia Child's life—middle adulthood—a substantial amount of learning that she experienced continued to be sensory. As with James Beard (1964, 1992) who described the development of his taste memory, Julia developed what she described as a critical sense of taste (Reardon, 1994). Reardon describes Julia's development of her palate during the Child's stay in Marseille. "...the variety of fresh foodstuffs available in the Marseille market, the quality of wine that Paul liked to serve, and the array of cheeses available from the Provençal countryside had contributed to the refinement of Julia's palate" (p. 127). This critical sense of taste became an important

way by which a cook such as Julia Child could judge the preparation of her food and continue her learning. Later in her life, Julia commented that a good cook has to know how foods should taste (Goodman, 1994). The development of taste was, for Julia, a specific skill that she applied to her craft. As we review the progression of Julia Child's learning, it is possible to detect a theme or strand in her life. This theme is that much of Julia Child's learning associated with cooking and food occurred as she worked to solve problems.

It is possible that Julia's problems or challenges began with her incursions into Indian and Chinese cuisines as she and friends sought to escape their military food. As she progressed from cooking for and entertaining with her husband, Paul; attending the *Cordon Bleu*, teaching cooking and writing a book of French recipes for American cooks, Julia's skill in the culinary arts increased. In fact, we might surmise that these problems gave Julia's learning an element of direction.

In response to these problems, Julia engaged in different tactics. She underwent formal training activities such as the cooking classes in which she enrolled in Beverly Hills. Julia also expended her sources of information. When she first began to attempt to learn cooking, her primary resource was Rombauer's (1936) *The Joy of Cooking*. Within a few months, however, Julia had accumulated issues of *Gourmet Magazine* and additional cookbooks (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). By the time she and Paul moved to France, Julia had expanded her cookbook collection to include several important French references. But by this time, Julia also began to make critical judgments about the information provided in different cookbooks. In fact, she became capable of discussing which resources were useful to her and which ones were not. This is evidence that her



knowledge had progressed beyond the mere amalgamation and organization of information about cooking.

In response to the challenges of her teaching and the production of the cookbook, Julia Child also found people who could help her. Again, the social component of Julia's learning emerges. This is demonstrated by the work that she and Paul engaged in as they attempted to produce French bread in the United States. The two of them worked on the recipe until they could not figure out what they were doing wrong (Whitcomb, 1980). Upon their return to France, however, Simone Beck referred them to a French baker. Later, Julia recounted the story. "The next time we went to France, I called Simone [Beck] and she got hold of this wonderful baker, Raymond Calvel. Paul and I spent a whole day with him. As soon as he started working, we could see exactly what we'd been doing wrong" (p. 22). This highlights not only the value of being able to work with others in order to learn a craft, but also the importance of hands-on experiences, as well as the importance of connecting with others as a way to facilitate problem-solving.

Julia Child's knowledge of cooking continued to progress beyond the publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Julia and Paul Child and Simone Beck spent a considerable amount of time promoting the cookbook at their own expense (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). This must have been a challenging venture as described by Joan Reardon (1994).

Visiting prominent department stores, they started at 10:30 AM and continued nonstop all day preparing Roquefort quiche, sole in white sauce, and chocolate madeleines, and they baked Reine de Saba cakes in the test kitchens of big city newspapers as part of their interviews. Sometimes the

facilities were so unsuitable for cooking demonstrations that their pots and pans had to be washed in the Ladies' room. But Simca, Julia and Paul had found their stride. (p.148)

In this brief period of time—a few months after the initial publication of the cookbook—we can observe an interesting set of activities in which Julia furthered her understanding of cooking. Here we again have examples of Julia having to solve problems such as dealing with tight schedules and inadequate equipment and facilities. The need to solve these problems and promote their book gave a focus to Julia's learning. She also gained from her collaboration with her husband Paul and Simone Beck.

Therefore, in the extended period of time that Julia dedicated to the production and promotion of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* it is hardly surprising that Joan Reardon (1994) referred to this period of Julia Child's life as a 10-year apprenticeship in French cooking. This apprenticeship, moreover, heralded even more learning for Julia Child as she, at the age of 50, began a career as a writer and a celebrity on public television.

In June 1962, Julia Child appeared on television in an interview *regarding Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. The station received a number of letters from interested viewers, prompting the production of three pilot television cooking programs featuring Julia Child (Fitch, 1997; Reardon, 1994). The popularity of the pilot programs prompted an initial series of 26 shows that were produced at WGBH in Boston. Julia Child's appearances on television represented her work, as what she once described as that of a teacher and cookbook writer (Reardon, 1994). In fact, we can see her teaching strategies in the way she planned the cooking programs.

A fundamental premise for Julia Child's cooking programs was an understanding that the knowledge of French cuisine was easily accessible to the average American cook. As a result, much of her efforts on the programs were to demystify French cuisine. This premise is suggested by Joan Reardon (Reardon, 1994). "In 1962 Julia approached French cooking determined to take the "ooh-la-la" out of it rather than stress the complexities of a daunting recipe" (p. 154). She also wanted to emphasize the notion that cooking was meant to be fun, which added to the demystification of the craft.

Perhaps one powerful way Julia was able to demystify French cuisine and promote the idea that cooking can be fun was through the way she dealt with her mistakes. According to Joan Reardon (1994) Julia was consistent in her message. "There was no such thing as a failure, she reminded her viewers, you are alone in the kitchen, nobody can see you, and cooking is meant to be fun" (p. 156). In another passage, Reardon discusses how Julia dealt with mistakes in the early shows that could not be edited out before her show was broadcast.

On the other hand, when an assistant forgot to take a pound of butter out of the refrigerator before a demonstration or a crêpe missed the pan, she seized the opportunity to show her audience how to cope with the common mistakes encountered in any kitchen. (p.156).

In a later interview, Julia talked about making mistakes in front of the television camera (Frankel, 1970). "I wouldn't be surprised if the people watching think if that fool can do it, anyone can" (p. 130). Later, in the same interview, Julia was quite candid about American cooks. She stated that there should be no mystique associated with cookery, and that she thought Americans have a pathological fear of failure.

In the case of the butter that had not been softened, Julia improvised (Whitcomb, 1980). When confronted with the cold butter, Julia simply stated that she had forgotten to take it out of the fridge and instructed the viewers what to do when that happens. Thus, Julia modeled that cooks should not be intimidated by the craft or turned aside by the thought that mistakes might occur. This parallels her own learning. For example, when Julia tested recipes and something did not work, she became determined to understand why the problem occurred (Reardon, 1994). By avoiding mistakes, she might have missed an important set of opportunities to learn, and she did not want her viewers and readers to miss opportunities to learn from their own cooking. Trial and error and application of ideas to real world problems continued to play important roles in Julia Child's learning and appear to have directed her practice as cook, teacher and food historian.

At the same time that Julia worked to demystify French cuisine, she also recognized the need for cooking to be a hands-on experience as illustrated by Reardon (1994). "...she patted plump chickens, minced garlic cloves with gusto, sampled the dish in progress, gingerly wiped her hands on the towel always at her waist, and beamed approval at the evolving dish with a "try it" smile" (p. 154). If we reconsider just one period of Julia Child's life, her studies at the Cordon Bleu, we can observe this same "hands-on" approach to learning the culinary arts. Julia's typical day at the time began with lessons at school. The school also emphasized hands-on experience. Later in the day, Julia would recreate what she learned for Paul and gained additional hands-on experience.

The process of learning through hands-on experience recurs throughout Julia Child's career. The importance of this type of experience is emphasized by Michael Ruhlman (1997), whose book *The Making of a Chef* chronicles his education in the Culinary Institute of America. Much of that education involved Ruhlman's hands-on work in the different kitchens of the Institute. An important component of this hands-on experience for both Ruhlman and Julia Child is that they both are able to reflect on their work. This process is similar to what Donald Schon describes as reflective practice (1983; 1995). Schon's writing has been directed primarily at mental processes, but the work of Ruhlman and Child suggest that reflection on practice also includes the interaction between mental and physical activities.

An important aspect of learning cooking through hands-on experience is the opportunity to develop knowledge about the *fonds de cuisine*—the basic principles of cookery. This is what Julia learned as she developed her skills. From the *Cordon Bleu*, teaching in *L'Ecole des Trois Gourmandes*, and writing a comprehensive book on French cookery—her 10-year apprenticeship—Julia had learned about the basics of cooking through repeated lessons. This learning was similar to the lessons James Beard received from Jeanne Owen regarding the theory behind French cuisine. According to Joan Reardon (1994), “Julia had grasped the architectonic structure of French cuisine and demystified it for her American audiences” (pp. 155-56). Reardon provides an example of this idea later in the same chapter.

From the beginning of *The French Chef* series, Julia made a practice of repeating the technical points involved in the preparation of a dish—  
“don't overcook it” or “baste a lot,” or “don't crowd the pan,” and by

demonstrating what she meant, she visually reinforced it. She also never made a mystery of the ingredients she used; she emphasized shopping at the supermarket. (p. 157)

In this passage, we can catch a glimpse of the nature of Julia's learning processes. She makes the knowledge accessible. This accessibility is enhanced by the use of television, but Julia also presents information in a logical manner. In addition, she repeats important information. Perhaps this repetition of information, in particular, reflects how she acquired knowledge of the fundamental principles she teaches. In fact, in an article that she and Simone Beck wrote for *House & Garden* (1962), Julia remarked that a fundamental tenet of French cookery is to learn fundamental techniques and *repeat* them until they become second nature. It is this process that Noah Adams (1997) describes in his book devoted to learning the piano after the age of 50 as a passage from amateur to expert. Adams describes this passage as involving a transition from having to be vigilant about technique to a point where much of the technique is automatic and the focus can be on the more artistic and spontaneous elements of playing a musical instrument. In the kitchen we also can observe a possible increase in spontaneity as the novice cooks moves toward expert.

It is possible that Julia came to grasp an appreciation of the interaction of creativity in the kitchen and the fundamental principles of cooking at this time. She discussed this in an interview with *U.S. News & World Report* (Julia Child Savors "the Creative Sense of Cooking, 1979).

But for creative experiments, you must have done enough cooking so that you really know what you are about. Then, if it doesn't work out one way,

you've had the experience to try another, and another, until you arrive—  
you hope—to a successful result. (p. 83)

Production of a television program such as *The French Chef* in that era was a complex task. This is especially the case with the early shows. The budget was limited and the equipment did not permit extensive editing. This endeavor probably constituted an enormous learning project for both Paul and Julia.

An example of the complexity of this project might be found in a program dedicated to a simple pot roast. In order to present this dish to a television audience, ingredients needed to be purchased. Both ingredients and tools would need to be set up in advance in the studio “kitchen.” Julia would have to write a script, and an outline of the specific sequence that tools and ingredients needed to be used. Finally, a second roast with its trimmings needed to be put into the oven in order to be ready for Julia to “show off” to the audience at the end of the program.

We must remember that this script was planned to be conducted without interruption and with little or no opportunity to “clean it up” later with some editing. In other words, there was little or no room for error, and if something was missed, or a mistake occurred, the show was broadcast. This production schedule proceeded for many years.

In addition to her work on public television, Julia Child wrote articles for popular magazines such as *House & Garden* and a weekly column for the *Boston Globe* (Reardon, 1994). These activities can be viewed as ways in which Julia furthered her understanding of her craft. In a way, Julia's writing was a process similar to her teaching, as well as her work on public television. In her writing, as well as the other venues, Julia had to describe and explain important elements of the craft of cooking.

Thus, as Julia wrote about food and cooking, she built upon the knowledge she had already created.

One interesting component of Julia's writing arose from the voluminous amount of mail she received from fans. She received literally hundreds of letters each week requesting additional information and recipes. Julia's responses to these letters can also be viewed as a form of teaching in which she again was pressed to provide descriptions and explanations to an army of Jw's. Her responses to these requests constituted another context for repetitive activity, for Julia undoubtedly received many inquiries for the same recipe or other information.

At the same time of her writing articles and weekly columns, Julia Child was working with Simone Beck to create a second volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Reardon, 1994). This new project also included a formidable amount of research on the part of Julia. Julia's research for the second volume is described by Joan Reardon (1994).

As remembered by Paul's brother, Julia spent days from sunup to sundown in the kitchen experimenting. . "After eight days of unremitting labor, she finally made a batch [of brioche] that met with her approval.

She was overjoyed. I commented that she hadn't had much of a vacation.

She only remarked that she'd had a glorious time, and she had." (p. 162)

This quote reveals the difficult work in which Julia Child was engaged to produce books on cooking, but how this work was also a labor of love. Both Julia Child and James Beard emphasized the importance of developing a love of the craft of cooking for without it, one might as well heat up a frozen TV dinner. This quote also resonates with Beard's



emphasis on the need for cooking to be a fun, enjoyable activity.

By the early 1980's Julia Child had been involved with the production of a number of additional cookbooks including *Julia Child and Company* and *Julia Child and More Company*. In 1981, Julia also became food editor for *Parade*, a publication with a circulation of 40 million. During that period, she also became involved with the American Institute of Wine and Food, while remaining an active supporter of the culinary collection of the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College. By the middle of the decade, Julia had embarked on a series of instructional videos, *The Way to Cook*. These were accompanied by a cookbook. Julia Child's work associated with *The Way to Cook* represents yet another form of learning because the publication attempts to address changing tastes in America. In an interview with *Mc Call's*, Julia discussed her new challenges with this work (Coffey, 1988). "People used lots of cream and butter then. Now people are more health conscious, so cookbooks have to reflect that" (p. 97).

Julia Child is nearing her ninetieth birthday. It will occur in August 2002. She continues to cook and enjoy life. She also continues to learn. Once, Julia made the following statement about learning in the kitchen. "Cooking is a life work. As an old chef friend used to say, 'There's not a day I don't learn something new.' Isn't that a lovely thought" (Wilson, 1970, p. 74)?

#### Mastering the Art—An example of Learning and Teaching

A way by which we can arrive at an understanding of Julia Child's learning is to examine the two major cookbook projects in which she collaborated with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle. These were *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Volume One (1961) and *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Volume Two (1970).

From the onset of designing of the first volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, both Julia Child and her co-authors wanted to convey to American cooks that the book was far more than a set of recipes. In a 1962 article about the book in *House & Garden* (Beck & Child, 1962), Julia Child and Simone Beck explained the basic premise behind the first volume.

This cook book is designed to explain the structure and basis of French cooking with a sampling of typical recipes from a cream soup to a feathery dessert soufflé. Though the recipes are not complicated, they are intentionally spelled out in great detail to show you the specific techniques that produce the special end results. These techniques are used over and over again in French cooking. (p. 175)

Their idea as expressed in this article mirrors a passage in the Forward of their cookbook (Child et al., 1961) in which Child, Beck and Bertholle discuss technique.

Cooking techniques include such fundamentals as how to sauté a piece of meat so that it browns without losing its juices, how to fold beaten egg whites into a cake batter to retain their maximum volume, how to add egg yolks to a hot sauce so they will not curdle, where to put the tart in the oven so it will puff and brown, and how to chop an onion quickly.

Although you will perform with different ingredients for different dishes, the same general processes are repeated over and over again. As you enlarge your repertoire, you will find that the seemingly endless babble of recipes begins to fall rather neatly into groups of theme and variations...

(p. vii)

The learning process implied in these descriptions is developmental. The novice cook begins with relatively simple recipes and techniques and moves to those that are more difficult. This process is evident in Julia Child's life as she progressed from cooking meals for Paul toward her appearances in over 100 episodes of *The French Chef*. In addition to promoting the development of skills, these writers also encourage some reflection on the process itself. This is evidenced by statements such as, "as you enlarge your repertoire."

The progression from novice to expert becomes an integral component of the learning associated with both cookbooks. Moreover, the learning has different aspects. The cookbooks provide ample information about the basic tasks associated with each recipe. Additional information helps the reader to avoid problems. In the case of explaining how to sauté onions for French onion soup, the reader is told to watch the onions carefully while they brown, but that they can be left to simmer (Child et al., 1961). The information contained in recipes is presented in a logical order and this is consistent throughout the book.

In addition to having a well-organized and logical format, these books are written in an encouraging tone. There is also evidence that the writers attempt to demystify the process of cooking. An example of this effort is found in a chapter on sauces in volume one of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Child et al., 1961). In the introduction of this chapter, Child, Beck and Bertholle admit that the list of sauces in French cooking is "stupendous." But in several sentences, they explain how these sauces can be divided into a few major groups "...and each one in a particular group is made in the same general way" (p. 54). This section simplifies and organizes the information while

providing encouragement to the novice.

An example of Julia Child and Simone Beck's teaching can be found in the second volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Child & Beck, 1970), in which they have written a chapter on baking that is nearly 100 pages in length. The chapter begins with an overview of yeast doughs. The reader is provided with a number of ideas regarding creating yeast doughs. Considerable information, for example, is provided about the function of yeast. "The function of yeast is not only to push dough up but, equally important, to develop its flavor and texture" (p. 53). But these writers continue to inform the reader about how yeast functions in the dough. They discuss the interaction of gases produced by yeast with the intricate mesh of gluten strands in the dough. After providing information on working with yeast, they proceed to a recipe for French bread.

This recipe in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Volume Two, took Julia Child a number of years to perfect. This recipe begins with a brief overview of the importance of French bread to the French. Then, in a logically designed sequence of information, the recipe provides information on flour, bakers' ovens and the equipment needed to complete the recipe. In a series of steps, the recipe guides the reader through two separate fermentations (rising), shaping dough, and a final rising followed by baking, cooling and storage. Finally, the reader is presented with a number of different options for making the bread. It can, for example, be formed into different shapes, and the reader is encouraged to try different ways of baking the loaves.

This case example exemplifies how Julia Child mastered the art of French cooking. She developed her skills through diligence and hard work. Moreover, her skills

improved over time—in a developmental fashion. As her skills developed, Julia attempted more difficult procedures. Along with fundamental concepts, Julia learned how to organize her work. She also acquired the vocabulary of the art.

Throughout this process, Julia collaborated with a number of people in and out of the kitchen. This includes the individuals who were her students, readers and viewers. Therefore, for Julia Child, the mastery of cooking was a gradual process based on a love of the craft. She has been generous in sharing both her love and knowledge with anybody who has an interest in good food and cooking.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Elizabeth David—Grand Dame of English Food Writers**

#### **Biography**

I have drawn Information about the life of Elizabeth David from a number of different sources. Sources of information include two major biographies, *Elizabeth David: A Biography* (Chaney, 1998), and *Writing at the Kitchen Table: The Authorized Biography of Elizabeth David* (Cooper, 1999). Elizabeth David has also been the subject of a chapter of the book, *Out of the Frying Pan: Seven Women Who Changed the Course of Postwar Cookery* (Castell & Griffin, 1995). Information from magazine and newspaper articles by and about Elizabeth David have been used to supplement these books.

Elizabeth David, C.B.E. (nee Gwynne) was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December in 1913. She died on May 22, 1992, and on her headstone were the following words.

Daughter of  
Rupert Gwynne, M.P.  
& the Hon. Stella Gwynne  
of Wootton Manor, Folkington

Her books on cookery brought joy  
And enlightenment to food-lovers  
All over the world (Chaney, 1998)

This woman whose writing strongly had a remarkable impact on the cooking practice of post World War II England did not begin to cook at an early age.

The rural countryside was the setting for Elizabeth David's childhood. Elizabeth David's upbringing was one of privilege. Her maternal grandfather was a conservative Member of Parliament who was later named Home Secretary (Chaney, 1998; Cooper, 1999, 2000). James Gwynne, her paternal grandfather, was a successful industrialist who

owned a considerable amount of property, including an estate in Folkington. Elizabeth's father, Rupert Gwynne, practiced as a barrister and was also a Member of Parliament.

Rupert and Stella Gwynne, Elizabeth's parents did not hold much interest in cooking or the kitchen. They had no need to know anything about cookery; this was the responsibility of their domestic staff. Lisa Chaney (1998), who comments on Stella's involvement in the family's meals explains her attitude toward cooking. "In keeping with most well-off women at the turn of the century Stella was not interested in the kitchens, and she seldom entered them" (p. 19). Chaney also explains that the Gwynne children were not encouraged to visit the kitchen. "Here [in the Wootton kitchen] the girls were not welcomed. Nor were they recompensed by delicious foods pulled up to their nursery and schoolroom from the kitchen down below. With few exceptions these meals were of little cheer" (p. 20).

The absence of interest in food and cooking arose, in part, from the English attitudes of the time. Children were often not permitted to enjoy rich food and drink because those foods were viewed as impeding the development of moral fiber (Chaney, 1998). Chaney also notes that the English of that time developed a social prohibition against the discussion of food.

But the English thought it vulgar (some still do) to make more than passing references to the merits of the repast. The gentlemen might discuss the wine, perhaps after dinner, but rarely the menu. By the end of the nineteenth century the enjoyment of good food in England was often confused with the old medieval sin of gluttony. Those who did pay proper attention to food were often stigmatized as decadent. (p. 21)

This quote illustrates the potentially powerful influence of social standards on the process of adult education—possibly the identification of what is and is not worthy of learning. A similar process is evident during that same period in the United States as women were being told that cooking was a chore and drudgery (Hess, 1998; Plante, 1995).

With this backdrop, the Gwynne girls lived in relative comfort. Rupert Gwynne, however, died in 1923 (Chaney, 1998; Cooper, 1999, 2000). At the time, he was 53 years old. At the time of Rupert's death, his brother was left in charge of the family estates. His family was permitted to remain in Wootton, but their financial condition became more problematic.

Elizabeth spent two years following her father's death in a boarding school, Godstowe Preparatory School (Chaney, 1998). At the age of sixteen, Elizabeth's mother sent her to board with two other English girls in Paris. In Paris, Elizabeth studied French language, literature and history. In Paris, the young Elizabeth was exposed to many different types of foods. She also benefited from her exposure to foods prepared and consumed by the French family with whom she lived. In the following quote, Elizabeth describes an encounter with mussels in cream sauce. "So those Norman mussels which reminded me, for whatever reason, of our secret childhood feasts [wild mushrooms in cream sauce cooked by their nanny], became forever endowed with the mystery of far off and almost unobtainable things" (p. 47).

We can capture in Elizabeth's words a sentiment that runs through the lives of the other two subjects as well as others engaged in the craft. This is a bond with cooking that includes a strong sense of pleasure and comfort associated with food. And many of these cooks recall meals experienced during transitions in their lives. James Beard talks about



a meal he consumed upon his arrival in England. For Julia Child, it was her meal she shared with her husband when they arrived in France. And Richard Olney (1999) extolled the virtues of the mashed potatoes he consumed during a memorable meal in Paris; they were simply pushed through a sieve and flavored with some butter, salt and pepper. It is this sentimentality toward cooking that may add to that “umbilical” relationship between cook and craft.

Despite Elizabeth’s immersion in French culture and cuisine, her cooking skills never developed to any degree during adolescence and early adulthood. After her entry into Oxford, Elizabeth needed, for example to be taught how to make herself a cup of tea for previously this task had been accomplished by servants.

While at Oxford, Elizabeth became involved with the theater and earned parts in a number of plays. But the parts Elizabeth earned never provided much income. Combined with her allowance, this small income did not pay all of Elizabeth’s expenses. In response to her lack of funds, Elizabeth began to teach herself to cook (Chaney, 1998). At the time, she was 22 years old.

It was during this period of her life that Elizabeth David met Charles Gibson Cowan. They began a long-standing relationship, and in 1939 they purchased a sailboat named *The Evelyn Hope*. The boat had been built in 1906 and was equipped with an engine in 1930. The Evelyn Hope was in disrepair and Cowan had to invest a considerable amount of time to rebuild its engine, refurbish the interior and to have a number of rotting planks replaced.

Elizabeth and Charles, accompanied by a passenger who helped with their expenses, departed from England that July 1939 to sail the Mediterranean and the Greek islands. In

a manner similar to that of the other two subjects, Elizabeth also sailed away from home during her early adulthood in order to experience life in different cultures.

As she and Charles departed England, however, the clouds of World War II began to gather. Within weeks, Germany had invaded Poland. At the time of the outbreak of hostilities between France and Germany, Elizabeth and Charles were situated in a small port in the south of France (Cowan, 1946). While the impending holocaust worsened, Elizabeth and Charles continued their trek through the Mediterranean.

It was in the spring of 1940 that Elizabeth David met the writer Norman Douglas (Chaney, 1998). Douglas had written extensively about travel and food in Europe. Elizabeth's relationship with Douglas was to have a lasting impact on her writing. Douglas' impact on Elizabeth David was driven by his extensive knowledge of food and eating, as well as his practice of the craft of writing.

Douglas and Elizabeth parted company later that year as she and Charles continued their travels. But Elizabeth was able to maintain a close relationship with this writer for many years, and she later commented that it was a mistake to have left Norman behind (Chaney, 1998; Cooper, 1999, 2000). Elizabeth and Charles's journey became more difficult when Italy declared war on the Allies. On the day Italy entered the war, Elizabeth and Charles attempted to pass through the Straights of Messina, their boat was captured by the Italians (Chaney, 1998; Cooper, 2000). Elizabeth and Charles were held briefly by Italian authorities who thought they might be spies. They were released, but the *Evelyn Hope* was never returned. The two were stranded in Italy without funds. With assistance from the American consulate, they were able to flee to Athens. Charles

obtained a teaching position in the Greek islands. Here, they lived for a period of time on the island of Syros (Cooper, 2000).

According to Artemis Cooper (1999; 2000), conditions on the island were primitive. Their water was obtained from a well and most cooking was accomplished outdoors on a small brazier. Their bathroom consisted of a small hut with a hole cut into the ground (Cowan, 1946), and Charles Cowan reported that when Elizabeth saw their “outhouse,” she joked about having a marble floor and at least it had a roof.

Elizabeth and Charles remained on Syros until Germany invaded Yugoslavia and Greece. As the German invasion progressed, Syros was bombed and the couple fled to Cyprus in a small boat. After the Germans attacked Cyprus, Elizabeth and Charles were evacuated and finally made their way to Egypt. It is in Cairo where Elizabeth and Charles parted company.

In Egypt, Elizabeth found work as a civil servant with the British government. She moved to Alexandria and immediately found herself immersed in a multicultural city populated by Turks, Arabs, Jews, Copts, Italians, Armenians, Greeks, Syrians, Americans and British (Chaney, 1998). Later, Elizabeth was transferred to work in Cairo where she remained for the duration of the war.

Part of Elizabeth’s development as a cook occurred in Egypt where she was exposed to a great assortment of different food commodities. Elizabeth also learned from a cook she and her apartment mate had hired. This cook, Kyriakou, was the first in a series of cooks Elizabeth Gwynne hired while she resided in Egypt. Kyriakou and a second cook, Suleiman, were subjects of Elizabeth’s later writing. In the following quote, Elizabeth David (1960) describes Suleiman, who “... performed minor miracles with two primus

stoves and an oven which was little more than a tin box perched on top of them. His soufflés were never less than successful...” (p. ). These cooks were a source of learning for Elizabeth. They introduced her to different ways to cook, as well as the pleasures that were associated with good foods.

It was toward the end of the war that Elizabeth met and subsequently married an Indian officer, Tony David. After the war, Elizabeth David accompanied her husband back to New Delhi. She had spent nearly five years in Egypt. Life in India was not the wellspring of information on food and cooking that Julia and Paul Child had discovered a few years earlier. Elizabeth found the experience stifling, and she returned to England in 1946.

After Elizabeth David’s return to England she became increasingly focused on writing (Chaney, 1998). However, writing about food in post war England became a formidable challenge. Elizabeth had returned with her husband Tony to an England still beset with the austerities of forced food rationing. Lisa Chaney (1998) quotes Lord Gowrie who describes these circumstances. “After all, we had won, but we looked as if we had lost, with the persistence of powdered eggs and synthetic custard, imported tinned Spam. Growing up in austerity was incredibly nasty from a culinary point of view. I mean, the food was really disgusting” (p. 208).

In this time of restricted food supplies and a Puritanical attitude toward food held by her fellow countrymen, Elizabeth David applied the skills she had amassed during years of travel. She drew from her experiences as a cook, as well as from the variety of foods she had consumed during her travels.

Elizabeth, upon the encouragement of a friend, used these experiences as the basis for a book. Originally planned as a description of her adventures with a description of the food she ate along the way, this writing project evolved into a book about food (Chaney, 1998).

While Elizabeth was working on her first book, her mother, Stella, helped Elizabeth and Tony to finance the purchase of a home in London (Chaney, 1998). In this home, Elizabeth set up a large kitchen in which she frequently entertained guests. Elizabeth later stated that the kitchen should be the most comforting and comfortable room in the house (Chaney, 1998).

Elizabeth David's career as a writer began in 1948 when she was introduced to the editor of *Harpers Bazaar* (Chaney, 1998). In March 1949, her first article, *Rice Again*, was published. She wrote articles on a regular basis for that magazine for six years. Lisa Chaney describes David's then emerging writing style, one that persisted throughout her career, as "...authoritative, practical, tart and evocative" (p. 236).

Through this period of her life, Elizabeth David dedicated much of herself to writing about food and cooking. *Harpers* requested additional articles from her and offered her more space for her work. The articles David wrote for *Harpers* and other publications were later adapted into her first book, *Mediterranean Food* (Chaney, 1998).

As Elizabeth David continued to develop her skills as a cook and as a food writer, she also began to write about the sensuality of food and the emotional bond between a cook and her craft. In her first book, Elizabeth, for example, quoted from her mentor Norman Douglas when she insisted that culinary tasks should be conducted with reverential love (Chaney, 1998). She also suggested that not only do cooks have to possess a requisite set

of skills and a body of knowledge, but they also need to have a great deal of worldly experience, a sense of the artist and a capacity for enthusiasm (Chaney, 1998).

One year after the publication of *Mediterranean Food*, Elizabeth David produced *French Country Cooking* which was a compilation of recipes she gathered in France (Chaney, 1998). One of the skills that Elizabeth championed in her second book was the art of shopping in the marketplace, an ability demonstrated by most French housewives.

During the remainder of the 1950's, Elizabeth David continued to write magazine articles. Even though she published throughout much of her adulthood, the bulk of her magazine articles were produced between 1955 and 1965 (David, 1952).

She lived for three years in Italy and published a book on that nation's cuisine (Chaney, 1998). This was followed by her book, *Summer Cooking*. In this book, David emphasized the importance of keeping cooking simple. This is emphasized by her biographer, Lisa Chaney (1998). "Regarding the preparation of summer food Elizabeth gave that same advice which had become her hallmark: keep the dishes simple, don't mix things when they can be left separate...the simplest hors d'oeuvres are the best, looking clean and fresh..." (p. 321). This sentiment resonates in the craft of other famous cooks who were influenced by Elizabeth David. A case in point is Richard Olney who wrote about simple French cooking (Olney, 1974). Citing the famous French food writer Curnonsky, Olney emphasizes that the natural flavors of foods, when permitted to remain intact, constitute a simple yet wonderful basis for a cuisine. "This [simple cooking] is none other than the artist's precept, "Respect your medium," transposed into the world of food" (p.10). And John Thorne (1996), an American food writer takes up this same theme

in his book of essays when he discusses the craft of cooking as being embodied by the ability of a person to take up that which is readily available and make a satisfying meal.

Through subsequent years, Elizabeth David continued to produce a variety of magazine articles and books. In 1960, she published the book, *French Provincial cooking*. She also wrote for the *Sunday Times* and *Vogue*. As her writing became more popular, Elizabeth David began to develop into a cult figure in England (Chaney, 1998). In 1964, she collaborated in opening a kitchenware shop, Elizabeth David, Ltd. (Chaney, 1998). She spent a number of years managing this operation and in 1974 published a book, *Spices, Salt and Aromatics in the English Kitchen*. Her book, *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* was published in 1977, and in 1984, she produced *An Omelet and a Glass of Wine*, a collection of her essays (Chaney, 1998).

During the latter years of her life, Elizabeth David continued to write. Despite being severely injured in an automobile accident, she continued to work. However, as she aged, David became increasingly private. She died of a stroke on May 22, 1992. Her last book, *Harvest of the Cold Months*, was published posthumously, in 1994.

#### Elizabeth David's Awards

1977 *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole*

1979 Honorary doctorate, University of Essex

1982 Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature

1986 Commander of the British Empire

Learning to Cook Throughout Life

While Elizabeth David did not grow up in a home in which cooking was prized as it was in the Beard family and also never attended culinary school as did Julia Child, she

has been recognized as one of the greatest food writers of the twentieth century. In his Foreword to *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine* (1987, 1997), the food essayist, John Thorne describes Elizabeth David's influence on the craft of cooking.

But it was Elizabeth David who convinced us that it was all right to care about cooking as a serious thing, because she herself did so with a discrimination as fine and passionate as any we ourselves had just been learning to make over such things as *The Waste Land* or *The Wings of the Dove*. (p. 6)

Jill Norman (1993) also writes about the influence of Elizabeth David on an entire generation of British cooks.

In the sixties many an enthusiastic amateur opened a small restaurant with little more than his or her well-used copies of Elizabeth David, the necessary minimum of equipment and the will to succeed. And many of them did. In those days, more often than not, dinner parties, whether cheap and cheerful or stylish and sophisticated, were drawn from her books. (p. 35)

How do we understand this woman and her substantial impact on the craft of cooking?

The fact that Elizabeth David had little or no encouragement to learn cookery in her early life involves an interesting excursion into adult learning.

Despite that Elizabeth David had a significant impact on cookery, understanding her development as a cook is a daunting task. She never was as public as James Beard and Julia Child. Artemis Cooper (2000), her biographer, states that Elizabeth assiduously avoided celebrity. Craig Claiborne (1966) describes her as Britain's "shy authority" on



food and cooking. Even in her writing, it is difficult to detect how Elizabeth David gained her knowledge of cookery. John Thorne (1987, 1997) refers to her writing as “relentlessly anti-autobiographical” (p. 7). She does not reveal information about herself in the manner of James Beard’s reminiscences, and rarely appeared on television. In fact, she once commented that the publicity associated with cooking trivialized it as an art (Cooper, 1999).

It is probable that Elizabeth Gwynne’s initial exposure to the craft of cooking began when she departed from home to live in Paris and later visited Berlin. In these travels, Elizabeth experienced foods that were remarkably different from those she had consumed at home. Like James Beard and Julia Child, Elizabeth Gwynne began to develop the sense of taste that eventually developed into a sophisticated sensory understanding of the craft of cooking and eating. It is also highly likely that Elizabeth’s passion for food and cooking began to develop during this period.

It is likely that Elizabeth’s earliest attempts to prepare food for herself occurred when she first left her parents’ home to live in London. It was in a small apartment in London that Elizabeth set up a compact kitchen equipped with a gas stove and a refrigerator (Cooper, 1999). She was 21 years old. Elizabeth purchased a cookbook, *Recipes of All Nations* by Murphy which augmented another book, *The Gentle Art of Cookery*, which Elizabeth’s mother had given her. These two references shared a common theme; their directions were not very precise (Cooper, 1999). They also provided the reader with vivid descriptions of foods produced in their recipes. Another addition to her cookbook library was *Good Food*, written by Ambrose Heath. According to Artemis Cooper, the value of this cookbook to Elizabeth was that it grouped different foods by season. Thus,

Elizabeth began to learn how to plan meals around whatever products were in season and readily available.

Later in life, Elizabeth commented that the lack of precision in these cookbooks appealed to her imagination (Cooper, 1999). When she wrote recipes for her books and magazine articles, moreover, Elizabeth David followed this style and tended to downplay specific details. Her own style then influenced cooks such as Alice Waters who, in a 2001 interview with *Modern Maturity* (Winn, 2001), emphasized that “Elizabeth David, taught her that recipes are a guide and inspiration rather than a blueprint.” John Thorne (1994) also wrote about the nature of Elizabeth David’s recipes and their impact on cooks.

Elizabeth David disliked giving exact measurements in her recipes. This -- although contemporary food writers (or at least their editors) consider it an inexplicable, even reader-hostile, failing -- expresses a direct truth. The responsibility for a dish must finally lie not with the writer but with the cook. Too much instruction muddles the reality of this responsibility. Cookbooks cannot hold hands; their task is to make the reader think. In Elizabeth David's books, reader and writer face this fact across the page. She treats us as adults, and her writing, even if making no overture of friendship, offers an intimate encounter with an intense, vulnerable, intelligent, admirably honest mind.

The fact that Elizabeth began to develop an interest in cookery that was not bound closely to recipes shows an aspect of her development as a cook that parallels that of James Beard. He had learned to cook intuitively from observing his mother, and later

encouraged beginning cooks to be able to use recipes as guides—to strive to add a personal element to their cookery.

The impetus to experiment in cookery by Elizabeth David was not prompted by mere curiosity. Previously, she had been ordering prepared foods from Selfridges, a local store where she had an account (Cooper, 1999; Denning, 2001). Her ability to cook for herself helped reduce her living expenses. In this situation, Elizabeth learned in the manner of James Beard as she became involved with problem-solving, while she cooked for herself and friends.

An additional opportunity to learn the craft of cooking occurred during this period when Elizabeth visited Malta where her sister Priscilla and her husband Richard Longland lived. It was during her visit that Elizabeth encountered the Longland's cook, Angela (Cooper, 1999). Angela modeled the craft of cooking for Elizabeth, but she also demonstrated a sense of enthusiasm for cookery (Cooper, 1999). In this episode from Elizabeth's life we can see how both her understanding of and affinity for the craft of cooking began to develop.

Elizabeth's visit with Priscilla was part of a five-month trip in which Elizabeth visited Cairo and the Levant—Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. This trip added to Elizabeth's exposure to different foods. She undoubtedly experienced the marketplaces in these new and exciting lands. Her learning thus included interaction of vendors and consumers, and upon her return to England, Elizabeth purchased a heavy-duty notebook for recording recipes.

Less than one year after her return to England from Cairo and the Levant, Elizabeth and Charles Cowan purchased the two-Amsted yawl *Evelyn Hope*, and set sail for their

cruise through the Mediterranean Sea. While Elizabeth did not reveal a great deal of information about the galley on their craft, it is highly probable that its accommodations were, at best, Spartan. Nearly 60 years later, Diana Jesse (1997) had some pithy advice for would be galley cooks on yachts. “Items in the galley need to be easily reached, particularly if you are wearing a safety harness” (p. 33). Steve Colgate (1996) also discusses the need for a cook to work to maintain her balance while the boat is underway.

Most cruising sailboats have a galley designed to allow the cook to brace against some bulkhead and use both hands for cooking regardless of the heel angle and the motion. Those that don’t, usually have added belts with snaps to hold the cook near the stove even when the galley is on the high (windward) side of the boat. (p. 197)

These writers also point to the trouble of storing food on a boat. The damp environment, for example, can accelerate the spoilage of certain foods. In addition, storage of any kind is limited on a small boat.

It is important to note that these writers discuss the challenges of storing, preparing and consuming food on a boat in the context of an era that includes microwave ovens, blenders, freeze-dried foods, vacuum packaging and an vast array of convenience foods that were not available to Elizabeth Gwynne and Charles Cowan when they set sail in 1939. The Primus stove that Elizabeth probably used was similar to what we today would recognize as a small gas heated camping stove. This was hardly a piece of equipment that facilitated cooking under even the most favorable conditions.

Given the conditions of a small boat at sea, it is conceivable that tasks as simple as making coffee would have been highly complicated. Steve Colgate (1996) hints at this

when he recommends procedures for pouring coffee into a cup. He says that one person should hold both the cup and the coffeepot. If two people attempt the task, it is too difficult to coordinate the pot with the cup while maintaining balance. All too frequently, the result is that the scalding liquid will burn one or both people.

The information on cooking in a boat's galley provides insight into the challenging environment in which Elizabeth Gwynne had to develop cooking skills. This information, however, does not address how she learned cooking skills. Since Elizabeth avoided revealing much about herself, we need to hypothesize about her cooking on the *Evelyn Hope*. We can assume that Elizabeth's initial cookery on the boat was at least in part a process of trial and error. However, both Julia Child and James Beard stressed the importance of trial and error as a useful way to learn how to cook. In that small galley, Elizabeth probably limited herself to a few basic dishes. In his book about their voyage, for example, Charles (1946) mentioned cooking sausage and brewing coffee in the galley. Charles also most likely collaborated in cooking some of meals.

It is also possible that Elizabeth learned to value simplicity in cookery while she lived with Charles on the *Evelyn Hope*. Elizabeth's value for simplicity in cooking is demonstrated in an article she wrote years after her voyage on the *Evelyn Hope*. "I can only say that there are times when one positively craves for something totally unsensational; the meals in which every dish is an attempted or even a successful tour de force are always a bit of a trial" (p.). Despite the fact that simplicity is not a specific skill such as the ability to fold egg whites or knead dough, the ability to think about cooking in terms of uncomplicated processes seems to be a valuable asset to a cook. The

value of simple cooking has also been underscored by a variety of writers including John Thorne (1996), Richard Olney (1974) and James Beard (1977).

Perhaps one expression of simplicity in Elizabeth David's cookery can be detected in the recipes she provides to her audience. In an article devoted to Eduard de Pomiane (David, 1967), Elizabeth emphasized how this man, educated as a scientist, made the principles of cookery interesting and understandable. In this same article, Elizabeth also offers one of Pomiane's recipes, *tomates à la crème* as an exemplar of his effective, yet uncomplicated approach to cooking (David, 1952).

Take six tomatoes. Cut them in halves. In your frying pan melt a lump of butter. Put in the tomatoes, cut side downwards, with a sharply-pointed knife puncturing here and there the rounded sides of the tomatoes. Let them heat for five minutes. Turn them over. Cook them for another ten minutes. Turn them again. The juices run out and spread into the pan. Once more turn the tomatoes cut side upwards. Around them put 80 grammes (3 oz. Near enough) of thick cream. Mix it with the juices. As soon as it bubbles, slip the tomatoes and all their sauces on to a hot dish. Serve instantly, very hot. (p. 178)

This is indeed a very simple dish requiring three ingredients (unless you add salt and pepper) and three utensils (two if you can move the tomatoes from the frying pan to a plate with the broad side of your knife). The manner by which Elizabeth describes this dish, however simple, convinces us that it is interesting and delicious.

Perhaps the recipe for *tomates à la crème* demonstrates another component of Elizabeth's learning. The directions, like those in earlier cookbooks she used, are fairly

imprecise. Her reliance on this type of recipe may signify that Elizabeth David began to show confidence in herself as a cook. It is difficult to state with certainty when this confidence developed, but managing to prepare even the simplest meals in the galley of a small boat at sea must have helped to instill this as part of her personality. Regardless of how this confidence developed, we see yet another similarity among the subjects in this study. This is a feeling that improvisation—moving beyond recipes—is an important stage of development of cooks. This is illustrated in how subjects learned and taught their craft.

Elizabeth and Charles's voyage took them to the south of France where Elizabeth met the writer Norman Douglas. On a number of occasions throughout her career, Elizabeth David emphasized the important influence of Norman Douglas on her life. He had a considerable impact on Elizabeth, who once spoke of her love for the man (Cooper, 1999). She later wrote two essays about their relationship (Cooper, 1999). M. M. Pack (2001) describes the relationship between the 72 year old writer and the 26 year old Elizabeth Gwynne.

Within the context of Mediterranean culture, he talked knowledgeably about food at a time when educated people simply did not do so, and he taught her that, with a little care and attention, one could eat well and inexpensively every day. He instructed her in the art of searching out the best and rejecting all that was bogus and second-rate. The inscription in a book he gave her could be taken as her consequent text for living:

“Always do as you please, and send everybody to Hell, and take the consequences. Damned good Rule of Life.”

Elizabeth (David, 1969) later wrote that the inscription had been written by Douglas on the back page of her copy of *Old Calabria*. Elizabeth later stated that at the time, Norman simply attempted to jar her into leaving Charles, a relationship Douglas thought was a negative influence in Elizabeth's life.

Even though Norman Douglas was not a cook, Douglas was well known as a gourmet (Lindeman, 1965). Certainly, Douglas' influence on Elizabeth was directed toward food, for the subject had been an interest of his for years (Douglas, 1925). But he also conveyed a sense of importance for food and cooking when educated people simply did not discuss the subject (Cooper, 1999). Artemis Cooper (1999) describes Douglas' attitude toward food.

He talked of food because it mattered, because it was part of civilized life, to be enjoyed as profoundly as every other pleasure and accorded the interest and respect that, in Norman's opinion, too many pretentious people accorded to art. (p. 66)

The impact of Douglas' attitudes regarding food echoes throughout Elizabeth David's writing, and she dedicated her first book to his memory. Not only did Norman Douglas provide information about food to Elizabeth, but he also challenged her, through his example, to engage in rigorous scholarship, to seek the truth and to always seek authenticity, as well as excellence in matters of food and wine (David, 1969). This latter influence became apparent in the scholarship that Elizabeth David applied to her writing and she frequently referred to Douglas' publications.

The influence of Norman Douglas on Elizabeth Gwynne, therefore, was substantial. In their relationship, we can see elements that are similar to the relationship between Paul



and Julia Child. Like Norman, Paul was not a cook. But as mentors, he and Norman seemed to have conveyed an important set of lessons to Julia and Elizabeth. These lessons had more to do with the importance of food and cooking than the tools, products and procedures that are part of the craft of cooking. They also seemed to communicate a value for quality and genuineness.

Norman Douglas also asked Elizabeth to leave Charles and remain with him (Douglas) on the continent. Later, Elizabeth suggested that she might have been better off to remain with Norman, but she then would have missed the experiences that gave rise to her development as a cookery writer.

Elizabeth chose to sail away with Charles, and they were swept up in the maelstrom of World War II. Their capture and subsequent release by the Italians propelled Elizabeth and Charles to Greece and the Aegean islands. It was not until years after Norman Douglas' death that Elizabeth (David, 1952) talked about him and how he had touched her life.

A more fitting place to remember him (Douglas, ) was in the lemon grove to be reached only by descending some three hundred steps from the Piazza. It was so thick, that lemon grove, that it concealed from all but those who knew their Capri well the archbishops' palace in which was housed yet another of those private taverns which appeared to materialize for Norman alone. There, at a table outside the half-ruined house, a branch of piercingly aromatic lemons hanging within arm's reach, a piece of bread and a bottle of the proprietor's olive oil in front of me, a glass of wine in my hand, Norman was speaking. (p. 125)

After their departure from Italy, Elizabeth and Charles finally settled in on the island of Syros. There, Elizabeth found herself cooking in conditions that were not much better than on the *Evelyn Hope*. Much of the cooking was accomplished on an outdoor brazier. The availability of tools and products we simply take for granted were not available. Elizabeth did not have refrigeration or other appliances. In addition to the limitation of tools on Syros, Elizabeth was also beset with a limited amount of food with which she could cook. There were no supermarkets with aisles of canned, frozen and prepared foods ready for her consumption. In fact, their diet was composed primarily of foods from the local open-air market and what could be harvested from the sea. In the latter case, the primary foods available were fish and octopus, a food that Elizabeth claimed she continued to love throughout her life.

Thus, if we pause to consider the primitive conditions on Syros, we again can appreciate the learning Elizabeth had to undergo in order to simply produce a meal. While she did not provide explicit information about their circumstances on the island, it is likely that the cooking utensils available did not include much more than a few pans, bowls and knives. In these conditions, the production of a slice of toast would have constituted a formidable challenge. Yet Elizabeth was able to prepare meals under these conditions.

Elizabeth's challenges associated with cookery on the *Evelyn Hope* and on Syros illustrate another similarity among subjects. This the process of problem-solving as a theme in their lives. As the nature of problems and their contexts changed, it is likely that subjects' learning increased.

Their evacuation from the Greek Islands propelled Elizabeth into yet another new set of circumstances. In Alexandria and subsequently in Cairo, Elizabeth was reintroduced to an entire world of new foods. The marketplaces of this very different culture must have been on Elizabeth David's mind when she wrote *Mediterranean Food* and discussed the vibrant colors and flavors of Mediterranean foods.

Elizabeth's subsequent employment in Egypt gave her the financial resources to hire a series of cooks. One such cook, Kyriacou, taught her about foods available in the marketplace, and he was able to demonstrate the production of good foods that were made under relatively primitive conditions. For example, much of the cooking had to be accomplished with the use of a Primus stove similar to the one Elizabeth used on the *Evelyn Hope*.

What Kyriacou provided to Elizabeth was more than knowledge about cooking. In the manner of Norman Douglas, he demonstrated a passion for the craft. His value for cooking as a craft is illustrated by Elizabeth's own words as she described an octopus dinner Kyriacou prepared to celebrate the news that his family had escaped the war (Cooper, 1999).

With passionate concentration he prepared it [the octopus], and I watched him build up in a deep pot a bed of thyme branches on which to lay a huge quantity of onions, tomatoes, garlic, bay leaves and olives, and then the octopus. Gently he poured red wine over his carefully constructed edifice, stirred in the ink from the fish, and left his covered pot to simmer for the rest of the afternoon. (p. 87)

Later, Elizabeth was also assisted with her cooking by another cook named Suleiman who extended her understanding of Mediterranean food (Cooper, 1999). Elizabeth had hosted lunches in her apartment on a regular basis. She and Suleiman collaborated to cook for these events. The cookery, however, was still quite a challenge as described by Artemis Cooper (1999). “The lunches, as Elizabeth was the first to acknowledge, were a joint effort between her and Suleiman, on fairly primitive equipment. They had a portable charcoal grill and two primus stoves, while a square tin box perched on one of the stoves served as an oven” (p. 104). In the manner of his predecessor, Kyriacou, Suleiman conveyed a sense that cooking was a special activity. Elizabeth later described Suleiman’s “lavish hand with herbs and seasonings” (Cooper, 1999, p. 104). She also spoke of his “devoted watch” over the cooking.

Elizabeth also shopped with her cooks and became accustomed to many different products available in the typical Middle Eastern marketplace; learning in a manner similar to the other two subjects. It is important to keep in mind, moreover, that Elizabeth continued to develop in areas aside from cooking techniques. She ate many different foods and learned through her senses. In a manner of speaking, Elizabeth began to develop a sophistication of her sense of taste as described by James Beard and Julia Child. She also strengthened her bond with the craft, especially her love for the people and foods of the Mediterranean.

Elizabeth’s marriage to Tony David took her for a period of time to India. This was not a culture whose cuisine had captivated the likes of Julia Mc Williams and Paul Child. However, later in life, Elizabeth did write about curries and her knowledge must have arisen, at least in part, from her brief experience in India. Nevertheless, Artemis Cooper

(1999) states that Elizabeth David loathed British India. Fortunately, Elizabeth's stay was abbreviated by illness.

Elizabeth David returned to an England that, after the conclusion of the war, remained in the clutches of food shortages and rationing. The severity of the rationing in 1946 is described by Artemis Cooper (Cooper, 1999).

As far as rationing was concerned, 1946 had been a very disappointing year. Fears of world famine meant that bread was rationed for the first time in Britain. Rice was no longer imported, and increases in allowances of meat, bacon and eggs failed to materialize. (pp. 126-27)

Elizabeth David refused to be limited by the severity of rationing. She viewed conditions as a challenge, and later said, "with whatever I could get, I cooked as one possessed" (Cooper, 1999, p. 127). Elizabeth also compared the conditions with those she had experienced in Egypt. She remarked that even though the standard of living in Egypt had not been very high, the food she was able to procure had "life" to it—there were always interesting smells and flavors (Cooper, 1999). From these words, we can see how Elizabeth David's relationship with food and cooking had changed over a period of years.

It was in the midst of the austerity brought about by continued postwar rationing and shortages that Elizabeth began to write about Mediterranean food. According to Artemis Cooper (1999) Elizabeth David's original impetus for writing about Mediterranean food was her longing for the sunny skies of the Levant. She also based the book on over 12 years of cooking. The experiences that helped Elizabeth develop her skills are summarized by Lisa Chaney (1998).

Elizabeth's experience of cooking and eating places was by now enormously varied, both in a geographic and a gastronomic sense. This experience included running a ship's galley, with primus stoves, managing a primitive kitchen on a Greek island, in Egypt - and, to a lesser extent, India - becoming familiar with the world of Eastern food. Before the war this would have been unknown to her but for the beguiling Mrs. Leyel and *The Gentle Art of Cookery*. Elizabeth's experience included eating in some of the best restaurants – both costly, modest and unknown - in all these countries. Throughout her travels she had learnt the art, essential for both travellers and good cooks, of pragmatic adaptation and accommodation to circumstance. (p. 210)

These experiences not only helped Elizabeth to develop a useful set of cooking skills, but they also enabled her to acquire a sophisticated sense of taste that Chaney describes as being "... at once fastidious, traditional, catholic and bohemian" (p.210). It is important to echo Lisa Chaney's comment that much of the twelve years were characterized by Elizabeth's cooking in severe conditions with a minimal amount of equipment.

At this point in Elizabeth's development as a cook, we can again detect similarities between her and the other subjects. This in the development of her taste, and the word catholic resonated with Robert Clark's (1996) description of Elizabeth Beard's broad experience and "catholic" tastes. It is in this development, over a period of time, that enables these cooks to rely on their senses as a way to pursue their craft, not simply a set of prescribed recipes and formulas.

The result of Elizabeth's work was a book titled *Mediterranean Food*. While Elizabeth David's initial book on food provided recipes for her readers, she also concentrated on describing the life of the people of the region as a context for their food. She wanted to bring the foods alive for a nation that had faced years of ration-limited eating. The recipes in *Mediterranean Food* were also authentic and Elizabeth made no attempt to alter them to accommodate to the restrictions of rationing. Meat, for example was not taken off the ration list until 1956 (Cooper, 1999).

In a process similar to Julia Child's experiences with the development of her first cookbook, the production of *Mediterranean Food* furnished Elizabeth David with an opportunity to learn about food and cooking. In examining their work, however, several prominent differences emerge between the work of these two women.

A substantial difference between the initial writing of Julia Child and Elizabeth David was the focus of their books. Julia Child spent a considerable amount of time and energy to translate French cookery into a form that could be understood by American cooks and be accomplished with available foods. As a result, Child's emphasis was utilitarian. The emphasis of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was primarily utilitarian.

In *Mediterranean Food*, however, Elizabeth David seemed to work toward striking a balance between the substance of a recipe and the aesthetic qualities of the food she introduced to the reader. She also created a social context for the food—a sense of the people who created the dishes she described. Elizabeth's approach to her writing is illustrated in the following recipe (David, 1980).

### **Pissaladina or Pissaladière**

This dish is one of the delights of Marseilles, Toulon and the Var country, where it is sold in the market places, and the bakeries in the early morning and can be bought, piping hot, by the slice, off big iron trays.

Get from the baker a piece of uncooked bread, pull it out and spread a baking sheet with it. Cover the bottom of a saucepan with olive oil. Add 2 lbs. of sliced onions; do not brown them but let them slowly melt almost to a purée, which will take about 40 minutes. Pour the purée on to the dough, put stoned black olives on the top and decorate it with criss-cross fillets of anchovy. Cook in the oven.

If bread dough is unobtainable, an excellent dish can be made by spreading the onion puree into a tin lined with the same pastry as for the tarte à l'oignon (p. 33) or thick slices of bread cut lengthways from a sandwich loaf. Fry one side lightly in olive oil, spread this side with the purée and put in a tin in the oven with a little more oil and cook about 10 minutes.

The flavour of the olive oil is essential to this dish.

Further along the coast, across the Italian border, these dishes baked on bread dough are called pizza, which simply means a pie, and there are many variations of them, the best known being the Neapolitan pizza which consists of tomatoes, anchovies and mozzarella cheese (a white buffalo-milk cheese). The local pizza of San Remo is very like the Provençal *pissaladière*, but garnished with salted sardines instead of anchovies; it



is known locally as *Sardenara*.

If you can get yeast from a local bakery which makes its own bread, the dough for a pizza or a *pissaladiere* can be made as follows: dissolve a little under  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz. of yeast in a little tepid water; pour  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. of plain flour in a mound on a pastry board; make a well in the centre, put in the yeast and a teaspoonful of salt. Fold the flour over the yeast, and blend all together.

Add about  $\frac{1}{8}$  pint of water and knead to a stiff dough. Press the dough out and away from you with the palm of the hand, holding the dough with the other hand. When the dough begins to feel light and springy roll it into a ball, put it on a floured plate, cover with a floured cloth, and leave in a warm place for 2 to 3 hours, by which time it should have risen, and doubled in volume.

To make the *pissaladiere* roll out the dough into a large disc or square (about ~ inch thick) and garnish it with the onions, black olives and anchovies, prepared as already explained, and bake in a fairly hot oven for 20 to 30 minutes. (pp. 38-9)

In this recipe, Elizabeth David both educates and entertains the reader. She also leaves a degree of ambiguity for the reader to define for herself. This style of recipe formulation echoes the nature of subjects' learning cookery. This learning developed into a way to define one's meaning in life.

Elizabeth David, like Julia Child learned from writing recipes such as this. When she checked the recipe, for example, Elizabeth needed to put herself in the place of her reader. In doing so, she practiced basic cookery skills such as chopping vegetables and

working with dough. This practice, moreover, was undoubtedly similar to the repetitive tasks that helped James Beard and Julia Child to hone their craft. As with the other subjects, Elizabeth also had to learn how to organize information and present it in a meaningful manner to her readers.

The scope of her recipe shows that Elizabeth David had involved herself in a broad form of scholarship. She wrote about the people as well as their food. In doing so, Elizabeth, like Julia Child and James Beard, assumed the roles of cook, writer and historian.

It is interesting to note that Elizabeth's original manuscript for *Mediterranean Food* was returned by her publisher for revision, in part, because it needed more information about the foods contained in the recipes. This was due, in part, with Elizabeth's notion that she did not have anything of substance to contribute and that she needed to keep her voice out of the book and focus on recipes. Fortunately, her publisher disagreed and insisted that Elizabeth provide more than a conglomeration of recipes (Cooper, 1999).

Therefore, in order to add depth to *Mediterranean Food*, Elizabeth David had to draw from writers such as Henry James, Marcel Boulestin, Robert Byron and D. H. Lawrence (Cooper, 1999) in order to write about the people of the Mediterranean. The information provided by these writers, however, was not sufficient. Elizabeth also had to draw from her own experience. And Elizabeth David learned to also speak with her own voice. What emerged were passages such as her description of a fisherman who prepared the shellfish he had just caught for her. It is also evident in her introduction to *Mediterranean Food* (David, 1980). "The cooking of the Mediterranean shores, endowed

with all the natural resources, the color and flavor of the South, is a blend of tradition and brilliant improvisation. The Latin genius flashes from the kitchen pans” (p. 5). Could these be the words of the same woman who, a few years earlier, did not know how to brew tea?

Elizabeth David continued to write books and magazine articles through the remainder of her life. In the 1960's, she embarked on a business venture and opened a cookware store in London. Even though the ownership of a retail cookware store may not, at first blush, appear to be a source of learning for a woman who had previously written extensively about food and cooking, Elizabeth was compelled to engage in a considerable amount of travel and research in order to obtain products for her customers.

Elizabeth left cooks and food lovers on more than one continent with a rich legacy. She emphasized the need to know the basics of cooking. However, Elizabeth also focused on the preservation of cultural traditions associated with food, and she promoted the pleasures of both cooking and eating. For this, we will always be in her debt.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Learning the Craft of Cooking**

*In all ages, of course, wise men have recognized that learning is the active, not the passive part of the process [teaching and learning]: the learner opens himself up, he stretches himself, he reaches out, he incorporates new experience, he relates it to his previous experience, he reorganizes this experience, he expresses or unfolds what is latent within him. (Kidd, 1973, p. 15)*

This study has attempted to discover the special learning process that adults experience as they stretch, reach out and unfold. In this study, biographical data has been used as a rich source of information about subjects' lives, and the nature of their learning.

The analysis of the results of the study has been shaped by a number of theoretical principles associated with the field of adult education. With this information, we can create a backdrop upon which we can best understand the data provided through the analysis of subjects' biographies.

#### **The Self in Adult Learning**

One of the fundamental principles of adult learning theory is the idea that learning is an essential component of life. Eduard Lindeman (1961), for example insists that education "...is a process coterminous with life..." (p. 5). His words are echoed by Cyril Houle (1984) who indicates that education might be the entire purpose of life. In another book, Houle (1961) illustrates the broad learning opportunities available to adults when he quotes the character Ishmael from Melville's *Moby Dick* who insists that the deck of a whaling ship was his (Ishmael's) Harvard College.

The centrality of learning throughout the course of life suggests that the process of adult learning is intimately bound up with the self. Malcolm Knowles (1980) discusses the adult's self-concept as including a readiness to learn as well as a need to have some control over learning activities. Another element of the interaction of learning and the self is the cognitive style applied by individual learners to store, organize and access information (Tennant, 1997). Learners vary in many different ways such as field independence vs. dependence or preference in visual vs. auditory or kinesthetic information. Other psychological factors such as locus of control also contribute the complexity associated with the interaction of adult as individuals and the process of adult learning.

The individuality of adult learners is also closely associated with the complexity of their lives. This complexity includes adults' engagement in multiple roles and responsibilities (Brookfield, 1986)—parent, employee, volunteer, child, spouse, etc. Adults also have a rich set of accumulated life experiences (Knowles, 1980; Lindeman, 1961). These experiences form a rich and complicated reservoir that can be applied to the learning enterprise, or may challenge learning and thus have to be contended with in the course of the educational process (Jarvis, 1987; Mezirow, 2000). Previous experiences with a subject may, for example, induce a sense of foreclosure in the adult learner who then may not be willing to invest himself in an activity where there is a chance for failure.

In part, the complexity of adults' life experiences, past and present, is represented in the various learning projects in which they become engaged. Adults frequently participate in self-directed learning projects (Brookfield, 1985; Candy, 1991; Knowles,

1975; Tough, 1967, 1971). In these projects, learners typically identify learning objectives, select resources and establish criteria for success (Knowles, 1975). These learning projects need not be independent from formal settings for they also can be utilized as a pedagogical strategy (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

A final theoretical element is the notion of adult learning as a process of personal transformation. This approach assumes what might be described as a cognitive stance toward transformation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). According to writers such as Jack Mezirow, transformation occurs when adults reflect on experience. As a result of this reflection, the learner experiences fundamental changes in existing schema or perspectives.

It is important to view these different factors that influence adult learning from a perspective that includes an appreciation for their interrelationships. It is possible, for example, that an adult engaged in an independent self-directed learning project may also experience some degree of transformation in the process. In addition, this learning project will undoubtedly be influenced by the adult's intricate network of roles and responsibilities as well as her individual characteristics as a learner and her previous experiences with the subject or text.

#### Learning in a Web of Interpersonal Relationships

The potential role of social forces in shaping learners lives is substantial. These forces can constitute broad cultural and societal movements or simply the influence of a reference group. The importance of these factors is underscored by Kurt Lewin (1951) who once challenged that an explanation of behavior cannot be limited to characteristics of an individual, but had to include the social context in which it was embedded. Even

though the biographies of subjects in this study are located within a greater social and cultural milieu, this analysis takes a narrower view toward the social context of adult learning.

The role of interpersonal relationships in shaping our lives is significant, as illustrated by the words of Malcolm Parks (1998) "...most people view their personal relationships as the most important sources of meaning and satisfaction in their lives" (p. 155). One special form of interpersonal relationship is formed between mentors and their protégées, and the present study has provided a significant amount of information on that subject.

#### Mentoring in the Adult Education Literature

There has been a considerable amount of literature dedicated to mentors and the process of mentoring. In their chapter, *Mentoring in the Learning Society*, Norman Cohen and Michael Galbraith (1995) propose that mentoring has the potential to provide "...adult learners with significant opportunities for significant personal, academic and career development" (p. 5). Cohen and Galbraith propose a model of mentoring in which they describe mentoring as a "...process of guided developmental learning based on the premise that the participants will have reasonably frequent contact and sufficient interactive time together" (p. 5). They also depict mentors as contributing knowledge, proficiency and experience to the mentoring relationship.

Laurent Daloz and others (1986; 1999; 1996) have written extensively about mentoring. These writers describe the process of mentoring as involving a journey in which the mentor encourages the protégé to enter a new world, and then acts as a guide who assists the protégé on further movement beyond the mentor toward additional development.

In describing the mentor, Daloz couches his ideas in Western mythology and literature. He taps into Homeric legend to describe the original Mentor and evokes Dantes' journey through hell with Virgil as a guide and mentor. Through the use of myth, Daloz portrays the mentor as a halfway entity existing between two different worlds—that of the protégé's present experience and a world of potentiality.

As the protégé continues on her journey into the new territory, the mentor helps her to avoid potential dangers. The mentor also offers encouragement while at the same time challenging the protégé. And when the journey is nearing completion, the mentor facilitates the protégé's movement beyond their relationship. In another book, Daloz and others (1996) describe the impact of mentors. In their book dedicated to individuals who lead for the common good, they comment on the development of these unique individuals. "At least three quarters of the people we studied were significantly influenced by mentors or mentoring environments. Mentors challenge, support and inspire" (p. 44). It is important to underscore, moreover, that the process experienced by protégées is frequently viewed as being developmental in nature with the protégé experiencing qualitative "leaps" of growth at different stages of her journey.

Writers outside the field of education have also provided insight into the nature of mentoring. For example, Edward Sketch (2001) who, in reflecting on 20 years of mentoring in a large corporation describes mentors as being wise, savvy, technically strong and caring. His ideas resonate in the words of Stephanie Mehta (2001), another writer from the field of business, who states that successful mentors have experience, act as role models and are in a position of authority in the organization. She adds that



mentors tend to be excellent “networkers” who can help the protégé to work with other useful members of the organization.

Despite the fact that a considerable amount of literature has been dedicated to the process of mentoring, the definition of a mentor is troublesome. Just as counseling must be more than paid friendship, there must be more to mentoring than the issuance of advice. Perhaps the critical element that defines the mentoring relationship is that it is somewhat permanent and has an affective component. Moreover, in the relationship, there is an unequal distribution of power. This inequality exists because of the unequal distribution of knowledge and/or experience. It is the person who possesses additional knowledge and/or experience who acts in the role of the mentor. The nature of this relationship, moreover, need not be explicit. For example, a person reflecting on a relationship might identify a person previously who acted in the role of a mentor even though this aspect of their relationship was not apparent at the time.

We can detect evidence of the mentoring relationships, in varying forms, evident in all three subjects’ lives. The stories of mentoring in subjects’ lives, moreover, suggest that there are more affective components to mentoring than described in the current literature. These data also propose that the definition of the mentor needs to be expanded. These general elements emerge in each of four sections on mentoring in subjects’ lives: a) introducing a new world of possibilities, b) modeling excellence and competence, c) introduction to a community of practice, and c) expressing passion for the craft.

## Introduction to a World of Possibilities

In a manner similar to that of other subjects in this study, Julia Child was introduced to a new world of cuisine and cookery by a variety of different mentors at different points in time. An example of this is found in Julia's relationship with Chef Max Bugnard and other instructors at the *Cordon Bleu* culinary school. These professional cooks encouraged Julia, challenged her and her classmates, but also invited Julia to enter the world of French cuisine. In the process, these instructors taught her and included Julia and other students in many of their projects. This new world contained not only information on the codified gastronomy of France, but also individuals such as Escoffier who helped to develop the tradition of French cooking and the special place food and cooking have for the French.

The initiation of a protégé into a new world filled with potential is a theme that resonates through the lives of other great cooks. Georges August Escoffier (1997) talks about how several chefs provided him with an opportunity to learn when he was a young man.

During the summer season, Le Restaurant Français closed down from the end of May to September 1, and during that time I was in charge of cooking for the family. Our neighbor was a renowned confectioner and a pastry cook. The two chefs of these departments in his establishment very kindly invited me to visit them in their laboratory, and when I had a little free time I would take advantage of their kindness and help them prepare preserved fruits while learning about this branch of our profession. (p. 10)

The image of the “older and wiser” mentor leading the less experienced protégé into a new world does not have to apply in every situation. Ruth Reichl (1998) relates how a roommate in college introduced her to many new foods.

But Serafina was a great cook. She stayed up nights marinating chicken in curry, onions and Kitchen bouquet. She made little fried breads called “bakes” and asked her mother for the coconut bread recipe. Soon she was making roti and souse, filling the kitchen with smells I’d never even imagined. (p. 111)

Serafina was not older and possibly not much more wiser, but she was still able to open a world of fragrances, flavors and new foods to Ruth Reichl. By cooking in the apartment and including Ruth in the food preparation, Serafina also made that new world more accessible. It was not just an invitation to explore new territory that Serafina offered Ruth. Serafina also exuded an exuberance or verve for her cooking. And Serafina’s food composed a significant part of her *joie de la vie*.

Perhaps introduction to a new, accessible world by a mentor does not even have to be accomplished in the presence of a protégé. This might be said of a good cookbook writer such as Irma Rombauer whose conversational tone in her books (Mendelson, 1996) invited novice cooks to experiment with new foods. Julia Child, with her welcoming, try this smile accomplished the same feat with a generation of television viewing, aspiring gourmet cooks. And Elizabeth David found herself captured by the words of a cookbook writer named Leyel (Cooper, 1999). “I wonder if I would have ever learned to cook at all if I had been given a routine Mrs. Beeton to learn from, instead of the romantic Mrs. Leyel with her imagination-catching recipes...” (p. 44).

The encouragement to enter a new world might not even have to originate from a mentor who has great experience in the craft. Perhaps the most significant mentor for Julia Child was her husband Paul. Despite the fact that Paul was not a great cook, he introduced Julia to a new world and started her on a journey that has lasted the rest of their lives.

Paul was nearly 10 years older than Julia, and this might fit our image of an older, wiser guide. The fact that Paul had lived in Paris, worked on freighters, was a gourmet and an artist is proof that Paul came from a world that was far removed from Julia Mc Williams' life in Pasadena. However, it seems that he and Julia embarked on the journey as partners, quite unlike the image of Gandalf leading an assortment of Hobbits through Middle Earth, for neither knew exactly what would constitute their final destination.

Over the course of their journey, the relationship between Julia and Paul Child shifted as Julia gained additional experience in cookery. When Paul was transferred by the State Department, they moved to France where Julia enrolled in culinary school. Paul supported her education and took time to become a self-educated wine expert. Both Paul and Julia both continued to develop throughout life as they explored the many aspects of the world of food and cookery.

We might surmise that the most significant mentoring influence in Elizabeth David's life was associated with Norman Douglas. Like Paul Child, Norman was not trained in cookery, although he was a self-educated authority on food and travel. Norman also opened a door for Elizabeth David. He challenged her family's puritanical views toward food and modeled scholarly research. Above all, he pushed Elizabeth into deciding what paths her own journey would cover.

These data confirm, to an extent, what Daloz (1986; 1999) has written about the importance of mentors to “usher” a protégé into a new world or onto a journey. He portrays the mentor, for example, of having feet in two worlds, the present and the future. In the data, we see evidence of this process. Paul Child brings Julia Mc Williams into a realm of great foods and Serafina does the same for Ruth Reichl.

It is through the behavior of mentors such as Paul Child and Serafina that the data extend our understanding of how a mentor might encourage the protégé to embark upon a journey or explore new territory. Writers such as Daloz (1986; 1999), discuss the need for the mentor to encourage a passage to the new world, but there seems to be more to the expression of the mentor’s affect associated with the passage. There are many other sentiments that the mentor could express, and we might wonder if there is room for emotions such as enthusiasm, exuberance, trepidation and boldness in Daloz’s model.

The demonstration of affect associated with the protégé’s journey is evidenced by the exuberance of Serafina as she cooked and the many evenings Paul Child and Julia Mc Williams spent talking about food and cooking while they were stationed in Asia. However, it was not simply conversation, it was the intensity of Paul’s interest in foods that seems to be an important factor. This interest made such an impact on Julia that she later discussed her motivation to learn cooking as a way to please Paul and to become a better wife for him.

Both Paul Child and Norman Douglas represent data from the study that challenge the notion presented in the literature depicting a mentor as being more experienced in the new domain the protégé enters. Perhaps the most striking example of the older, experienced mentor arises when Daloz draws from modern literature and depicts the

mentor as the wizard Gandalf who, at varying times, shepherds Hobbits through the perils of Middle Earth. While mentors such as Julia Childs' instructors had considerable experience in gastronomy and the culinary arts, Paul and Norman do not really fit this mold. Paul Child, while having traveled extensively, was not a cook. And as we review their lives together, we develop the sense that Paul and Julia explored the new territory of cookery together.

Finally, it is also the accessibility of a new world that a mentor needs to communicate to the protégé through her behavior and attitudes. It is difficult to perceive this in the existing literature. However, we can experience an invitation to the joy inherent in the world of cooking expressed by the words of Irma Rombauer. We can see it in the smile of Julia Child in episodes of *The French Chef*, and we can perceive how Elizabeth David's words moved countless cooks to open small restaurants "armed with her books and a few necessary tools" (Castell & Griffin, 1995).

#### Modeling Excellence and Competence

At a very early age, James Beard found his mother to be a powerful mentor. She modeled excellence in cooking through her behavior. James, in fact was always quick to credit Elizabeth for the cookery she accomplished with a minimal amount of equipment (Jones, 1990). "More and more I think about my Mother's small woodstove at Gearhart, he wrote, and the dishes that issued from that tiny kitchen. I still wonder at her technique" (p. 18). Escoffier was also influenced by his maternal grandmother to value excellence in cooking. His biographer, Timothy Shaw (1995) depicts her influence. "Auguste's maternal grandmother was an outstanding cook, and it was she who initiated

him into the delights and secrets of her art” (p. 16). In his autobiography, Escoffier (1997) also talks about his grandmother.

I used to watch with great interest every gesture made by my grandmother, a veritable cordon-bleu cook, as she prepared her delectable ragoûts. I religiously kept all of her recipes and often used them during the course of my long career. (p. 3)

In these quotes, we can observe an interesting expression of what it means to have a value for quality. These writers do not talk about matters such as technique or specific rules. While these factors are important, it is interesting to note their use of words such as art and intensity. And the path toward excellence in cooking is not necessarily complex or arcane as revealed by Patricia Wells’ (1991) description of Richard Olney’s use of fresh herbs in his cooking.

I share with Richard Olney a passion for Provence and its cooking, a cuisine that’s direct, earthy, seasonal and of the soil. Likewise, I agree with him that a commitment to fresh herbs differentiates a good cook from an indifferent one. (p. ix)

Like Richard Olney, James Beard’s mother modeled excellence in her cookery by stressing the need for good ingredients. Beard’s biographer Robert Clark (1996) comments on Elizabeth’s standards for the food she purchased.

Elizabeth was an exacting shopper and withering in her criticism of what she felt to be less than best. She instinctively understood the principle that good food is first and foremost a function of good ingredients and that

mastery of techniques, recipes, or equipment cannot rescue a dish based on second-rate materials from its inherent mediocrity. (p. 21)

Elizabeth's standards became well known with the food purveyors of their community, as evidenced by the following passage from James Beard's (1964, 1992) autobiography.

I particularly remember one very early visit to the market in the company of my nursemaid. We had just been to the doctor's and on the way back stopped to buy a few things for my mother. When they were wrapped and handed to the maid, she said quietly, "Please charge them to Mrs. Beard." The clerk blanched and said, "For God's sake, give me that package. If I sent that to *her*, she'd kill me!" (p. 49)

Henri Charpentier's (2001) brother, an older accomplished chef, was also effective in communicating his strong value for excellence in the craft through his behavior. Henri describes an incident in his brother's kitchen. "Once I heard him roar: 'Stop it! Animal, are you a cook or a mason? Do not stir thus, roughly with your spoon. But like this: take the butter so:--be gracious" (p. 27).

Just as the mentor's behavior has the potential to encourage the protégé to embark on a great journey, we also see the mentor's ability to model important values. In Elizabeth Beard we can recognize the communicative power of a mentor's behavior. It is this form of communication described by Watzlawick and others (1967) that is capable of communicating very complex affective messages. By using concepts drawn from the literature of interpersonal communication, we thus have a theoretical frame for understanding how mentor's behavior, attitudes and feelings affect the mentoring relationship.



From reading the literature on mentoring, it is evident that an important aspect of mentoring is to challenge the protégé to develop as completely as possible. This development, moreover, is usually not limited to learning a craft or other body of knowledge. Daloz (1986) suggests that the mentor provides a challenge to the protégé. Cohen and Galbraith (1995) also suggest the importance of challenges to the protégé, but add that mentors must also be facilitative. These two writers also recommend that the competent mentor demonstrates skills to the protégé. In another chapter of the same edited book, Galbraith and Cohen (1995) repeat the same themes, stating that the more knowledgeable and experienced mentor provides "...professional networking, counseling, guiding, instructing, modeling and sponsoring" (p. 90). They add that the mentoring relationship is developmental with personal, professional and psychological components, and that it involves socialization.

The notion of a mentor as modeling and challenging the protégé as it appears in the data furnished by this study confirms much of what writers such as Daloz have suggested regarding the mentor's role in modeling knowledge, skills and attitudes. Some of the mentors such as James Beard's mother and Escoffier's grandmother demonstrated their attention to detail and their hard work to their protégées. Likewise, Henri Charpentier's brother, an older, accomplished chef in his own right, demonstrated enthusiasm and passion for excellence through his leadership in the kitchen.

What we see in these examples, however, is a more complicated and life-like depiction of the relationship between mentors and the substance of the protégé's quest or journey. While it is important to discuss modeling and teaching from a theoretical

standpoint, these factors more animated and powerful when we see them expressed with passion and commitment.

#### Introduction to a Community of Practice

For the purposes of this study, a community of practice refers to a social network of individuals engaged in different aspects of a craft or profession. The use of this expression should not be mistaken for its use elsewhere by writers such as Lave and Wenger (1991; 1998) whose use is directed primarily to membership in an occupation such as insurance claims processors. In the case of this study, community of practice assumes a broader definition.

James Beard also benefited from his mother's ability to model networking with many different people involved with the "food" community. Here, he describes his mother's relationship with a produce purveyor (1964, 1992).

Delfino grew great quantities of sweet basil, and he would bring us armloads of it. Mother learned from him how to use basil in *pesto*, the wonderful green sauce made with this herb, olive oil, garlic, grated cheese, salt and pepper and sometimes pine nuts; and she learned another heavenly sauce which was simply a blend of tomato, basil, salt and pepper and a touch of garlic. She was taught to put the herb to still another use by adding strips of it to a tomato salad, giving it a glory it had never known.

(p. 46)

How does this passage illustrate the impact of Elizabeth Beard on her son James? Here, we can see her modeling the importance of learning. As with other types of mentors, Elizabeth Beard not only demonstrates the importance of networking, but she also shows

how it is done. Beard later describes his mother's relationships with Delfino and other purveyors—how she would socialize with them and, at times, invite them into her home (Clark, 1996). “Elizabeth not only knew most of the farmers and dairy people she bought from, but invited them home for lunch and to parties, often trading her own jams, baked goods, tea blends, and fruit for their produce” (p. 37).

The marketplace was a nexus of connections for the great grandmother of Madeleine Kamman. In her book of memoirs of great women cooks from her family, Kamman (1976) describes her great grandmother and the other characters who populated their village market in France.

Marketing with her was an adventure, for she combed the market for expatriates from her own village or district and it was endless. All these women knew one another, all were still attached to that Bourdrie where they had been born and all of them sold real food of the Poitou, trucked over by sons or husbands or mailed to Montparnasse in huge wicker baskets. All of them, having suffered through periods of restrictions, practiced that ancestral cooking of hard times known as *La Cuisine de Misère* to millions of French women. Practicing *La Cuisine de Misère* meant cooking something with nothing. (p. 20)

For Madeleine Kamman's great grandmother, her connections with significant others in the marketplace became as important as her purchasing.

It was Jeanne Owen who played as strong a mentoring role in James Beard's life as his mother. She introduced herself to James (Clark, 1996) and immediately became an

important part of his life. Evan Jones (1990) describes the strength of the relationship between Beard and Owen.

He remained somewhat in awe of her [Owen] throughout his career, just as his regard for his mother stayed with him in spite of his parent's imperious possessiveness. In fact, as the camaraderie between Jeanne Owen and Jim developed, it often had the love-hate dimension of life under his parent's dominance. (p. 96)

As with Beard's mother, Jeanne drew James into a wider community. It was Jeanne Owen who also provided James Beard with a network of connections, and her understanding of the principles of cookery complimented what James had learned from observing his mother in the kitchen.

The literature on mentoring does suggest that mentors help their protégées to become connected to a network of individuals who are potential resources. In the business literature on mentoring, this is viewed as another trait of the traditional mentor (Mehta, 2001; Sketch, 2001). As a result, data from the study confirms an accepted view of mentors. These data, however, expand our understanding of networking associated with the mentoring process. In the lives of subjects, we can uncover a broad spectrum of affective components associated with this community. And the network has a much greater reservoir of available experiences than just those associated with a craft such as cookery. This is illustrated in the words of Gloria Wade-Gayles (1997) when she describes a community of Black women, and the role of food and cooking in Black women's lives. "Cooking was the centerpiece of their bonding. They shared how-to recipes (oral, not written), information on what was on sale at the grocery, and a sample

of an old dish prepared in a new way” (p. 97). In this community of practice, we catch a glimpse of camaraderie, tenderness and caring. These are elements not situated in the literature of mentoring.

When we examine the subjects’ lives, the concept of the marketplace emerges as a common theme. However, the depiction of these marketplaces is not one that is limited to transactions for food. In fact, James Beard (1964, 1992) once commented that a person could learn much from observing the social element of a marketplace.

#### Expressing Passion for the Craft

When we consider the information provided in this study, we are faced with a number of examples of mentors who demonstrated a passion for their craft. In addition to initiating Julia into a world of French cuisine, her instructors in the *Cordon Bleu* challenged her to be excellent. There was, however, a subtle element of their relationship. These older men also demonstrated their deep commitment to the craft of cooking (Clark, 1996). They were proud of who they were and what they did. Likewise, members of James Beard’s family expressed passion for their cookery. Their passion was undoubtedly expressed clearly through what they did. Elizabeth slaved over a small stove and John carefully tended to the sautéed chicken for Sunday breakfast. And Evan Jones depicts Elizabeth’s passion for outdoor cookery as being as intense as a White House chef preparing for a state dinner. Later in his life, Beard described the pride that the family cook, Let had for a fruitcake he baked at Christmas (Jones, 1990).

Let loved Christmas; he had created especially for the Beard’s family

holiday his white fruitcake flavored with preserved ginger. It was a work

of art, mellowed by dosages of white rum—a cake that brought ooohs and  
aahs from all the guests including many from Chinatown. (p. 48)

The intensity of the relationship between James Beard and Jeanne Owen, like that of Beard's relationship with his mother, father and Let, fostered Beard's strong feelings about the craft of cooking.

Passion and commitment thus resonate throughout this study. And we can see how these affective components of the craft were subsequently expressed by subjects. James Beard, for example, once stated that love for the craft was an important was to become a good cook. This commitment is also evident in subjects' behavior. It is not difficult, for example, to envision Elizabeth David cooking over a Primus stove in the galley of the *Evelyn Hope*. Later in her life, we can see a similar intensity in Elizabeth David as she collaborated with her cook Suleiman to produce extravagant lunches for her friends, prompting a friend to describe Elizabeth as an enthusiastic and excellent cook (Cooper, 1999). And it had not been too many years since Elizabeth had picked up a cookbook by Mrs. Leyel in order to save some money and prepare a few meals for herself and friends.

The communication of passion may have been overt such as Henri Charpentier's brother's enthusiastic behavior in the kitchen. However, this passion was then transmitted through Charpentier's words as he described the feelings he experienced for a career that spanned seven decades. On the other hand, passion can be found expressed in the subtlety of Paul Child's poetry, his humor about Julia's culinary experiments and his lifelong commitment to her career as a cook, writer and food historian. The messages emanating from these different sources are similar; it is just as important and enjoyable to tend to a simmering pot of beans as it is to consume them.

These data continue to affirm the importance of a mentor's behavior and its impact on the protégé. There is little in the literature that addresses the passion associated with commitment that a mentor can communicate to the protégé. However, this can be an important element in the pursuit of any career, for it is difficult to conceive of a greater testimony to the power of passion than the extensive work subjects engaged in to develop their craft, to write about it, and finally to teach it to others.

### Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning has long been identified as an important theoretical construct for the field of adult education (Long, 1989). In fact, writers such as Lindeman (1961) and Malcolm Knowles (1975) have highlighted self-directed learning as a factor that helps to define adult learning. Philip Candy (1991) adds that self-directed learning, "...is one of the most common ways in which adults pursue learning throughout their lifespan, as well as being a way in which people supplement (and at times substitute for) learning received in formal settings" (p. 15). Allen Tough (Tough, 1967, 1971) emphasizes that almost everyone undertakes at least one or two self-directed learning projects each year.

Self-directed learning can be examined from a number of different perspectives. The research on this subject has been directed toward its process, as well as the characteristics of self-directed learners (Hiemstra, 1997). This study has provided information that is relevant to the nature of self-directedness and autonomy in the learning projects of its subjects.

Tough's research (1971) has provided a considerable amount of empirical data on adults' independent learning projects. His emphasis on self-directed learning is on individual learners. "...we have chosen to focus on the person's highly deliberate *efforts*

*to learn*. In particular, we study his decisions, preparations, reasons for learning, help, problems and needs” (p. 12). Furthermore, the motivations to learn identified by Tough are highly instrumental. “Since our central focus is on the adult’s *efforts* to learn, we are interested in episodes in which a certain intention (gaining and retaining certain knowledge and skill) accounts for more than half of the person’s motivation” (p. 12). Later in his book, Tough proceeds to describe the motivation behind self-directed learning projects. He again relies on a set of desired outcomes that motivate the adult learner.

Over the past 25 years, a considerable amount of research on self-directed learning has been undertaken (Brockett, 2000). According to Ralph Brockett, much of the research has been directed toward an analysis of self-directed learning projects or an assessment of self-directedness in learners. This study does not attempt to examine either of these two aspects of self-directed learning. It also does not attempt to study the phenomenon as a pedagogical approach. This, instead, an exploration that seeks to understand the nature of self-directed learning in the context of subjects’ lives.

A significant amount of data produced by this study was related to learning projects that were undertaken by subjects. For the purposes of this study, self-directed learning projects are considered as they occur outside the context of formal educational or workplace settings. While there are many different ways to define self-directed learning, in this study, self-directed learning is considered to be a process in which learners assume the responsibility for the identification of learning objectives, the selection of resources and the specification of criteria for success (Brookfield, 1985; Knowles, 1975). For the most part, the literature on self-directed learning has defined it as an intentional activity



undertaken by learners, differentiating self-directed learning projects from learning that is incidental to other activities.

The data from this study, however, suggests that there is an interesting relationship between self-directed learning which is intentional, and incidental learning. Furthermore, the data indicate that self-directed learning projects be considered as they fit into a person's lifespan, and that the interrelationship between self-directed learning projects and incidental learning combine to form what could be described as a learning career. Therefore, in the following sections, I will summarize from self-directed learning projects found in subjects' lives. I will also hypothesize about the tacit, incidental learning that these subjects experienced. Finally, I plan to discuss the interrelationship between subjects' self-directed learning projects and their incidental learning.

#### Subjects' Self-Directed Learning Projects

Julia Child, in attempting to translate a recipe for French bread for American cooks using available ingredients, made an *intentional effort* to learn. During the course of this learning project, Julia spent a considerable amount of time experimenting with recipes. She adjusted ingredients, quantities and techniques in order to account for differences in products and equipment. At one point in time, Julia, Paul and Simone Beck met with an experienced French bread baker who was able to help them to refine a recipe that was ultimately used in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Volume II. The efforts of Julia and Paul Child's, as well as Simone Beck's efforts to learn resulted in an increased level of both *knowledge* and *skills*.

Other examples of learning projects are found in the life of Elizabeth David. In early adulthood, for example, she taught herself to cook after moving to London. In this

learning project, Elizabeth identified her learning objectives and proceeded to select sources of information. In this case, Elizabeth's primary source of information was the cookbooks she obtained. Presumably, Elizabeth established standards by which she could judge her learning.

Years later, we can observe Elizabeth engaged in another self directed learning project in which she drew from her own knowledge, including that which she developed in her early years in London. She drew from this and many other experiences and conducted a considerable amount of research in order to write *Mediterranean Food*.

Julia Child undertook a similar learning project shortly after her marriage to Paul. In order to improve her cooking skills, she too consulted cookbooks such as *The Joy of Cooking* (Rombauer, 1936) and a number of cooking magazines such as *Gourmet*. The results were not always rewarding. Years later, Julia retold this episode of her life to Noel Riley Fitch (1997).

I was not much of a cook when we first married. I was using magazines and *The Joy of Cooking*. We would not eat dinner until around ten because it took me so long to cook. I was doing fancy things. Paul would help. He would do anything. He was a wonderful companion; he was never, ever boring. (p. 140)

In this case, the learning project was fairly well defined by Julia. She identified what she needed to learn and selected resources of information. She also benefited from the support of her husband Paul.

An example of a significantly more substantial intentional learning project can be found in the life of a person other than the three major subjects. Michael Ruhlman

(1997) took part in a learning project that lasted nearly two years in order to write a book about the Culinary Institute of America. In this project, Michael moved his family from Ohio to New York in order to attend the Culinary Institute.

Ruhlman's initial objective in this project was fairly straightforward and is revealed by his own words. "...I intended to learn how to cook and to write about how one learned" (p. 7). Michael had established himself with the administration of the Culinary Institute and received permission to enroll in the school for the purposes of writing the book, *The Making of a Chef*. Michael knew what he needed to do in order to succeed in this project. He identified necessary resources, or his instructors specified resources such as textbooks. Ruhlman also established criteria for success and incorporated those criteria that were established by his instructors and the institution.

In reviewing Ruhlman's book, however, we can see how this writer learned about many other subjects than cookery. And much of this learning was probably unplanned. An example of this unplanned learning is Ruhlman's knowledge he developed about his classmates. He learned about their backgrounds and the many complicated reasons behind their choice to attend the Culinary Institute.

Ruhlman also learned about leadership and mentoring in the kitchen, and in the last part of the book entitled "Afterword: Benediction," he talks about his visit to Chef Pardus, the instructor for Ruhlman's initial culinary skills course. The initial skills course is typically a gateway into a culinary program. The instructor for this course plays an important role in bringing students into the culture of the profession and school. The setting for this last chapter is at the time of Ruhlman's graduation, and his words hint at the impact Pardus had on Ruhlman's life. "...I missed Chef Pardus, missed hearing him

talk about food, missed arguing whether the hollandaise had too much acid or not enough salt” (p. 304). This quote also hints at both the power of mentoring and the role of incidental learning.

On a smaller scale, is the work associated with the project initiated by James Beard, Bill and Irma Rhode to establish *Hors d'Oeuvres*, Inc. These three needed to set up an entire catering business. As part of the business, they had to create menus, shop the markets for available foods and engage in food production. Each step of this process undoubtedly presented problems to solve and subsequent opportunities for learning.

These data support the ideas proposed by writers such as Allen Tough (1967; Tough, 1971) who state that adults routinely engage in self-directed learning projects. The data from this study, however, also suggest that there is an interesting interplay of interpersonal relationships in self-directed learning projects. This conflicts with literature suggesting that self-directed learning is primarily an individual activity, or that other people are “brought into the project” as learning resources (Cavaliere, 1992).

The cooking classes that Julia Child taught at various points in her life illustrate the significance of interpersonal relationships to her learning projects. Julia learned from designing and implementing these projects. These were not just projects that involved providing cooking lessons. If we examine these teaching activities carefully, additional details emerge. One such detail is that the knowledge Julia utilized arose, in part, from her collaborative work with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle. Paul Child also helped Julia with wine selections, and organized her kitchen in order to make cooking demonstrations more efficient.

The subject matter that Julia taught was also influenced by requests from learners. And Julia learned while working in the kitchen with students. Undoubtedly, reflection on her practice with these students produced even more learning. In addition to teaching, Julia shared meals with her students and their guests, thus adding to the interpersonal element of these projects.

By considering a specific set of projects engaged in by a learner such as Julia Child, therefore, we can detect that her learning occurred in concert with other people. The activities shared with others suggest a sense of holism—that their combined interactions became increasingly enriched and complex.

In examining the lives of both Elizabeth David and James Beard, we are able to construct learning projects with similar features. Elizabeth collaborated with her cooks to create lunches for friends stationed with her in Egypt. James Beard worked with acquaintances to create a successful catering business. In each of these examples, we can examine clusters of learning projects associated with a particular activity. Both Beard and David, for example, learned to shop their marketplaces for products they could use. And both of these subjects later wrote about their valuable experiences in these places. James Beard, in particular, wrote about the different marketplaces he had encountered and what he had learned about food and cooking. However, Beard was also careful to explain how he had learned from the people of the marketplaces—by gathering information about foods and by watching the people of the marketplace interact.

#### Incidental Learning in Subjects' Lives

The existence of incidental learning in subjects' lives is not as apparent as the intentional learning projects in which they engaged. From the subjects' lives, I have

selected a number of problems or challenges they had to address. Examples of problem-solving related to food and cooking are found throughout subjects' biographies. It is from these problems that I have hypothesized about unintended learning that subjects probably experienced.

Prominent examples of extended projects containing opportunities for incidental learning are found in Julia Child, Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle's work to produce *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and the extended projects undertaken by Irma Rombauer and her daughter Marion Rombauer Beck (Mendelson, 1996) in the production of a number of editions of *The Joy of Cooking* between 1931 and 1975.

These two extended projects undoubtedly contained many different individual learning activities, both intentional and incidental. We know now that the work involved with these two sets of projects amounted to far more than collecting and transcribing recipes. The amount of learning undergone by both sets of writers must have been staggering as these writers struggled to collect recipes, test them and present their information in an understandable format for their readers, many of whom were inexperienced cooks. These writers also had to deliver information to their publishers and collaborate with editorial and marketing staff.

A sample of the incidental learning associated with these two projects can be drawn from the recipe testing subjects conducted. A simple recipe such as French onion soup, contains only a handful of ingredients and a few simple steps, one of which is browning onions. By testing this recipe carefully, a writer such as Julia Child would have encountered information about varieties of onions, the use of different fats (butter, olive oil), as well as different methods to cut the onions. She would have also learned about

the properties of utensils in which the onions browned, and the various liquids used to deglaze the pan after the onions had browned.

In reviewing this hypothetical example, it is possible that Julia began the project with an intention to learn. Her learning plans were probably general in nature with an interest in understanding and teaching the recipe. However, it is as likely that a portion of the learning she underwent was not planned, and some of it might have even been unconscious.

In James Beard's early adulthood, he frequently found himself lacking an adequate income. In order to address that problem, James applied different strategies including cooking meals for people who would provide the food. How Beard planned meals for friends and other patrons undoubtedly involved learning. We might hypothesize that part of this learning was also incidental.

In another episode of Beard's life, he encountered a marketplace on the island of St. Thomas while on his initial voyage to England. The reason for his locating the marketplace, in his words (1964, 1992), was to escape the terrible food provided on the ship. His quest, therefore, was not to explore and learn about native cuisine, but years later, Beard recalled how much he learned from his brief visit to that marketplace and he recommended markets as useful learning resources for novice cooks.

When Elizabeth David found herself living on a small island in the Aegean Sea with no running water, she faced the problem of adapting to her new and challenging circumstances. Elizabeth later drew from this experience for her writing, but it is unlikely that at the outset she viewed her experience as a learning project. Finally, when Julia Child's assistant forgot to soften the butter for an episode of *The French Chef*, Julia

certainly learned about the power of improvisation and used it effectively to teach her viewers.

The existence of incidental learning in subjects' lives is, in itself, not new information. What seems to be important about incidental learning in their lives, therefore, is how it seems to be interconnected with their planned learning projects. It is important, therefore to examine the connection of these two important forms of learning and how they might be interrelated across subjects' lifespans.

#### The Connection of Intentional and Incidental Learning Across the Lifespan

One way in which the data from this study illuminates the interrelationship of planned learning projects and incidental learning occurring over the lifespan can be demonstrated in the two learning projects undertaken by Elizabeth David that were described earlier in this section of the paper. These two learning projects, separated by so many years, could be examined apart from each other. However, I suggest that it is far more useful to consider the two projects in light of the years of Elizabeth's life experience that connects them. In fact, if we stop and examine these years more closely, we are able to construct an interconnected pattern of learning, intentional and incidental, that occurred over a period of years. These two seemingly "independent" learning projects become more meaningful as part of an entire lifespan of learning—a biographical approach to learning.

Our story about Elizabeth David's learning projects has its roots in her early life. For example, we can trace early experiences with novel foods when, as an adolescent, she visited the Continent. Even at this early stage of Elizabeth's life, we detect an awareness of the special nature of cookery. In fact, she later wrote about the young French woman who prepared mussels that reminded Elizabeth of "far off mysteries and secret childhood



feasts.” A similar set of experiences occurred when Elizabeth visited the Levant and her sister’s home on Malta. It was the markets of the Levant that provoked additional interest, but Elizabeth’s exposure to her sister’s cook revealed how a crafts person could be closely attached to her work.

A few years later, when Elizabeth moved to London, she taught herself cookery skills and began to collect recipes—the initial project mentioned earlier. However, Elizabeth undoubtedly applied and expanded her skills on the *Evelyn Hope*. At this point, we encounter the possibility of Elizabeth reflecting—consciously or unconsciously—on the earlier learning project. It was also during her voyage that she met Norman Douglas who taught Elizabeth about love for quality in food and challenged her to “please herself”—to follow her own path. He also modeled quality in scholarship.

In the Greek Islands, Elizabeth again found herself needing to prepare foods under austere conditions. She learned to cook with a minimum amount of tools in what might be described as a hut on a remote island in the Aegean Sea. When the tides of war washed Elizabeth into the great cities of Egypt, she learned to shop their markets and collaborated with cooks to produce meals for herself and a wide array of friends and acquaintances.

If we simply follow Elizabeth’s footsteps during this period, we can trace a path that led her from England through France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and India. We could also trace a path of learning. It was after her return to England that Elizabeth engaged in the learning projects that eventually produced *Mediterranean Food*. Much of this book, however, was based on Elizabeth’s previous learning—intentional and incidental.

This broad review of a segment of Elizabeth David's life presents only a few nodal points in which she engaged in learning. From our examination of these points, however, we can understand how they are connected—both planned learning projects and incidental learning. It is as if we were considering the ecosystem of a small tide pool. We could look at just the small fish, crabs or flora. However, the pool's beauty and complexity becomes more pronounced when we take a step back and observe all its organisms as they live in concert with each other.

We can detect a similar process in the life of Julia Child. Julia became involved with food at a later age. In fact, Julia's early attitudes toward food and cooking are revealed in her own words, when she described once thinking of the kitchen as just a "place of drudgery" and her family's food as fairly boring. As a result, it was not until Julia was in her mid-thirties that she became interested in food and cooking. In Julia's life, we can also trace the connection of her learning projects over a span of many years.

Through Paul Child's influence, for example, Julia became interested in foods of Asia. In India and later in China, we can detect a sense of adventure as Julia, Paul and their assorted friends experienced these interesting cuisines. Julia returned to the United States after the end of World War II and enrolled in cooking classes. In part, her participation in cooking classes was a way to please Paul.

After her marriage to Paul, Julia spent time teaching herself to cook. In a manner similar to Elizabeth David's early learning, Julia utilized cookbooks as sources of information. Her initial mainstay was *The Joy of Cooking*. Julia also had the presence of her husband Paul who frequently served as a guinea pig. In addition, Paul encouraged

Julia, and it is important to consider that Paul continued to encourage Julia throughout her culinary career.

Julia also learned about food and cooking through a stay on the Continent. She enrolled in the *Cordon Bleu*, in Paris. In the *Cordon Bleu*, Julia learned a great deal about French cuisine. However, she was also influenced by her relationship with the school's instructors and their commitment to their craft. Later, Julia opened a cooking school in conjunction with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle. Julia also collaborated with Beck and Bertholle to produce *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, a project that lasted for nearly ten years.

In the case of Julia Child, as with Elizabeth David, we also uncover the interconnection of a series of intentional and incidental learning episodes. With Julia, we can hypothesize about an interesting interplay between these two types of learning. Consider, for example, her conversion of French recipes for American cooks as part of her work on *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Through the course of that large task, Julia probably engaged in a number of different independent learning projects. In one, she learned the different properties of French and American butter as part of her translation of recipes from French. However, she probably involved herself in other activities in which she experienced incidental learning. At the same, Julia taught cooking classes. Without any intention to learn, she might have encountered new information about butters that would have complimented her intentional learning project. However, the two learning activities complimented each other.

The data on self directed learning projects gathered in this study appears to take the concept in an entirely new direction. Much of the literature on this subject seems to deal

with self-directed learning from two standpoints. One standpoint is that self-directed learning projects are fairly discrete entities. A case in point is Cavaliere's (1992) study of the Wright brothers' experimentation with heavier than air flight. The second is that these projects are primarily intentional in nature. What the data suggests is that certain self-directed learning projects may be centered around a theme throughout a person's life span. In addition, learning projects are most likely to be bound up with experiences of incidental learning that also occur throughout a person's life. The interrelationship between these two forms of learning, therefore, may constitute what could be described as a learning career or vocation.

The perspective on self-directed learning created by the data from this study supports Ralph Brockett and Roger Hiemstra's (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991) contention that self-direction in learning is best considered as a life-long process. It is the context of biography that the complex nature of self-directed learning projects is revealed. In fact, the learning projects of all three subjects seem to become more meaningful when they are situated in the entire lifespan. With this taken into respect, we may need to examine self-directed learning projects in the context of learning themes or careers that occur throughout adults' lives.

A case in point that illustrates the complex interplay of different factors influencing learning projects is found in the life of Irma Rombauer (Mendelson, 1996) who began to work on her first cookbook in the tragic aftermath of her husband's suicide, and her daughter Marion Rombauer Beck. These two women engaged in a series of learning projects associated with different editions of *The Joy of Cooking* that lasted over 40 years (Mendelson, 1996).

In order to appreciate any of the Rombauers' learning projects during this period, we need to know how each particular project connected through their entire lifespans. We also need to know how both planned and incidental learning projects interacted. Finally, we need to identify how different webs of interpersonal relationships affected their projects.

The example provided by the Rombauers also challenges the notion of independence in learners' projects. By situating self-directed learning in the context of biographical information that includes an intricate web of interpersonal relationships, the data from this example challenges the view of self-directed learning as a primarily intentional, individualistic enterprise. Furthermore, other individuals may play very significant roles in learning projects. This idea is seen in the collaboration between Julia Child and Simone Beck over the course of many years.

A review of data from this study therefore suggests that an umbrella approach needs to be taken toward the process of self-direction in adult learning. This approach could explain self-direction in the context of an informal learning career that occurs throughout the lifespan. Within this career, learning projects could fall on a continuum of independence with individual learners at one end and collaborative groups at the other. It would also include incidental and intentional learning activities. Thus, some of Elizabeth David's work such as her writing would fall toward the individuality end of the spectrum while the collaborative production of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* would be placed at the opposite end.

## Conclusions

From a review of the data developed in this study, it is evident that both mentoring and self-directed learning projects are best understood within the context of learners' biographies. These biographies form what might be described as learning biographies. Learning biographies are similar in nature to what Steven Weiland (1997) describes as an educational biography, one that is a narrative understanding of an individual's learning experiences. This biography, moreover benefits from an analysis of how differing learning experiences are related to each other.

The biographical data on subjects' learning implies that their learning biographies include more than learning projects. As subjects develop throughout their lifespans, it becomes apparent that cooking and teaching people how to cook became an integral component of their identities. This implies that we need to expand the notion of subjects' learning biographies to include elements of meaning-making and the discovery of self in the world; an approach undergone by both Phenomenology and Existentialism.

It is within the arena of subjects' biographies that we can also detect a social component of adult learning that includes a complicated spectrum of interpersonal relationships. Among these relationships are those that occur between mentors and protégées. In the context of relationships between mentors and their protégées as well as in the relationships associated with self-directed learning projects, the role of affect and how it is expressed is substantial. In fact, it may be useful to reconsider the use of the term self-directed, and this coincides with Ralph Brockett's (2000) suggestion that the emphasis of research needs to move away from a focus on the individual adult learner and toward an emphasis on a sociopolitical context. And this would include the

understanding of the role of interpersonal relationships. The abandonment of self-directedness may push research toward an understanding of an umbrella concept of learning projects that recognizes varying degrees of self-direction and also varying levels of connection with formal educational settings.

### Implications of the Study

The implications of this study involve theoretical aspects of adult learning. Results confirm our current understanding of aspects of the mentoring relationship such as the importance of mentors providing encouragement and challenges to their protégées. However, the naturalistic setting of this study adds to this understanding by providing information on affective components of these relationships and how affect is communicated. It is important therefore, for the mentoring process as being conceived as more than an instrumental relationship.

These data also challenge theorists in adult education to reconsider what the mentor knows and has experienced. The mentor might possess information that facilitates the protégé in completing her journey without having a great deal of knowledge about the new territory to be explored.

The data also challenge the notion of networking as it relates to mentoring. Perhaps there is a need for an emphasis on the quality of relationships—including affective components—in a network. This then rails against an approach to networking that is too utilitarian. It also indicates that networking relations should provide reciprocal benefits.

The data related to self-directed learning projects challenges the notion of self-direction and suggests that a new way to conceptualize self-directed learning projects be developed. The data also challenge the understanding that these projects are primarily

intentional and suggests that a person's learning projects need to be considered as they occur across the lifespan in concert with other types of learning. The multifaceted forms of learning may also occur within a learning biography.

There is also evidence that the results from this study hold promise for practitioners of adult education. By furthering our understanding of the role of affect in shaping the relationship between mentors and their protégées, practitioners can work to develop a different understanding of how to work effectively with protégées. And this implies that words such as zeal, enthusiasm and commitment need to be added to the vocabulary describing the qualities of effective mentors.

An understanding of a more generic definition of the mentor's expertise should be encouraging for practitioners who work with adult learners who wish to embark on learning projects that are different from the knowledge and experience of the educator. This is particularly encouraging for younger adult educators who work with older students. Despite differences in levels of experience, these educators have much to offer when they work as mentors.

A final benefit for practitioners is the encouragement to consider biography as a legitimate form of education with certain populations of adult learners. Biography and autobiography can be employed to understand complex issues facing adult learners. Likewise, adult learners can be encouraged to write their own autobiographies in order to understand themes in their lives, including those associated with learning. The process of storying and restorying, for example, can encourage the occurrence of transformative learning (Rossiter, 1999).



The study of lives such as those of the three subjects in this project, provides the reader with a rich, naturalistic context for understanding adult learning and development. According to Marsha Rossiter, the unfolding of narrative over time presents a distinctly human portrait. We benefit from a narrative understanding of subjects' lives for it furnishes richness and complexity that mirrors life itself. We also benefit from narrative for it appeals to both our heart and soul.

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