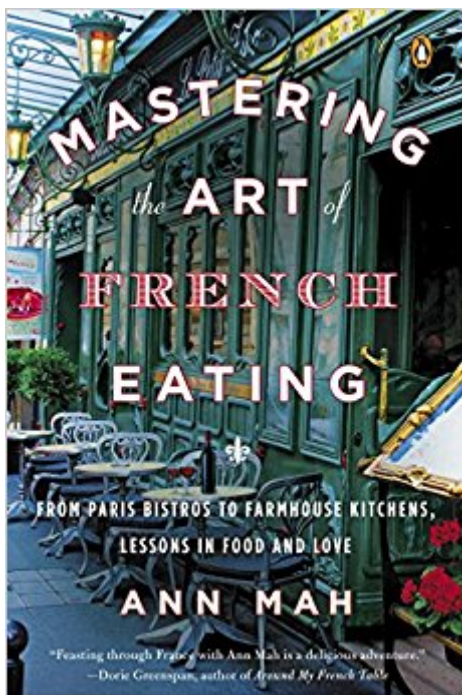


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# Mastering The Art Of French Eating: From Paris Bistros To Farmhouse Kitchens, Lessons In Food And Love



## Synopsis

The memoir of a young diplomat's wife who must reinvent her dream of living in Paris "one dish at a time" When journalist Ann Mah's diplomat husband is given a three-year assignment in Paris, Ann is overjoyed. A lifelong foodie and Francophile, she immediately begins plotting gastronomic adventures *À deux*. Then her husband is called away to Iraq on a year-long post alone. Suddenly, Ann's vision of a romantic sojourn in the City of Light is turned upside down. So, not unlike another diplomatic wife, Julia Child, Ann must find a life for herself in a new city. *À* Journeying through Paris and the surrounding regions of France, Ann combats her loneliness by seeking out the perfect pain au chocolat and learning the way the andouillette sausage is really made. She explores the history and taste of everything from boeuf Bourguignon to soupe au pistou to the crispiest of buckwheat crepes. And somewhere between Paris and the south of France, she uncovers a few of life's truths. Like Sarah Turnbull's *Almost French* and Julie Powell's New York Times bestseller *Julie and Julia*, *Mastering the Art of French Eating* is interwoven with the lively characters Ann meets and the traditional recipes she samples. Both funny and intelligent, this is a story about love of food, family, and France.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mah gladly dons rose-colored glasses in this gastronomic travelogue of regional French cuisine. She revels in the essence of summer captured in Provence's fresh and creamy soupe au pistou; the gooey decadence of Savoie's fondue; and the buttery, toothsome chew of Brittany's buckwheat crepes, attempting to distract herself with the history of classic French dishes after her

diplomat husband is called away from their new post in Paris for a yearlong assignment in Iraq. Another diplomat's wife, Julia Child, is invoked throughout the book for guidance in French cuisine and in dealing with the unsettling feeling of playing second fiddle to a spouse whose job requires regular moves about the globe. The real joy of this book, though, is in Mah's mouthwatering, bite-by-bite descriptions of the plates set before her in Parisian cafés, country homes, and hole-in-the-wall foodie hideaways. Francophiles will delight in the smattering of French words and phrases sprinkled throughout every page, and serious cooks may endeavor to follow the lengthy recipes for a signature regional dish included at the end of each chapter. --Amye Day Ong  
--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Mastering the Art of French Eating makes you want to be in Paris as [Mah] describes the delight of crusty baguettes spread with butter and jam, surprise glimpses of Notre Dame caught from the bus, nursing a glass of red wine in a cafe that has mirrored columns and a zinc bar. . . . the book has appealing honesty and vulnerability, overlaid as it is with the pain of her husband's absence. It will also make you very hungry." • "Wall Street Journal" • "Mah admirably fits her research into easily digested bites, the reader's enthusiasm mirroring her own." • "The New York Times Book Review" "A well-written entrée into French dining." • "The Daily Beast" • "Our readers were enraptured by [Mah's] luscious and detailed descriptions of the meals that became the rich medium for a lonely wife's tentative socializing in a strange land." • "Elle" "Consistently passionate and emotionally resonant, Mah's prose brims with true love . . . A bighearted, multisensory tour of France." • "Kirkus" "The author's investigations into the importance of each dish to the people she meets are beautifully woven together with her reflections on culture, identity, love, and marriage, resulting in an enjoyable and thoughtful read that sparkles with humor. . . . This honest, funny, and eloquent memoir is sure to delight lovers of France, food, or travel." • "Library Journal" "The real joy of this book . . . is in Mah's mouthwatering, bite-by-bite descriptions of the plates set before her in Parisian cafés, country homes, and hole-in-the-wall foodie hideaways. Francophiles will delight in the smattering of French words and phrases sprinkled throughout every page, and serious cooks may endeavor to follow the lengthy recipes for a signature regional dish included at the end of each chapter." • "Booklist" "Whether you're French or Francophile, a long-time connoisseur of French food or someone who's just figuring out the difference between frites and frangipane, feasting through France with Ann Mah is a delicious adventure." • Ann's writing is lovely, her curiosity boundless and her good taste assured. • Spending time with her in Mastering the Art of French Eating is a treat." • "Dorie Greenspan, author of Around My French

Table and owner of Beurre & Sel Cookies"Ann Mah dishes up a welcoming concoction, a good dose of French history, a personal, vibrant, enthusiastic picture of life in a country she adores, without apology. I am hungry already!"â "Patricia Wells, author of *The Food Lover's Guide to Paris* and *Simply Truffles*"Excellent ingredients, carefully prepared and very elegantly served. A really tasty book."â "Peter Mayle, author of *The Marseille Caper* and *A Year in Provence*â œAnn Mah writes inspiringly about basic French dishes we thought we knew all about. She joins Elizabeth David in being a joy and an instruction to read."â "Diane Johnson, author of *Le Divorce*"A tour de force through French cuisine, Ann Mah crisscrossed France, learning about all my favorite foodsâ "from buckwheat galettes to the secrets of authentic cassoulet. Her personal culinary tale will have you packing your bags. But if you canâ t make it to France, Ann offers delicious recipes, culled from experts!"â "David Lebovitz, author of *The Sweet Life in Paris*â œAnn Mah goes straight to the essential in this lively, mouth-watering book as she explores the foundations of French cuisine.â She even goes where all before her have failed to treadâ "the wild country of andouilletteâ "to tempt with her stories and her approachable recipes. Bravo!â •â "Susan Herrmann Loomis, author of *On Rue Tatin*"Like a bowl of homemade cassoulet, this book is warm to the touch. Ann Mah writes about her international experiencesâ "and originsâ "with great sensitivity.â She gives us a peek into French kitchens foodies will envy, and no Francophile could resist."â "Elizabeth Bard, author of *Lunch in Paris*â œFrom the peaks of the French Alps to Brittanyâ s buckwheat fields, Lyonâ s bouchons to Burgundyâ s wineries, Ann takes us all over France in pursuit of its culinary traditions. But at the heart of her story is Parisâ "and all the love, wistfulness and deliciousness found there.â •â "Amy Thomas, author of *Paris, My Sweet*

It took me longer to read Ann Mah's "Mastering the Art of French Eating" than I had anticipated, because I savored every sentence, sometimes stopping to read a delicious or funny passage to my husband. And then there are the recipes at the end of each section that inspired me to put the book down and COOK! Wonderfully written, this memoir draws you into Mah's world as she navigates the challenges of a year without her husband nearby, settling into a new home in a new country, finding meaningful work and coming to terms with the type of life that comes with marrying a diplomat. (It's an enviable life, to some or most, but we all have to reconcile what we expected from our lives and what we actually find or get.) In doing so, Mah burrows into the reader's heart with her humor, courage, humility, and gastronomic enthusiasm. This memoir would make a fun, touching and mouth-watering movie--I hope someone makes one! This is a fun summer read, but also fall, winter or spring, as there's a lot of cooking to be done afterwards and some of the dishes are best in cold

weather!

The title, obviously, is a play off of Julia Child's famous dual-volume cookbook, written with her two French peers. Ann Mah is the latest person to be published who too was inspired by Child and her world away from home in France. Mah's connection to Child is more apt than "Julie" in Julie/Julia. Like Child, her husband is a U.S. diplomat who has been assigned to France, much like Paul Child. If you were caught up in that adventure for Julia, it's refreshing to know that the possibility of a similar adventure is there for Mah. She organizes the book around a few different areas/cities she visited in France and pulls from each one a signature dish. Near the end, she fully tugs with our emotions as she sets out to visit Julia's old apartment building. This was the best chapter, by far. Too much of the book, I think, was about Mah and her struggles with the fact that her husband was re-assigned as soon as they moved to France. She was therefore left to explore Paris and France on her own... the theme comes back chapter after chapter, and I believe placed too much emphasis on that aspect of her experience. That said, Mah's book is well-written (she's a good writer) and it's also an easy read. But in the end, for me, the book was more about how to endure being apart from someone you love rather than French cuisine. That said, I look forward to trying her recipes.

I am currently enjoying this immensely, Ann's adventures are identical to my own secret desire to live in France. Thanks to her I discovered the mystery to Andouillette AAAAA. We tried it in Paris, being highly recommended by the waiter, and although my husband ate it, I could barely stay at the table - it is definitely an acquired taste (and smell). Through her descriptions I feel like I am almost there.

I'm planning a trip to France and Ann Mah's book was suggested as a good place to start thinking about Paris, French cooking (and eating) and the specialty dishes of various regions. The book is the perfect summer read. It's a slice of life -- and a delicious one at that! I particularly enjoyed her prose describing her situation and then her various food excursions. It's a nice touch that she ends each chapter with a recipe and some helpful hints. I'll be cooking and referring to "Mastering the Art of French Eating" as I plan my trip.

Ann Mah's 'Mastering the Art of French Eating' is a delightful culinary journey into deepest France as she explores the history of the country's regional dishes. But it's more than that. Set against the

backdrop of her diplomat husband's year-long assignment in Iraq, Ann Mah also explores the territory of the heart as she tries to cope with his absence by making a 'tour de France' and cooking up its best dishes. As someone who has lived in France for nearly 40 years, I was pleasantly surprised to learn something new in every chapter. Original, bright and thoughtful, this is a heart-warming book that can be taken straight into the kitchen for a taste of France's best cooking -- or taken to bed for a delicious read about the nexus between relationships and the love of good food. It's a masterful book.

If, like me, you absolutely love the vicarious experience reading about the food and culture of other lands, and you especially love the work of Francis Maye and Peter Mayle, then you will love Ann Mah's *Mastering the Art of French Eating*. I thoroughly enjoyed her style, which combines memoir, food history, and travelogue. Mah is a francophile who is fortunate enough to have lived in Paris for four years and to have set out to explore the history of quintessential French dishes like Boeuf Bourguignon, Fondue, Cassoulet, and other typical regional French dishes, some of which one would never, ever try, but one loves reading about them. Mah has found a place for herself in this particular genre of writing, and I hope she follows this one up with yet another one.

This is a great book. It captures expatriate life in Paris perfectly and the culinary adventures in the rest of France are compelling. As I read it, I was adding meals and destinations to my foodie bucket list. The love story between the author and her husband will tug at the heart strings of anyone who has had to live apart. I'm so glad that I recommended it to my foodie book club.

I read the chapter on Soupe au Pistou to my husband because we had visited the region described and love the movies referred to. He has asked me to read a chapter every night before we go to bed (a custom of ours). It is SOOOOO much more than recipes. Wish I had had this when I was teaching French. We like your style, on so many different levels. I pre-ordered it because Kristin Espinasse had it on her blog. Like her style, too. Your humor sneaks up and then takes over the emotions; we, too, feel sorry for hatchet-face's daughter-in-law. Being alone in Paris made bearable by your can-do attitude was delightful.

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