

Book Club Notes for **Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously**
by Julie Powell

Summary

In her book **Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously**, Julie Powell is pushing thirty, living in a rundown apartment and working at a dead-end secretarial job as she begins to cook every one of the 524 recipes in Julia Child's **Mastering the Art of French Cooking**.

In her desperate search to spice up her life, she comes up with The Project – a deranged assignment to take her mother's dog-eared copy of **Mastering the Art of French Cooking**, and cook all the recipes in the span of one year.

At first she thinks it will be easy. But as she moves from the smooth sailing of *Potage Parmentier* into the obscure culinary backwaters of calves' brains, she realizes there's more to mastering the art of French cooking than meets the eye. The Project changes her life as it spreads into her everyday existence, and she begins to find the *joie de vivre* that has been missing for too many years.

'Restore[s] your faith in eating for pleasure.' – Vogue

About the author

After spending a long, long time working as a temp, Julie Powell now writes in her pyjamas in Long Island City, Queens, where she shares a 'loft' apartment with her husband Eric, their dog Robert, their cats, Maxine, Lumi and Cooper, and their snake, Zuzu Marlene.

Book Club Discussion Questions

1. Julie has such a remarkable relationship with Julia Child, despite never having met her. What did you think of the relationship that Julie built in her mind? And why does it not matter, in some sense, when Julie finds out that Julia wasn't an admirer of hers or the Project?
2. Throughout the book, various people become involved with the Project: Julie's husband, her friends, and several of her family members. Discuss the different roles each played in the Project. Which people were most helpful and supportive? Who was occasionally obstructionist?
3. Did you find Julie to be a likeable character? Did you relate to her insecurities, anxieties, and initial discontent? Why do you think it is that she was able to finish the Project despite various setbacks?
4. The Julie/Julia Project is obsessive and chaotic, yet it manages to bring a sort of order to Julie's life. Have you ever gone to obsessive lengths in an attempt to, ironically, make things more manageable? Why do you think Julie does (or doesn't) succeed in this?

5. If someone were to ask you about this book, how would you describe it? Is it a memoir of reinvention? An homage to Julia Child? A rags-to-riches story? A reflection on cooking and the centrality of food in our lives? Or is it all (or none) of these?
6. Did Julie's exploits in her tiny kitchen make you want to cook? Or did they make you thankful that you don't have to debone a duck or sauté a liver? Even if your tastes may not coincide with Julia Child's recipes, did the book give you a greater appreciation of food and cooking?
7. At various points in the book, Julie finds that cooking makes her question her own actions and values. What did you make of her lobster guilt, for example, or her thoughts on extracting bone marrow? Have you ever encountered these issues while cooking, or while going through other everyday motions of life? Have you come to conclusions similar to or different from Julie's?
8. When Julie began the Project, she knew little to nothing about blogging. What do you think blogging about her experiences offered her? Does writing about events in your life help you understand and appreciate them more? Do you think the project would have gone differently if the blog hadn't gained so much attention? Who was the blog mainly for, Julie or her readers?