

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Consulate General of France in New York. Along with Les Dames d'Escoffier and the American Institute of Wine & Food, we are pleased to greet you this evening for celebrating the 100th birthday of Julia Child, who is a renowned figure among all amateurs of French cuisine here in the United States.

As you may certainly know, I have just recently been nominated Consul General of France in New York, and I am very glad my first speech is dedicated to pay a tribute to a woman who is both dynamic and charming, and to whom French Gastronomy owes so much.

Julia Mac Williams was born in California, and I allow myself to recall the fact that she was introduced to French cuisine thanks to her diplomat husband. She followed him to Paris right after World War II, and it is there – in Rouen to be more specific – that she had a revelation while savoring her first, fried, Sole Meunière.

We may also thank the Chef at the La Couronne hostel, since Julia Child has never ceased to contribute to spreading the delights of French cuisine among Americans ever since, and with a spectacular success she herself undoubtedly did not expect.

After studying at the Cordon Bleu, She hosted Americans at her kitchen in Paris, and gave them cooking lessons along with her friends Simon Beck and Louisette Bertholle. The “Trois Gourmandes”, as they call themselves, would become her long-lasting partners in the pursuit of culinary perfection. Their quest culminated in the publication of *Master the Art of French Cooking* in 1961, which was to become a best seller, and a reference book to this very day, 51 years after its first edition.

But Julia Child did not stop there. Her passion and her great energy drove her to introduce French cuisine into the very heart of American households. In the 1960s, back in the United States, she created her cooking television show, *The French Chef*, which was a huge success that quickly turned her into an icon.

Today she inspires young generations such as Julie Powell from New York, who decided ten years ago to make all the 524 recipes of Julia Child's book in 365 days. Powell's blog, “The Julie/Julia Project”, was so successful it became both a book and later on a film. Not long ago, it was Meryl Streep who reintroduced us to the first steps of Julia Child's exemplary career.

Julia Child has been a militant for a culinary Art inspired by French traditions. Through her, these traditions have become more accessible. Both our countries showed her our recognition: At first, France bestowed the decoration of the French Legion of Honor upon her in 2000, and in 2003 she received the American Presidential Medal of Freedom.

I am very glad it is my turn now to pay a tribute to her:

- First, as a Consul General, for by making accessible to an ever wider public the recently added “Gastronomical Meal of the French” to the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List, Julia has considerably contributed to the cultural exchange between our two countries, and to the beaming of France in the world... Many Americans have discovered the Burgundy region through her famous Beef Bourguignon recipe.

- But I would also like to pay my tribute on a personal level, as an adept – I confess – in butter and goose-fat cooking.

Her talent and her heritage are still and will always be so vivid, and in good hands.

I will hand the floor over to Christine Panas, President of the American Institute of Wine & Food. This association, founded by Julia Child herself, does a wonderful job thanks, mainly, to the professionalism of its Chapter Chair.

Allow me to praise the work of Les Dames d'Escoffier, who, since the very beginning, and since their very first dinner here at the Consulate, have heartedly promoted women's culinary talents throughout the world. They also awarded Julia Child, as early as 1977, with the "Grand Dame Award" title. I would also like to thank Melanie Young for her efforts, today at the head of this organization in New York, and who will also speak tonight.

Finally, I would like to thank the caterer, Diane Gordon, as well as the Deutsch Family Wine and Spirits and the Southern Wine and Spirits of New York for their wine donations.

I wish you all an excellent evening, and as Julia Child liked to say: "Bon appétit!"