

# Someone's



MICHAEL McLAUGHLIN

**T**here was one TV in the dormitory that was home my first year at college, and on the nights when I knew it would be tuned, by popular demand, to *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, I would go down to the lounge early and stake a claim to watch *The French Chef*. I offer this by way of explanation for my bowing, scraping, and sycophancy on being invited to lunch at Julia Child's house. In the world of sports there are Jackie Robinson and Babe Ruth. In medicine there are Salk and Sabin. In cooking there are Escoffier, James Beard, and Julia Child. Since the first two are dead and therefore unsatisfactory as luncheon companions, this pretty much leaves Julia as reigning food icon.

Julia. No foodie could call her Mrs. Child. "Your honor," "your highness," or "your holiness," perhaps. We who are indebted to her for a world beyond meat loaf think of this 82-year-old amazon with the baronial voice as simply Julia. She taught us how to soufflé (*soufflé*, from

the French, meaning "to impress the in-laws"). She introduced us to the "chicken sisters": Miss Capon, Ms. Fryer, Mrs. Roaster, Mother Hen. And, watching a leg of lamb slide off its platter onto the dining-room floor, she gave us permission to chirp, "Not to worry—I have another one just like it in the kitchen."

In her last series, *Cooking with Master Chefs*, Julia merely introduced the

# in the Kitchen with Julia

Get your index cards ready:  
The queen of cooking shows  
is back with a new series

BY AIMEE LEE BALL

segments, appearing as a rather benevolent cipher, not even in the same room with the food. This wasn't nearly enough Julia for her fans, a situation that has been remedied in her new series debuting this month on PBS, *In Julia's Kitchen with Master Chefs*.

To put the show together, Julia invited 26 chefs to her 19th-century house in Cambridge, Mass. An invading army of technicians brought ceiling poles to hang lights and installed three cameras to insure constant closeups of host, guest, and food. The dining room became the control room, and a fat, silver air-conditioning duct snaked through the house. Julia handled the chaos with equanimity. "It was fun, like a big family," she says. "Nobody went upstairs, which was nice."

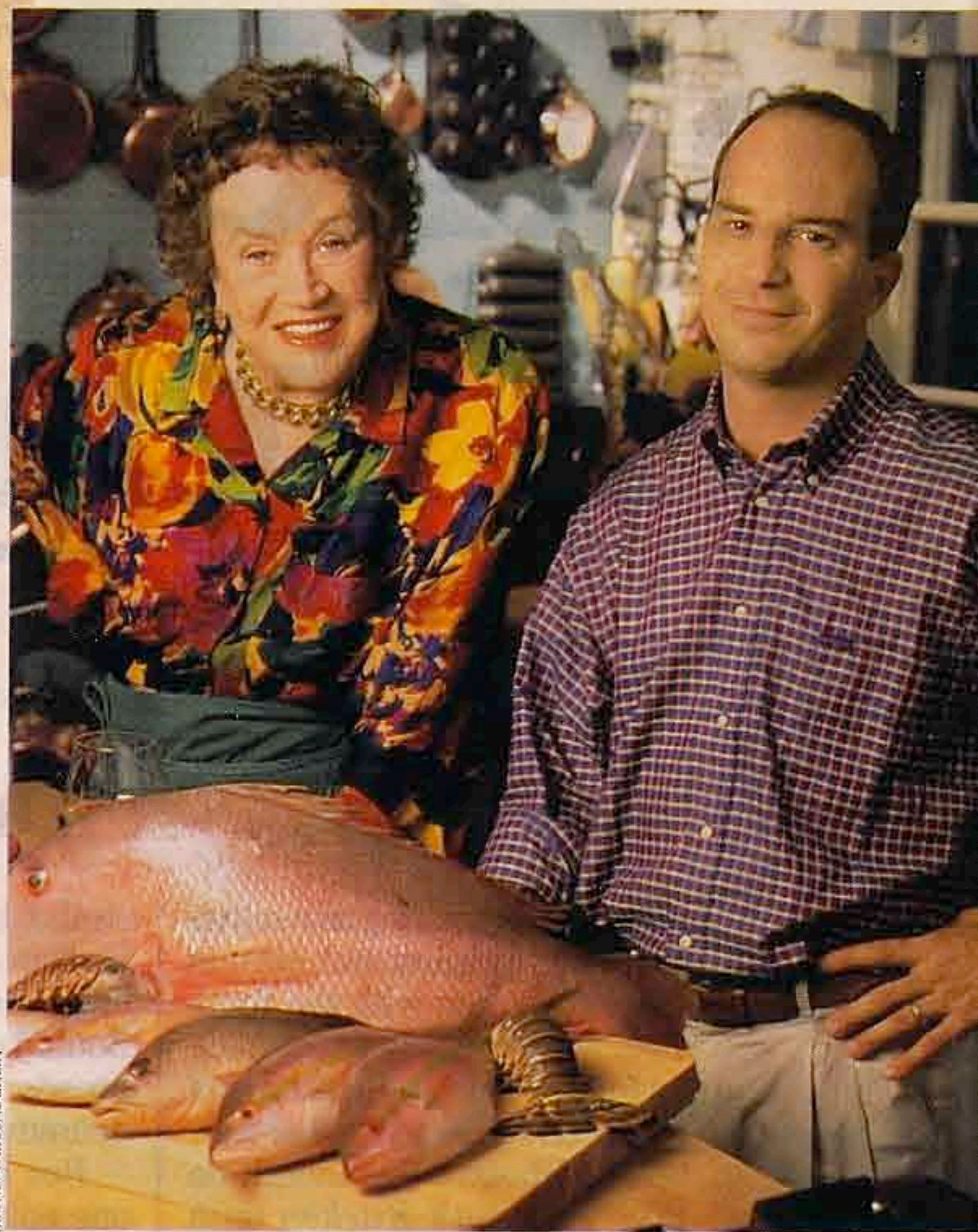
The series capitalizes on the fact that today's chefs are celebrities, complete with publicity, ego, and temperament. The

stellar international guest list includes Madhur Jaffrey making curry, Zarela Martinez stuffing poblano peppers, Daniel Boulud combining veal chops with sweetbreads, and Leah Chase presenting the definitive New Orleans sweet-potato pie.

But cooking is not always pretty. In one episode, Boston restaurateur Jasper White plunges a knife into a live lobster trying to escape across the counter. No blood is shed. (On that topic, Julia declares Dan Aykroyd's finger-severing send-up on *Saturday Night Live* "very amusing." But she says so as if she just smelled something bad.) "This series is aimed at the person who really likes to cook," she emphasizes, "not for fluffies," which by her tone must be the culinary equivalent of a ski bunny.

"We have nothing to do with nutrition whatsoever," says Julia proudly. "We expect people to know what they should eat." Still railing against a recent report about the fat lurking in sandwiches, she challenges, "A tuna sandwich is a heart-attack on a plate? Who has made it? If you make a sandwich with that many calories, you're a nut!" She does not count calories herself but admits, "If I ate the

**Julia and Florida chef Mark Militello** prepare to sauté some snapper.



way I'd like, I'd be Mrs. Six-by-six." She does make one health concession in the chicken salad she serves at lunch: The mayo has cooked, not raw, egg—a Julia invention.

It's hard to believe this woman nearly had nothing to do with food. She wanted to be a spy. When the bombs hit Pearl Harbor, Julia signed up with the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the CIA. "People your age don't realize that in World War II everybody wanted to join in, because we were saving our country," she tells me.

In its infinite wisdom, the government politely declined her offer to be Mata Hari and put her in charge of the files. Their loss was our gain. She met and married Paul Child, an OSS staffer stationed in Ceylon, and when he was assigned to Paris after the war, she enrolled at the Cordon Bleu. "I couldn't get over the food," she marvels. "I'd been casting around for my real career, and it became obvious that food was it."

She joined a French ladies' gastronomic club called Le Circle des Gourmettes and collaborated with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertolle on *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which was first declared unpublishable. (Note to editors everywhere: Hah!) When the Childs moved to the Boston area, Julia was asked to try a cooking show on PBS, and in 1962 *The French Chef* was born. (Julia doesn't have

## Julia Child's World-Famous LEMON-GARLIC UPPER-ARM CHICKEN WINGS

Two or three barbecued wings are perfect for a snack or a picnic, half a dozen for a main course—and they're good hot or cold. If you're serving these as cocktail snacks, accompany each with a cocktail napkin or encase the bone-end in a paper frill. (The lower part of the wing with its double bone and bony finial is too messy to eat as formal stand-up finger food.)

a French bone in her body; she was born in California. "The reason we called it *The French Chef* was that I always hoped we'd have some chefs on the program.")

This summer she'll be scarfing cannoli in an ambitious new series on baking, still zealous about work after all these years. "Why do you say 'still'?" she chastises. "I'm with a lot of vigorous young people, and that keeps it interesting. I just went to my 60th reunion at Smith College and hated every minute of it. Everyone was old and let their hair go gray and didn't wear any makeup. I hated it. I'm never going back to another one."

Sitting in Julia's kitchen with the vibes

of the 26 masters still in the air, I end up discussing not hollandaise, not bouillabaisse, but cyberspace. Let it be revealed here that Julia Child is a techie nerd. "When I'm not at the stove, I'm at my computer," she says. "But I'm not on-line yet. I haven't had time to learn." Perhaps that's because she has a new companion, actually an old friend who is also widowed (her husband died last May). In a great sort of cosmic joke, he is a rather conservative eater. "But it's nice having a chap around," says Julia, "and you don't have to marry anyone anymore." ■

*Aimee Lee Ball is a freelance writer based in New York.*

- 2 fresh lemons with shiny skins
- 2 large cloves garlic
- 1 slice fresh ginger root, 1/4-inch thick and 1 inch across
- 1 tbsp. soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp. dark sesame oil
- 1/2 tsp. thyme or rosemary, fresh or dried
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup excellent olive oil
- 18 (about 2 pounds) fresh upper-arm chicken wings (save the bony lower portions for stock or jus-roti)

**Suggested special equipment:**  
An electric blender

**The marinade:** Cut the zest (yellow part of peel only) from the lemons and drop into the blender container, along with the juice of the lemons. Peel the garlic and ginger, chop roughly, and add to the blender with the soy sauce, sesame oil, herbs, salt, and pepper. Purée to blend thoroughly. Gradually pour in the olive oil by dribbles through the top of the whizzing machine to make a creamy blend.

**Marinating the wings:** Wash the wings briefly in hot water, dry on paper towels, and place in a glass bowl. Pour on the marinade, tossing and basting the wings. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for several hours or overnight, tossing and basting the wings several times with the marinade.

**Broiling or barbecuing:** Either barbecue the wings on an outdoor grill, turning them frequently and basting with the marinade, or arrange in one layer on the rack of a broiler pan, set so the surface of the meat is about 5 inches from the hot broiler element, and broil 10 minutes or so on each side.

**When are they done?** The juices should run clear yellow when several wings are pricked deeply at their fleshiest part, and the wings should feel springy when pinched.

—by Julia Child, all rights reserved.

Julia in her kitchen, back in the early days.

