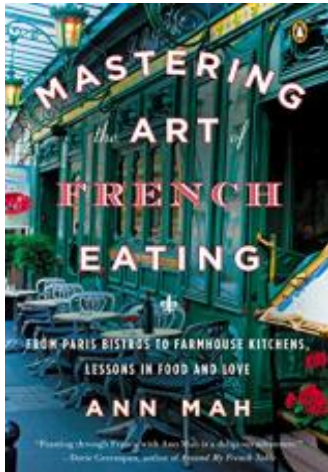


# Mastering the Art of French Eating: From Paris Bistros to Farmhouse Kitchens, Lessons in Food and Love

by Ann Mah



## About the Book

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. 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.

## Discussion Guide

1. How does the quotation from Brillat-Savarin at the beginning of *MASTERING THE ART OF FRENCH EATING* reflect Ann's experience in France?
2. Does the idea of Ann and Calvin's foreign service life --- moving constantly, learning languages, adjusting to new

cultures --- fill you with excitement or with anxiety? What would be the most challenging part of this kind of life? The most enjoyable?

3. Were you familiar with Julia Child's life story? In what ways does her experience parallel Ann's?
4. Is there anywhere in the world where you've always dreamed of living or traveling to? What draws you to this place?
5. There are numerous French stereotypes in American culture. Did you have any opinions --- positive or negative --- about France before you read the book? How, if at all, have they changed?
6. Ann's love for Paris began when she was young and carried through to adulthood. How did the reality of living in the city measure up to her expectations?
7. Could you ever imagine writing your own memoir? What would the title be?
8. What does the French expression *?il faut profiter?* (p. 59) mean? In what ways does Ann take this expression to heart?
9. If you were to describe Ann in three words, what would they be?
10. While many people find the idea of French cooking intimidating, the recipes that Ann shares are easy to understand and straightforward in their technique. Have you tried to make any of the dishes? If you did, how did that enrich your experience of the book?

## Author Bio

Ann Mah is an American food and travel writer. She is the author of the *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *THE LOST VINTAGE*, as well as three other books. She contributes regularly to the *New York Times* Travel section, and her articles have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The Best American Travel Writing*, *The New York Times Footsteps*, *Washingtonian* magazine, *Vogue.com*, *BonAppetit.com*, *Food52.com*, *TheKitchn.com* and other publications.

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