

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Discovering passion in a kitchen

There's a new movie made for foodies, writers, mid-life wanderers and anyone with a sense of humor—*Julie & Julia*. This latest offering from Nora Ephron, starring Meryl Streep, Amy Adams and Stanley Tucci, is based on two books. Julia Child's *My Life in France*—set post World War II—explores food, marriage and Julia's mid-life search for self. Julie Powell's *Julie & Julia* follows the author/blogger during 2002 as she cooks all 524 recipes from Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and, in turn, finds her passion and her voice. Wonderful movie, but the real star is the food—oh the food! (Eat before you go!)

Food was Julia Child's real passion—she loved good food—real food—fresh food. When she was a mid-life wanderer, that passion gave her a purpose and direction. Though food eventually gave her a career, when she first started out, cooking lessons were just something to do. She discovered that not only could she cook, and cook well, she could write about cooking and she could teach cooking—a life's work from one's passion—bliss!

When I was a mid-life wanderer, I put on my “thinking cap” (a big thank you to Romper Room's Miss Nancy) to try and figure out what I did really well—cooking and eating. Hogtown HomeGrown was born and, in the process, I realized writing was another skill I possessed. I wondered if a mid-life reinvention was possible through food and cooking? Then I read Julia Child's book, *My Life in France*, and I realized that anyone can reinvent themselves in mid-life—just like Julia!

Julia Child exuded confidence. She made you feel that you could tackle anything if you had a clear set of instructions. On television, she was a comfort—make a mistake, patch it up, move on—no retakes—just life in the kitchen. Take the recipe—your set of instructions—follow it and then enjoy the food. (By the way, take a good look at *Mastering The Art of French Cooking*—here are the clearest instructions you'll ever find.)

Julia Child gave me back the confidence I lost while wandering and put me on a path of rediscovery through food—to what end, I do not know. *Julie & Julia* proves the experience of rediscovery through food is not limited solely to mid-life—anyone, at any age, can discover passion in a kitchen—maybe you? Maybe you want to learn to cook from scratch. Maybe you dream of a catering or restaurant business. Maybe you have a great recipe that everyone loves, but no way to produce it commercially.

I am part of a group in Gainesville that wants to help people find their passion in a kitchen—in a community kitchen—a shared-use commercial kitchen facility available to help anyone cultivate their passion—through food. It will be a place you can take Aunt Mary's Wild Plum Jam recipe—you'll refine the recipe, produce it in quantity, package it safely, market it attractively, then sell it successfully—your passion can become a small business!

Are you looking for passion in a kitchen? Let us hear how you would use a community kitchen. Do you have the skills to help others turn their passion into a business? Tell us what skills you are willing to share. Would you like to make a local commercial kitchen a reality—a passion we can all share? Join us! And if you'd like to donate a big pile of money, or equipment, or even a location, please let us know. We have an email address that will reach the whole group at once—kitchen@celestejet.com. We want to hear from you!



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What's Fresh Right Now?

- Corn—white
- Cucumbers—mini seedless, slicers, kirby
- Eggplant—purple/white italian, oriental
- Figs—LSU gold/purple
- Garlic—chives
- Grapes—muscadines
- Herbs—italian/thai basil, spearmint, oregano, rosemary, sage, mexican tarragon, parsley
- Honey
- Mushrooms—oyster, shitake
- Okra
- Onions—sweet, yellow
- Pears
- Peas—white acre, black eye
- Peppers—green/red sweet bell, anaheim, sweet italian, cubanelle, jalapeno, habanero
- Pineapple
- Potatoes—white
- Squash—summer, zucchini, acorn, butternut, calabasa
- Sweet Potatoes
- Tomatoes—beefsteak, grape, cluster, cherry, green

Putting Food By

Have you been putting food by? Putting food by means to take produce at its peak and freeze it, can it or preserve it so you can enjoy its goodness during the “off-season.” An afternoon spent in the kitchen can yield a batch of jam, sealed and processed, to be consumed later or given as gifts. In just a few minutes you can freeze several bags of berries. Oven-dried tomatoes only require about 30 minutes preparation before they sit in the oven overnight, drying while you sleep! Taking a little time during the peak season of your favorite fruits and veggies can yield lots of meals and smiles for the rest of the year.

Local and Fresh—

Muscadines (or scuppernongs?)

Callaway Gardens, a favorite vacation spot in western Georgia, was where I was introduced to native grapes—in jams and sauces. Our family called the dark grapes muscadines and the lighter ones scuppernongs. Turns out they are all varieties of the cultivated wild grape family known as muscadines. Nowadays, growers have a choice of several light and dark fruit varieties. They all have thick, tart skins and sweet pulp with seeds. Don't make the mistake of discarding the skins, since a lot of the nutrients, as well as the unique flavor, can be found there. Eat grapes fresh, freeze grapes whole in plastic zipper bags, or cook grapes into jams and sauces.

Muscadine Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pints bronze muscadine grapes
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 Tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon (try Vietnamese)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mace
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

Use your fingers to pop grape pulp, juice and seeds out of skins into a deep pot. Place all skins into one pot, cover partially with water and cook until tender—about 15 minutes. In the deep pot, cook pulp, juice and seeds until seeds separate from pulp. Pour through a fine sieve, pushing pulp through. Mix pulp/juice mixture into cooked skins, add sugar and stir occasionally while simmering over low heat until thickened—about 3 hours. Add vinegar, spices and salt, stir thoroughly and simmer at least 30 minutes. Scoop into hot jars, seal and process 12-15 minutes. Store open containers in refrigerator. Good on biscuits or ice cream!

Zucchini Spaghetti

INGREDIENTS

8 ounces spaghetti, cooked al dente	2 Tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped	2 medium zucchini, 6-8 inches long
1/2 sweet onion, sliced lengthwise	10 small sprigs of fresh thyme
1/2 cup dry white wine	1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
salt and pepper to taste	1/2 cup grated hard cheese
1/2 cup grated aged cheese	1 cup walnuts, toasted and chopped

DIRECTIONS

Prepare zucchini by cutting lengthwise into 1/4 inch thick slices. Stack slices and cut into 1/4 strips. Place with onion and 1/2 the thyme in a large bowl. Cook pasta, reserve 1 cup pasta water, then pour enough pasta water to cover veggies in bowl—be careful not to drop the pasta! Drain pasta and set aside. Heat pasta pot over medium heat, add oil and garlic, stirring occasionally. Drain veggies well, remove thyme, then toss veggies in with garlic. Use tongs to turn carefully. Strip remaining thyme from the stems and stir into veggies with dried thyme. Turn heat up high, stirring constantly, until all the juices are bubbling, then pour in the wine all at once, add the pasta, stir well, cover and turn to low. Let simmer for 2-3 minutes, stir again and add cheese. Taste for salt and pepper. If it needs more moisture use the reserved pasta water. Cover for another 2 minutes until cheese melts. Serve hot or warm with walnuts sprinkled on top.

HARD CHEESE SUGGESTIONS—Parmesan, Romano, 5 year Gouda
AGED CHEESE SUGGESTIONS—Emmenthaler, 2 year Gouda, Jarlsberg, Thomasville Tomme

Sweet Pepper Spaghetti

Instead of zucchini, substitute 4 cups of thinly sliced strips of different colored sweet peppers (and maybe a hot one too!) Use whole fennel seeds in place of dried thyme. Pair an aged Provolone with Romano. Top with roasted pine nuts and dry-toasted fennel seeds.

Summer Skillet Supper

INGREDIENTS

1 Tablespoon olive oil	2 garlic cloves, chopped
1/2 onion, chopped	4 cups veggies, chopped to cook evenly
3 cups cooked brown rice	1 Tablespoon dried herbs (see NOTE below)
1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil	salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Heat large frying pan over medium-high heat, add oil and garlic. Stir to coat garlic with oil and sauté until fragrant. Add onion and cook until soft, stirring occasionally. Pour in all the veggies at once, stir well, and lower heat to medium. Cook veggies to taste, stirring so all veggies cook evenly. Add rice, herbs and sun-dried tomatoes with oil. Stir to mix completely, cover and lower heat to simmer. Cook 5 minutes, stir and taste for seasoning. Cover and cook an additional 10 minutes. Serve immediately or at room temperature. Travels well for potlucks.

SUGGESTIONS FOR VEGGIE AND HERB COMBINATIONS:

Yellow squash, grape tomatoes, sugar snap peas with marjoram and thyme
Eggplant, zucchini, grape tomatoes with basil, thyme and oregano
Zucchini, sweet peppers, okra with oregano and mint

NOTE: To substitute fresh herbs, use twice the amount and add near the end of cooking.

Tricks or Tips

Next time you cook rice, make a double batch so you have leftovers on hand for quick dinners. Store refrigerated in an air-tight container for up to a week.

This one-pan dinner tastes great with a whole grain like barley or with a cup of cooked beans, tofu or tempeh in place of 1 cup of the rice.

Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More
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Tricks and Tips

Okay, pretend it is the middle of winter, you have a jar of Muscadine Sauce in your pantry, but Florida pears are out of season. What will you do? There are a couple of options—

Asian pears have almost the same texture as a Florida pear. Another option is a sweet apple. Don't use a Granny Smith—the bread needs the fruit for sweetness as well as moisture.

Muscadine Pear Bread

INGREDIENTS

1 stick butter

1/3 cup honey

1/2 cup Muscadine Sauce

2 eggs

1 cup shredded Florida pear, peeled—about 1 medium pear

2 cups flour, whole wheat, white or a combination

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup pecans, finely chopped

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter a loaf pan.

In a large saucepan, melt the butter. Turn off heat, add honey and muscadine sauce, stir to combine thoroughly. Beat in eggs, then add shredded pear and stir well.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add to wet mixture, stir lightly. Add nuts and stir until combined, but do not overbeat.

Push into prepared pan, lightly smooth top and place in preheated oven.

Bake 30-40 minutes, until top is browned and springs back when touched. A toothpick will test clean. Let cool in pan 5 minutes, then loosen and remove.

Let cool before cutting—if cut while warm, the crust will crumble.

Wrap cooled loaf in foil and place in plastic zipper bag. Store at room temperature.