

## JULIE AND JULIA

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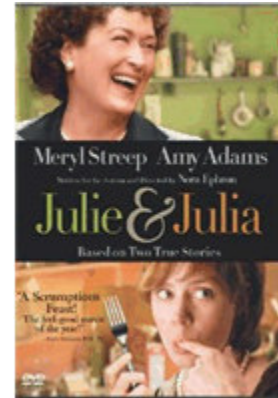
*Enchanting parallel-universe concoction* \_\_ 10/10

*Directed by Nora Ephron*

*Book Julie Powell*

*Screenplay Nora Ephron*

Meryl Streep ... Julia Child  
Amy Adams ... Julie Powell  
Stanley Tucci ... Paul Child  
Chris Messina ... Eric Powell  
Linda Emond ... Simone Beck  
Helen Carey ... Louissette Bertholle  
Mary Lynn Rajsakub ... Sarah  
Jane Lynch ... Dorothy McWilliams



*Paul Child: [to Julia] You are the butter to my bread, you are the breath to my life.  
[later echoed by Julie Powell to Eric Powell]*

Unfortunately, the quotes section on IMDb for this movie is nowhere near adequate to some of the marvelous lines coming from nearly every actor, on nearly all the significant occasions in the lives of the principal characters. And for that, whoever is responsible for such things, the person should be unproud. In any event, what a lovely and outstanding movie, that draws you in and causes you to fall in love with not only the celebrated Ms. Child, but the "servantless American cook" Julie Powell... even their respective husbands, a friend here and there, and one or two family members.

Note: Of the two principal characters, Julia Child and Julie Powell, I suspect the former is drawn closer to reality, while Ms. Powell is more a "poetic idealization" of film writer/director Nora Ephron.

In 2002, a young New York couple, Eric and Julie Powell (Amy Adams), moves from Brooklyn into Queens for more space (900 sq. ft.) and so Eric will be closer to his breadwinning job as an archaeology magazine editor. Julie works for a development company as a customer service representative handling various complaints stemming from the 9/11 attacks. In 1949, a young American couple, Paul and Julia Child (Meryl Streep), moves to Rouen, France, where Paul is employed with the State Department. Julia, who has been working as a file clerk, is thrust into a new world without knowledge of the language and no longer employed.

Julie has a thankless job, taking calls in her cubicle, usually being yelled at or otherwise chastised for whatever the caller blames the government for. When she comes home to their new apartment, a charming flat atop a pizza parlor near a noisy truck route, she feels just awful. Her way of unwinding and recovering is to make a dish, usually a desert—and here is where getting the exact quotation would be marvelous: Adams narrates words to the effect, "I can have a day where nothing, absolutely nothing, goes well. But no matter, because when I mix egg yolks, flour, and butter in the right combination, and complete the recipe as instructed, with minimal effort the world becomes perfect and delicious."

Back in Europe 50 years ago, Julia is simply not the sort of woman who doesn't "doooooo" anything, she casts about for what will make her more than simply a housewife, to find something she likes and to be the best she can "beeeeeee". She and

husband Paul (Stanley Tucci) have this wonderfully cheerful and mutually nurturing relationship, full of subtlety and nuance, and not a small amount of lovemaking. They sit down together and think about it. "What do you like to do?" asks Paul. "I like to 'eeeeeat,'" laughs Julia (ref. the "culinary revelation" of her first meal in France).

The film moves back and forth between the worlds of these two remarkable and simply adorable women: Julie Powell locates a cook book [the cook book: Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961)] that she managed to "apprehend" from her aunt's place before the move. Julie has always "looooved" Julia Child, and after some back-and-forth with and assistance from husband Eric, this newbie Queens resident sets up a Web blog with a mission to cook all 524 recipes from the book in 365 days. [The deadline is from her concern that 'she never finishes anything.']

This is the truth-based story of Julie's struggle to meet the ambitious goal she's set accompanied by continuing reflections from Julie on the younger lives of Julia and Paul Child[1]... in the 1950s in France, then shortly thereafter following the publication of the *Art of French Cooking*. We all know Julia Child from that point on became a cooking star, one of the earliest and most loved in our American galaxy.

The storytelling and directorial skill of Nora Ephron is extraordinary, adding a special magic, a *joie de vivre*, to the whole enterprise. She also has an uncanny knack for getting the settings exactly right, particularly recreating the Paris of Paul and Julia in the 1950s. Virtually every scene is a playful character study, not only of the four principals, but of their friends and family. I especially savor the scenes with Julia's sister Dorothy (Jane Lynch), who comes to visit: Dorothy is likewise tall and gangly—Julia Child was 6'2" tall—and speaks with the same drawn-out vowels and sighs, gentle self-deprecating comments, and childlike enthusiasm for everything.

On both ends of the time machine, we witness a cornucopia of native happiness, so many funny conversations, expressions, responses. Julia's sense of life is *suis generis*, even when the news is bad she keeps her chin up: when she and Paul receive a rejection letter from Houghton Mifflin at their home in France, she says with a smile, "Well, boooo hoooo," with her characteristic lilting delivery. [Streep was nominated for, by my count, her 16th Oscar[2] for this role, and sure should have won it over Sandra Bullock for the *Blind Side* (no offense, Sandra). She is more Julia Child than Julia Child, transcending the real character by distilling her essence.]

I am inspired. Indeed, I'm absolutely floored by Julie and Julia, taking it back out of the Netflix mailer and watching it twice. I think I'm in love with Julia Child. (!) Having the same awed respect that Julie Powell shows toward her. By the way, Amy Adams nails Julie, as well—though who knows if the portrayal is 100% accurate. Through Adams' work I totally get the experience of being a young 30s couple in modern New York City, and I feel moved by the struggle of this particular couple... how they keep it real and focused on genuine mutual happiness day to day.

In an early scene for Julie, she's meeting her 'girlfriends' (fellow graduates from Amherst?) for a power lunch: the disrespect from these insensitive, compulsive, conniving status-grubbers is palpable. And what a perfect way to contrast Julie's honest humanity via the project. One last thing, because I could give another 1000 words on the pleasures of this film, I like the way Ephron draws the men. I like the way the women love and respect their husbands and vice versa. I cannot imagine the projection of a better image of a good marriage. That's part of the special appeal for me.

10 stars! Do not miss this film. Thanks, Melody, for the heads up. Every time you watch Julie and Julia you'll feel elated—or most of you will—as if getting Julia's recipe for boeuf bourguignon exactly right.

[1] Julie has a notebook or a book containing letters written in that 1950s era by Julia and Paul. Wasn't sure the exact source. An autobiographical *My Life in France* does exist of Julia Child, though it was published posthumously in 2006.

[2] She won for *Sophie's Choice* (1983) and *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1980)

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*Meryl Streep | Amy Adams | Julia Childs | The Joy of Cooking*

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