Gourmet magazine was the only periodical to regularly disseminate gourmet (usually French) recipes to the American public before 1956. With a circulation that rose from 30,000 in 1945 to about 173,000 readers by 1961, the magazine made these recipes available to a large and growing public. In addition, Gourmet republished many of the same recipes in the two-volume Gourmet Cookbook (1950, 1957), which sold three hundred thousand copies by July of 1960; some of these recipes also appeared in Gourmet’s Cookbook of Fish and Game, Volume 1 (1947), and Gourmet’s Basic French Cook Book (1961). Furthermore, Samuel Chamberlain’s Clementine in the Kitchen (1943) and his Bouquet de France (1952) incorporated recipes originally published in the magazine. Taken together, these books comprised a significant contribution to the growing shelf of gourmet cookbooks and reinforced the impact of the recipes originally published in the magazine.¹

Like other types of recipe collections, publications presenting gourmet recipes enabled some readers to cook new dishes, but they also served a variety of other functions. As scholars have shown in considering various types of recipe collections, the messages implicit in the recipes or explicit in introductions and commentaries are often as important as the recipes themselves. My own research establishes that gourmet cookbooks and articles, never before studied in this way, featured such messages but, for the most part, failed to convert readers into cooks. Inferences from letters to the editor, the recipes that appeared in the magazine and elsewhere, and the cooking skills of Gourmet’s readers confirm this failure.

Gourmet cookbooks and articles played an important role in portraying French cuisine and culture as keys to good living, while clarifying the gender and class cohorts of the audience the recipes addressed. The authors, effectively ambassadors for French culture, often cast their writings in the form of travel essays highlighting French artistry of all kinds from the construction of beautiful cathedrals to the preparation and enjoyment of excellent meals. In this way,
the texts addressed primarily the aspirations of the growing upper-middle class, which sought to improve its social standing through gourmet dining, rather than the small population of French immigrants and their descendents in America, who wished to maintain their cultural and culinary heritage. As such, the audience for French cookbooks was different from that of earlier ethnic cookbooks.

Gourmet recipes were often gender coded. The magazine deliberately hired a professional chef rather than a home cook to present the principal lessons in French cooking. In so doing, Gourmet could associate itself and its readers with the grand tradition of French cuisine as embodied in a chef who had studied with Escoffier. Of course, the chef, always a man, could orient his cooking lessons in various ways. In tapping Louis De Gouy, known for his fish and game recipes, to be the first Gourmet chef, Gourmet signaled a clear gender orientation. De Gouy, after all, believed that a hunting or fishing trip was a necessary prelude to cooking the game that had been harvested. For these adventures, women need not apply. It is clear from the selection of De Gouy that Gourmet intended to appeal at the outset to potential male cooks.

As it turned out, however, American men went off to war, and women became the principal readers of the magazine. For those who aspired to cook, De Gouy’s macho rhetoric became an obstacle to using the recipes. It is not surprising, then, that after De Gouy’s death, Gourmet switched gears and pitched its recipes to women. The individuals charged with implementing this new approach were Louis Diat, the second Gourmet chef, and his American collaborator, Helen Ridley, who presented basic recipes from the viewpoint of Diat’s mother, a small-town French housewife. In this venture, the collaborators addressed the cooking lessons in a clear and nonthreatening manner to the inexperienced American housewife.

From the outset, there were two significant obstacles for readers who might have considered cooking from the recipes in Gourmet: their lack of kitchen experience and the inadequacies of the recipes. Subscribers to Gourmet were, in general, deficient in the cooking skills required for this relatively complicated task. Their inexperience, in turn, was a function of parallel developments in the American food industry and the home. Until World War I and the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 reduced the influx of immigrants and opened jobs in factories and offices to their predecessors, most well-to-do families had servants to cook their meals. At the same time, the revolution in food production made available boxed, canned, and packaged goods that required little preparation and were identifiable by their brand names. These new products not
only were easy to cook but were also hailed by advertisers and home economists as more nutritious, cleaner, and safer than bulk foods. Meanwhile, redesigned kitchens, outfitted with the latest appliances, further simplified meal preparation. In effect, this revolution enabled inexperienced housewives, who had lost their servants, to prepare family meals, even when they were ignorant of basic cooking processes. It disabled them, however, from cooking dishes that required a knowledge of traditional kitchen techniques.2

The second obstacle to cooking Gourmet recipes was the absence of sufficient instructions on how to find and prepare the ingredients for a given dish. Often recipes listed ingredients without specifying where to find the most obscure items, the exact size and weight of each ingredient, and the appropriate size and type of poultry or cut of meat. Moreover, few cookbook writers explained in terms a novice cook could understand how to sauté, make a crust for a quiche, or properly combine the ingredients for mayonnaise.3

Of course, American cooks were not all in the same boat when it came to considering whether or not to prepare a gourmet recipe. In large cities on either coast, as opposed to urban and farm areas in the Midwest, would-be gourmet cooks had greater access to retail stores that stocked fine wines and specialty ingredients required for certain recipes. By contrast, the survival of traditional cooking skills may have been greater in rural areas.

Curiously, the rise of gourmet dining societies may also have inhibited progress toward home cooking of gourmet meals. The all-male membership of most of these societies implied that gourmet dining was for men only. Furthermore, the societies often created their menus from haute cuisine recipes rather than those of cuisine bourgeoise, which was more accessible to home cooks. Moreover, some journalists, who apparently equated gourmet dining and haute cuisine, believed that it was too complex for home cooks. Jane Nickerson, the New York Times food editor, remarked that “home dinners can never duplicate the luxuries of the Chevaliers du Tastevin.”4

To evaluate the influence of recipes in Gourmet, I draw on “Sugar and Spice,” the magazine’s letters-to-the-editor column, where readers often reacted to the magazine’s recipes. (A rigorous sampling of early readers would be impossible to obtain at this point.) Even though the evidence is anecdotal, the letters provide insight into readers’ thoughts about cooking Gourmet recipes. After considering these responses, I briefly examine the quality of the recipes in gourmet cookbooks published between 1940 and 1961 by houses other than Gourmet to see how well they served inexperienced cooks. My main focus, however, will be articles by the Gourmet chefs, at least one of which appeared in every issue of the
magazine from the founding to 1960. Through these articles the chefs intended to provide a comprehensive approach to French cuisine, including recipes for the various courses of dinners served during all seasons and holidays. I evaluate these recipes to see how well they met the needs of the magazine’s readers. Of course, recipes appeared in other *Gourmet* articles, but largely to enable readers to imagine the flavor of the dishes rather than cook them.

**Readers as Potential Cooks**

While *Gourmet* published about half a dozen letters to the editor every month, only one on average actually commented on a recipe from the magazine that the writer had cooked. Most correspondents either sent one of their favorite recipes or asked for one from the magazine. While a number of subscribers reported reading the recipes, there is little evidence that they or *Gourmet*’s staff actually cooked them.

Letters from *Gourmet* readers who cooked from the magazine’s recipes frequently asked where they could find gourmet ingredients that were scarce in their locale. Mrs. Jacqueline Swank, for example, wrote from Towanda, Pennsylvania, to report that there were no truffles or “even shallots” available in her area. She applauded the magazine for rejecting “lazy ways of cooking” and providing “a perfect escape from an ungentle, harried world.” *Gourmet*, in turn, supplied her with mail-order addresses so that she could satisfy her quest for exotic ingredients.5

Other cooks expressed an appreciation for the quality of the recipes they prepared and were grateful to *Gourmet* for the opportunity to improve their cooking skills. In this vein, Mrs. H. Stanley Paschal reported that immediately after reading the latest issue of the magazine, she went straight to the stove to try out a few of the most promising recipes, while Miss Josephine Jenkins congratulated *Gourmet* on restoring pride in cooking and announced her plans for preparing a big meal including such dishes as *kreplach* in chicken broth, Welsh rarebit, and pecan pie, all from *Gourmet* recipes. Mrs. Meil Foster Cramer credited *Gourmet* for her improved cooking, which, according to friends, was now “inspired.” There were also half a dozen reports of informal gourmet societies that used the magazine as a source of recipes.6

A more surprising and more persistent theme in “Sugar and Spice” was the confession of subscribers that they preferred reading to cooking the magazine’s recipes. Publisher Earle MacAusland, who from the outset identified *Gourmet* as a lifestyle rather than a cooking magazine, was happy to endorse this practice. Consistent with this conception, he explained in the introduction to *The Gour-
met Cookbook that “there are gourmets who never stirred a sauce, but who love the lore of gastronomy . . . Their belief is that a recipe never yet made a good cook, but that a gourmet’s recipe certainly makes good reading.” No doubt, MacAusland hoped to encourage both readers and cooks to subscribe to the magazine and buy Gourmet cookbooks, and he probably suspected that the cooks were in the minority among the magazine’s readers.7

With such encouragement from the publisher, it is no wonder that readers often admitted their preference for reading over cooking the recipes. Mr. Albert Hawkins reported that he read cookbooks for pleasure much like others read detective stories. Among cookbooks, he particularly enjoyed perusing “Gourmet Magazine and The Gourmet Cookbook.” Mr. J. C. Scharf, who would have cooked from the magazine’s recipes if they had been helpful, remarked, “I esteem Gourmet for its literary quality, not for its recipes.”8

J. Russell Scott enjoyed reading the recipes even when he didn’t savor the fruits of them. As for Charles Fay, he found Gourmet a “fun magazine” because he could “read and dream over each and every special and fancy recipe, discuss it with my friends, and never have to make it.” Mrs. Marie P. Randolph spoke for herself and her husband: “first we enjoy reading, then we enjoy eating.” She said nothing, however, about whether they enjoyed the cooking that must have preceded the eating.9

“But because just reading it tastes so good,” Mary Montgomery asked Gourmet to renew her subscription. That line pleased Father Pat, a Gourmet subscriber and Jesuit from Detroit, who enjoyed the magazine menus occasionally, but mainly “it tastes so good just reading it.” Even though she said nothing about cooking, Mrs. Pearson Conlyn took Gourmet more seriously. Conlyn read the articles on “cookery in foreign and domestic places” as “travelogues.” Each was “unique and different.” Even Mrs. Meil Cramer, who credited Gourmet with improving her cooking, gave greater emphasis to the literary quality of the magazine, which provided “delectable reading material.”10

Mrs. Lou E. Peck admitted that she was usually interested in magazines that gave advice on dieting. However, she lay down with a copy of Gourmet, took an aspirin to allay her hunger pangs, and read herself to sleep with the magazine. Mrs. Peck’s fulfillment came in the form of a dream of vol-au-vent and whirling soup. She regarded the experience as a “rigorous test of character and will power” and experienced the joy of vicarious eating without weight gain or laboring over a hot stove.11

Such anecdotal evidence is significant, but not conclusive. It is confirmed, however, by the complication of household obligations in the postwar period,
the absence of helpful gourmet recipes, and the emphasis on traditional gender roles. The decline of domestic help, especially cooks, in upper-middle-class homes after 1941 forced housewives to make difficult choices. House cleaning, laundry chores, and child care limited the time available for the preparation of daily meals. When it came time to cook, the inexperience of most housewives in kitchen fundamentals such as slicing, sautéing, and roasting complicated the effort. Under the circumstances, following complicated gourmet recipes was a daunting task. So, many novice cooks must have found the articles in women’s magazines with recipes and menus featuring processed goods and requiring relatively little intervention from the cook quite tempting. Best-selling cookbooks such as The Good Housekeeping Cook Book (1942) and Joy of Cooking (1936) enabled inexperienced cooks to proceed with somewhat more complicated dishes by offering clear and detailed instructions for virtually every step in the cooking process. Until they were more comfortable with kitchen routines, however, these housewives must have been grateful for the shortcuts in the former and the clear explanations in the latter.12

Writers of gourmet recipes, who were essentially competing with the women’s magazines for the attention of these upper-middle-class readers, thus faced a difficult challenge. Their task was to convince the inexperienced housewife to spend more time in the kitchen preparing complex recipes, usually with fresh ingredients, rather than relying on recipes in the women’s magazines. Only a patient instructor who understood the limited cooking skills of many housewives could teach them to master the kitchen fundamentals that were necessary to prepare gourmet recipes. Occasional testimony suggests that the recipe writers were oblivious to the needs of such readers. Mrs. Peter Oszarski, for example, asked plaintively, “Will you please explain in detail how to lard roasts, etc., what a larding needle is, and where it can be purchased?”13

Mrs. Oszarski’s comments focus attention on the important question of how effectively various gourmet cookbooks and articles met the needs of their audience. To respond to this question, I checked the recipes of the Gourmet chefs, to see whether they contained information on the following points:

1. Appropriate cooking equipment from pots, pans, and knives to modern kitchen aids for preparing each step in the recipe.
2. Ingredients required for the recipe and, if unavailable at the local supermarket, instructions on where to find them or appropriate substitutes for exotic ingredients.
3. Steps leading up to cooking, including how to clean and cut up ingredients, truss fowl, cream ingredients, and separate eggs.

4. Cooking processes such as sautéing, broiling, and deep-fat frying and specification of the proper equipment to use in these processes.

5. Quantitative information such as the weight and/or volume of each ingredient, oven temperatures and times, and the number of servings each recipe would make.

6. Warnings about problems that might arise in following the instructions and advice on how to rectify these problems.

7. Intangibles: author’s awareness of the mind-set and skill level of the audience; the author’s conviction, clearly expressed to readers, that the instructions would enable them to cook the recipes; an authoritative but friendly tone.

Gourmet’s Rivals: Gourmet Cookbooks
Published by Other Houses

In order to appreciate the impact of Gourmet on home cooking, I evaluate the relative contributions of both Gourmet authors and those who wrote gourmet cookbooks for other publishers. For the purposes of this study, a gourmet cookbook must be focused primarily on presenting French recipes, since the public and food professionals were less likely to consider other ethnic cooking and traditional American dishes as “gourmet.” As Time magazine insisted, “French cuisine is the central grand tradition for the growing multitude of home gourmet cooks.” For this reason, I do not consider cookbooks that incorporated a number of French recipes—most notably Craig Claiborne’s New York Times Cook Book (1961)—but put greater emphasis on multiethnic and/or American recipes. Of course, only those cookbooks that appeared in English or were translated into English would have had any significant influence on the American public.14

Among those books were a number of encyclopedic works devoted to a comprehensive coverage of French cuisine, some translated and some written originally in English, whose authors were Frenchmen. There were also several travel narratives that used recipes to help illustrate the food adventures of their authors. Close to that genre, but somewhat more oriented toward cooking, were the four cookbooks of Elizabeth David, while three reputable French authors directed their small volumes to the housewife, American or French. In addition,
three celebrity chefs, who reached a large audience through their writings, as well as televised cooking classes, and service to the cooking profession, each produced an important volume.

Heading the list of encyclopedic works was the latest edition of Escoffier’s *Guide Culinaire* (1938), which was in print throughout this period in an English translation as *The Escoffier Cook Book: A Guide to the Fine Art of Cookery* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1951 [1941]). Its strength was a series of clear explanations of virtually every basic technique and process useful to the practitioner of French cooking. However, Escoffier wrote it primarily for the expert in haute cuisine as opposed to the housewife or spouse. And, at 923 pages and with almost 3,000 recipes in the 1951 printing, its size and scope would have been daunting to most novice cooks. Inexperienced cooks would have had the same difficulties in using Henri Pellaprat’s *Modern Culinary Art* (New York: French and European Publications, 1951), which weighed in at 738 pages and 3,500 recipes; André Simon’s 827-page *A Concise Encyclopedia of Gastronomy* (London: Collins, 1952), with its 2,500 recipes; or the first English translation (1941) of the 1938 edition of Prosper Montagné’s *Larousse Gastronomique* (1,101 pages and 8,500 recipes).15

Among the most effective narratives with recipes to illustrate dining experiences were Samuel and Narcissa Chamberlain’s *Clementine in the Kitchen* and *Bouquet de France*. The *Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954) adopted the same strategy with equally good results. While these books were popular and probably served to pique an interest in French cooking, Toklas, like the Chamberlains, addressed her recipes more to the reader than to the cook. She wrote skimpy instructions and rarely warned readers of problems they were likely to encounter in preparing her recipes.16

Elizabeth David, the English writer and gourmet, launched her career with the classic *Mediterranean Food* (London: John Lehmann, 1950). Over the next ten years, she also published *French Country Cooking* (London: John Lehmann, 1951), *Summer Cooking* (London: Museum Press, 1955), and *French Provincial Cooking* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960). David’s approach to food was unique. She highlighted the cultural environment in which the dishes were created and often incorporated the reactions of artists, writers, and travelers who consumed the dishes for which she supplied recipes. The latter were sketchy: a list of ingredients and instructions for combining them with little information about techniques. They would have sufficed for accomplished cooks, but not for novices.17

Interested American cooks could have learned a great deal from two popular French cookbooks translated into English by Charlotte Turgeon and a third one
written for Americans by André Simon. The former were modest cookbooks with a few hundred basic recipes for housewives rather than chefs and thus emphasizing everyday dishes; both authors briefly explained important processes and techniques, while Turgeon adapted their recipes to American ways. Even so, reviewers agreed that while both *Tante Marie’s French Kitchen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949) and *Good Food from France* (New York: M. Barrows, 1951) by Henri Pellaprat addressed the needs of the inexperienced French housewife, they were not sufficiently comprehensive and exact to meet those of the novice cook in the United States. As for *André Simon’s French Cook Book* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1938), revised and updated by Crosby Gaige in 1948, its organization by full-scale menus rather than single dishes made it less appropriate for the beginning cook.18

Few Americans knew anything about *What’s Cooking in France* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1952), a shortened version (sixty-three pages) of a larger manuscript by Louisette Bertholle and Simone Beck, Julia Child’s future collaborators. Helmut Ripperger rewrote the recipes, which Charlotte Turgeon judged to be “few but excellent.” Others disagreed, as will become evident. In any case, the publisher failed to promote the book.19

Among the cookbook authors who influenced a larger number of gourmets were Dione Lucas, James Beard, and Joseph Donon. “La doyenne of fine cuisine,” Lucas was a British immigrant to New York and a graduate of the Cordon Bleu in Paris with permission to offer the school’s diploma to her own students who had passed the Cordon Bleu examination. After opening a school and restaurant in London in 1934, she left for America in 1940 and within two years had established the Cordon Bleu Restaurant and School in New York. The *New Yorker* called it the “Athens” of cooking schools, which, along with gourmet dining societies, was spreading gourmet practices. An accomplished teacher, Lucas was also renowned for her dexterity as an omelette maker.20

To launch one of the first television cooking shows in 1948, Lucas drew on her expertise in teaching and cooking, as well as her “brisk British accent”; set in the Cordon Bleu Restaurant, the show was entitled “To the Queen’s Taste” and reached an estimated 63,000 New Yorkers, as well as audiences in Philadelphia, Boston, and Providence. Over the next ten years the thirty-minute weekly show migrated from WCBS to WJZ and WPIX.

Shortly before launching the TV show, Lucas published *The Cordon Bleu Cookbook* and established herself as a leading authority on French cooking. In the introduction, she promised to teach readers to prepare French recipes adapted to the needs of the American housewife. However, in contrast to her cooking school,
where she showed each student “how to prepare a dish, how to stir, how to roll out pastry and line a flan ring,” Lucas offered no instructions in the fundamentals of cooking and expected readers to use the recipes “without outside help.” Moreover, by her own account, the recipes relied more heavily on the cook’s imagination than on the exact measurement of ingredients. This approach clearly frustrated inexperienced housewives. In addition, the absence of chapters on sauces and salads diminished the value of the cookbook.

In the early postwar period, James Beard and Dione Lucas were rivals, along with heads of the gourmet dining societies, for leadership of the nascent gourmet movement. Beard was completing his TV show as Lucas launched hers, and he later followed in Lucas’ footsteps by opening what became a highly regarded cooking school in 1956. Both published cookbooks, although Beard was far more prolific. Even so, Beard’s cookbooks usually incorporated few French recipes as, for example, the *Fireside Book of Cooking*. Only in his collaborative project with Alexander Watt, entitled *Paris Cuisine*, did he focus primarily on French cooking.

Beard and Watt met in 1949, when both men joined the Wine and Food Society tour of French vineyards. The friendship they developed led in 1950 to “field work” for a book project during Beard’s seven-month Paris sabbatical. Already an expert on the Paris restaurant scene, Watt steered Beard to his favorite bistros and restaurants, from which they collected and tested sixty recipes. Beard then rewrote the recipes to make them accessible to an American audience.

Despite the recipes, the book was, as Charlotte Turgeon pointed out, “a gastronomical guide book, not only of Paris but indirectly of provincial and colonial France.” Rather than present the recipes by food category—meat, fish, desserts, etc.—Beard and Watt attached them to descriptions of the restaurants where they had dined. In this way, recipes for meat dishes were placed alongside others for fish, vegetables, and desserts, so that future cooks would have to consult the index to find options for various courses. More problematic was the absence of cooking instructions for complex processes. Take, for example, the recipe for *le Lièvre à la Royale* (regal hare) from the Rotisserie Perigourdine. The authors expected the reader to find a hare, “kill and dress” it herself, and “save the blood and mix it with a little vinegar so it will coagulate.” This was a tall order for the novice—or perhaps any—American housewife!

With help from his editors, Joseph Donon improved on the work of Lucas, Beard, and Watt. While Lucas was “la doyenne of fine cuisine,” Craig Claiborne dubbed Donon the “dean” of his profession. Following retirement as a private chef to the Vanderbilt heir, Mrs. Hamilton McK. Twombly, and while still head-
ing the Escoffier Society, Donon published *The Classic French Cuisine* in 1959 to favorable reviews in the *New York Times*. Claiborne called it “an excellent book on French cuisine for home use,” which was “adapted to the small kitchen.” Charlotte Turgeon agreed. Because Donon rendered French practices “readily understandable” to Americans, she concluded that “this is a book for will-be gourmets.” Donon’s clarity, in turn, owed much to his editors, Narcissa Chamberlain and Ruth Bakalar.

For both simple and complex dishes, Donon applied “precepts of *la haute cuisine française*” to home cooking. To help with this task, he provided instruction on how to distinguish between fresh and old fish, what kinds of chickens should be selected for particular recipes, and how to recognize tender, young artichokes and prepare them for cooking. Shrewdly, Donon gave a nod to nutritionists by urging American cooks to prepare irresistibly delicious dishes that happened to be nutritious and then match them with appropriate wines. He also recommended the use of electric blenders and frying kettles.

In sum, American cooks could choose from a variety of gourmet cookbooks written by experts, most of whom had no link to *Gourmet* magazine. However, only Donon’s manual, among them, met the needs of the novice cook. Even so, it never achieved a large circulation, in part because Alfred Knopf became frustrated with the lengthy editorial process and apparently wrote off the book even before it went to press. Equally important, Donon’s book capped the career of an elderly immigrant chef, who had neither the interest nor the energy to promote his *magnum opus*.

It is interesting to note that in January of 1958, just three months after Louis Diat’s death, Earle MacAusland asked Donon if he would be interested in writing for *Gourmet* magazine. The timing of the letter indicates that MacAusland hoped to make Donon the third *Gourmet* chef. For his part, Donon considered writing an article or two, but thought better of it. And *Gourmet*, perhaps despairing to find a French chef with Donon’s qualifications, eliminated the *Gourmet* chef altogether.

**Gourmet’s First Gourmet Chef: Louis De Gouy**

Louis De Gouy, the first “*Gourmet* chef,” served in this capacity for seven years. Because he would be the primary source of recipes for readers who hoped to cook gourmet dishes from *Gourmet* articles, the selection was important to the magazine and its subscribers. And it was not by accident that *Gourmet* hired for this position a chef who was, of course, a man and a French national, rather than
a home cook. After all, a chef would have a full grasp of the recipes, cooking techniques, and menu options in the French culinary repertoire. Selecting him was, thus, *Gourmet*'s way of recognizing the prestige of *haute cuisine* and the importance of offering readers the opportunity to learn it from an expert. In this way, as well, *Gourmet* further distinguished the recipes De Gouy was publishing from those in the women's magazines.

De Gouy's versatility was also an asset to the magazine. Aside from his knowledge of French cooking, he had considerable experience preparing American dishes and was familiar as well with Central and Eastern European cooking. How he developed an expertise in sandwiches and soda fountain drinks, which became the subjects of two early cookbooks, remains a mystery.29

In some ways, the appointment of De Gouy worked out well. Certainly, his articles broadened readers' horizons by presenting recipes of varying national origins linked to the history and culture of various regions and nations. And he made a sincere effort to speak with an “American” voice that many readers surely appreciated. However, *Gourmet*'s choice of De Gouy was probably based on the mistaken assumption that his principal audience would be American men, who were increasingly interested in challenging kitchen activities. No doubt, such an audience would have resonated to the masculine themes of his anecdotes. It was just the contrary, however, with the predominantly female audience that actually read his articles. Moreover, De Gouy's frequent failure to provide much-needed instruction in cooking fundamentals, as well as his habit of listing ingredients that were difficult to find, frustrated readers, as did his practice of suggesting that the cook needed special knowledge or intuition to prepare a recipe.

During De Gouy's seven-year tenure at *Gourmet*, he wrote two regular articles in each issue, one of which, “*Gastronomie sans argent*: To Tease Your Palate and Please Your Purse,” was the magazine's nod to hard times. As the title suggested, readers could prepare these recipes from inexpensive ingredients, including leftovers. The *Gourmet* chef also wrote a monthly piece, often with a seasonal theme, on such topics as spring vegetables, fall game dishes, etc. As time passed, however, the distinction between these two formats eroded, perhaps because *Gourmet* attracted relatively affluent readers who had little concern about cutting their food budgets.

De Gouy brought to his task an unusual background. He served under his father, Jean De Gouy, while the latter was Esquire de cuisine for Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria and later chef for the Belgian royal family. Following this apprenticeship, De Gouy found a new mentor in Escoffier, a friend of his father's; he then worked at a number of prestigious European hotels, including the Hotel
de Paris in France and the Carlton in England, before taking a position with the Waldorf Astoria in New York in 1911. De Gouy soon developed a reputation for excellence as a chef among wealthy Long Islanders for whom he catered parties and organized clambakes. He also served as “chef-steward” on the Astor yacht and, during its around-the-world cruise, on the J. P. Morgan yacht, *Wild Duck.* In 1917, he became the head chef of the fifth army corps of the American Expeditionary Forces.

In the years after the war, the restless De Gouy sought new opportunities within the food profession. Sometime before 1931, he intended to establish a cooking school and restaurant, but there is no evidence that he proceeded with this plan. In 1936, he published the first of seventeen cookbooks, which addressed a teenage audience, while the next year he made his mark with a two-volume set entitled *The Derrydale Game and Fish Book.* These unusual volumes, destined for a small circulation, appealed to sportsmen of the leisure class, who could turn over their catch to chefs like De Gouy with European training; for its comprehensive coverage of the subject and “the feeling of life” it conveyed, M. F. K. Fisher introduced the 1950 edition as one of “the near great” cookbooks of all times.

Both Fisher and the future publisher of *Gourmet* must have resonated to De Gouy’s reflections on the current status of wild boar. “In our somewhat softened civilization the once powerful cult of the lovers of rich, high meat and game has faded into obscurity. In the present day of hurry and bustle, there is little serious attention given to the sober study of pleasures of the table.” To enhance the flavor of game, De Gouy offered a variety of sauces, including bourgeoise, Spanish, Parisisienne, with fines herbes, or baked with mushrooms to use on fish and game. His associates at the magazine obviously valued the fish volume, which they reprinted under the *Gourmet* label in 1947 just before he died.

Given his interests, it is not surprising that De Gouy was also an enthusiastic defender of the gourmet ethos. He considered the founding of *Gourmet* to be one of many signs that Americans were clamoring for the “renewal of good cheer through good food and beverages appetizingly prepared.” And he gave eloquent testimony to the gourmet’s fascination with taste as an advocate of poached eggs Elysée Palace, which “make your tongue turn a somersault of delight.” For him, cooking and dining were great adventures in the creation and appreciation of savory dishes.

To implement his vision of gourmet dining, De Gouy emphasized exotic food, including game, fish, and Creole food that would open Americans to a new realm of experience. His strong interest in Creole cooking arose from firsthand
experience during a stay in New Orleans in the winter of 1941. In the following year, De Gouy offered a recipe for Creole Bouillabaisse, but his most complete review of this cuisine came four years later, when he published recipes for a Gumbo file with crabs, roast stuffed opossum Creole, and a Creole Cajun pecan tart, among other dishes.  

For his first article in the first issue of *Gourmet*, De Gouy presented the recipe for pheasant à la mode d’Alcantara (from his Derrydale cookbook), which had been discovered in 1806 during Napoleon’s peninsular campaign; it had history as well as flavor to recommend it. He noted that “the game tradition of America is as old as the country itself” and reminded readers that historically they were much closer than Europeans to an era when hunting was necessary for survival. He clearly hoped that his recipes, ready at hand from his Derrydale books, would help to revive hunting and fishing for pleasure if not for survival. Five years later, he drew on the same source to present *Gourmet* readers with recipes for pheasant Demidoff and pheasant Titania. Other De Gouy fish and game articles in *Gourmet*, some of which had appeared in the Derrydale volumes, included the New England clambake (in one paragraph!), rabbit, venison, quail, lobster, crayfish, shad roe, scallops, eel, and fluke.  

It seems likely that *Gourmet*’s editors, who must have thought that the hunting angle would appeal to male readers, strongly endorsed De Gouy’s approach. Indeed, in the October 1941 issue (p. 35), which featured a wild duck on the cover, the magazine printed an advertisement claiming that “shooting’s only half the fun”; the other half is “cooking and eating what you’ve bagged . . . *Gourmet* is a man’s magazine on food that men enjoy. No vitamins, no calories. Just good food, yes, and good drinks.” And, to establish its authoritative character, *Gourmet* is the “only magazine with a professional chef,” a true expert on fish and game.  

The words of the advertisement perfectly expressed De Gouy’s idea that the pleasure in tasting game was inseparably linked to the excitement of the hunt. Indeed, he wrote his debut article on pheasants from the perspective of the “happy hunter.” Three years later, a large illustration of a hunter carrying a huge rifle hovered over the printed words that detailed the challenge of shooting rabbits. It was a perspective that may have appealed to the minority of *Gourmet* readers who were male and/or hunters rather than the majority audience, which was female.  

Even when De Gouy was not relishing the prospect of dining on venison or crayfish, he unconsciously associated sophisticated dining activities with men. Take his account of male officials carrying a dish of fresh mushrooms on toast
goat:omic possibilities are delicious.
They are easy to raise and easy to keep, requiring hardly much more than a
warm, dry shelter, a middling ration of grain, hay, and green vegetables, and a
good recipe, to turn to hasenpfeffer.
The mere sight or suggestion of rab-
bit brings to the au consens the mouth-
watering aroma of hasenpfeffer, the
German spiced hare created, strangely
enough, by a French chef, Urbain De-
bois, when he was exquisit de cuisine for
the late and hungry Kaiser Wilhem II.
It may give you a severe twist to know
that in Europe the sauce for hasenpfeffer
was usually made without blood because
fresh blood was hard to obtain. The
sauce owed its scrumptious flavor to
spices and wine, as in this recipe:
Hasenpfeffer. Wash 1 large dressed
hare or rabbit (or 2 small ones), and
cut into serving pieces. Allow the pieces
to stand for 24 to 48 hours in a cool
place, well covered with the following
marinade: 2 cups vinegar, 1 cup water,
1 cup Clarat (or 2 cups vinegar and 2
cups Clarat, depending on the strength
of the vinegar), 2 large onions, sliced,
1 tablespoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pep-
er, 1 teaspoon mustard seed (optional),
1 teaspoon crushed juniper berries, 8
whole cloves, and 6 bay leaves. Turn the
pieces of meat every 12 hours; and when
the marinating period is over, wipe them
dry, dredge them lightly in a little flour,
and sauté them in 1 cup fat until they
are well browned on all sides. Then
drain off the fat. Strain the marinade,
dilute it with 11/2 cup hot water, adding 1
tablespoon sugar (optional), and pour
it over the meat. Bring the whole to a
boil; cover the pot tightly, and simmer
for about 40 minutes, or until the meat
is tender. Salt and pepper to taste. Ar-
range the meat on a hot platter, and pour
with a little flour if necessary. There
should be an ample quantity of gravy.
Hasenpfeffer is always served with potato
dumplings, such as the following:
Potato Dumplings. Dip 8 slices bread
in water, and squeeze the excess moisture
from them. Mix the bread in a bowl with
1 medium-sized onion, grated, a
pinch of minced parsley, and salt and
pepper to taste. Grate 4 large raw pota-
toes, and add them to the bread mixture,
together with 2 well beaten eggs. Form
the mixture into balls the size of a large
walnut, roll them gently in flour, and
cook them to boiling water or meat
stock in a covered pot for 15 minutes.
Drain, and serve very hot.
The gypies knew a good thing when
they saw it. How many tales of anommic
England are set about the poacher!—
every gypsy was suspected of having a
rabbit at the bottom of that savory pot
of his from which such delicious but un-
lawful odds. (Continued on page 12)
from the kitchen to an unidentified French king. While appreciating the complex preparation of this dish, De Gouy observed that a stove is “no place for weaklings or dreamers.” Women who read this article might be excused for thinking that De Gouy had them in mind.37

It was somewhat more difficult to masculinize leek soup, that everyday dish enjoyed by most Frenchmen. However, by naming among its greatest exponents Nero, King Arthur, and those Welshmen who wore the vegetable in their helmets while fighting the forces of the King of Northumbria, De Gouy succeeded in doing so. In this way, leeks became the Welsh national emblem. And even though Mary, Queen of Scots, was usually credited for the recipe De Gouy was presenting—braised leeks and custard sauce in the Scottish manner—he insisted that “each grateful gourmet give thanks to the anonymous cooks that added their bit.”38

As for leftover pork, De Gouy introduced this dish by recounting a duel between a French dramatist, Sainte Foix, and a member of the king’s guard over whether a slice of roast pork and bread served at the Procope restaurant in Paris was an appetizing meal, as Saint Foix proclaimed. When King Louis XV got word of the duel, he commanded the two men to return to the Procope, order a suckling pig, and charge it to the king.39

Of course, there were a few subjects that even De Gouy found difficult to masculinize, such as ice cream served on a summer’s day. Writing in a nostalgic vein, he depicted a mother dishing large helpings to her brood of children; the accompanying illustration featured family members and their dog sprawled on the lawn.40

De Gouy’s masculine rhetoric was no way to lure novice female cooks into the gourmet cooking fold. Equally ill-advised was his mixed message to readers about whether cooks were born or made. On the one hand, he praised Chef François Pierre for clarifying the correct way to make a soufflé: “crisp on the outside and soft in the center,” because it “should dispel for all time the mysterious haze that surrounds the making of such a successful soufflé.” In this instance, De Gouy exemplified the successful teacher, who was determined to demystify the cooking process for the benefit of his readers. However, what he gave he soon took away by claiming that “the pheasant is a mystery of which the key is revealed only to the initiated.” The “bon gourmet” alone had a nose for determining the aroma that signaled the readiness of the pheasant for cooking. With such a warning, even the most intrepid neophyte cooks would have avoided this recipe.41
Readers were no doubt equally frustrated by the absence of adequate instructions for preparing some of De Gouy’s exotic recipes. For starters, how many novice housewives in American cities would have been able to find a possum, rabbits, or a whole pig’s head? Furthermore, once the game was in the kitchen, would they be able to prepare these animals for cooking? In the case of the possum, De Gouy’s instructions called for removing the entrails, head, and tail of the animal, while in another recipe the cook was supposed to pluck, clean, sew, and truss a pheasant, after which she would remove the breastbone “(as you would of a small broiler) without damaging the bird.” However, he provided no explanations for executing these tasks.42

De Gouy was no more helpful in his March 1942 Lenten article. There he provided recipes for an omelette, a soufflé, and a clam pie, thus requiring novice cooks to learn three new processes he had never explained. To be sure, his account of Madame Poularde creating her famous omelette restaurant at St. Michel was charming and also reminded readers of their own travels in Normandy. However, in the instructions for cooking Omelette Mascotte (with artichokes in a white wine sauce), De Gouy advised readers “to prepare the omelet as you ordinarily do.” As for making a roux for scallops à la Poulette (in a white sauce flavored with lemon and parsley), the recipe called for adding “one tablespoon of a thick roux made from butter and flour.” (For the roux to be used in gumbo filé, De Gouy mentioned no ingredients at all.)43

A problem of a different kind arose in connection with instructions for making the Omelette Mascotte. De Gouy referred readers to the recipe for Béchamel sauce, an ingredient in the omelette recipe, published in his November 1941 Gourmet article (p. 48). Four months later, for a cheese and tomato soufflé, he again referred them to the Béchamel recipe. Such a strategy might have been practical for a magazine with an established readership, but in the first two years of Gourmet’s existence, new subscribers were the rule rather than the exception. The fact that there were no reader complaints suggests that few were interested in preparing the soufflé and the rest had other recipes for Bechamel.44

Perhaps De Gouy’s contribution as Gourmet chef would have been more significant if, like his successor, he had been able to focus his efforts on one rather than two articles in each issue of the magazine. As it was, however, Gourmet, no doubt with De Gouy’s concurrence, decided to provide complementary approaches to gourmet dining. “Gastronomie sans argent” encouraged readers to believe that economical recipes, often based on leftovers, were a legitimate part of gourmet dining. Those who preferred recipes based on fresh or
costly ingredients could usually find them in the topical article each month. Unfortunately, De Gouy was careless in categorizing his recipes. Simple, inexpensive recipes sometimes found their way into the topical articles and vice versa. No doubt, the distinction between the two formats came to seem outmoded once the war revived prosperity and Gourmet established its appeal to affluent Americans.

The division between economy and more elegant dishes emerged clearly on a few occasions. In one instance, the topical article prescribed ham recipes, while recipes for ham leftovers appeared in “Gastronomie sans argent.” In another issue, De Gouy adopted the same approach to lamb dishes. On most occasions, however, the two articles were unrelated to each other. All the same, recipes in “Gastronomie sans argent” offered interesting options. Chipped beef creamed with biscuits and meatloaf with mushrooms, for example, could satisfy traditional American tastes, while duck aspic bourgeois was a French makeover with a more cosmopolitan audience in mind.45

However, De Gouy sometimes blurred the distinction between the two formats when he treated the same food item in “Gastronomie sans argent” and topical articles. Even though he twice featured meat pies in “Gastronomie sans argent,” the elegant setting for the 1860 New York City dinner in honor of the Prince of Wales, at which the prince was served steak and kidney pie, apparently justified the placement of meat pie recipes in a topical article as well. On another occasion, De Gouy served up recipes for American pancakes alongside those for blini and crêpes in a topical article, while considering only American-style pancakes in the “Gastronomie sans argent” article. Two articles on smorgasbord, despite the different formats, were very similar in content.46

Louis De Gouy was an adventurer in life and in food. Without question, the themes of the articles and the recipes, especially those for fresh fish and game, transported the Gourmet audience well beyond the repertoire of dishes offered in women’s magazines. And De Gouy’s sprightly style helped to familiarize Gourmet readers with a wide range of approaches to cooking and dining and thus helped them to appreciate French and European culture. Most of his recipes, however, were not suitable for inexperienced cooks. No wonder Charlotte Turgeon found The Gourmet Cookbook, Volume 1, which reproduced many of De Gouy’s recipes, “not a book for daily use in everyone’s kitchen.” It was, she concluded, “a practical reference library for endless good meals.” Nor were the recipes well suited for women, who must have tuned out De Gouy’s macho message whenever they encountered it. Still, he deserves credit for advancing the gourmet cause by modeling for readers the imaginative and adventurous chef who
believed that the preparation and consumption of food was an essential part of the good life.47

**Gourmet’s Second Gourmet Chef: Louis Diat**

In early 1948, Louis Diat succeeded Louis De Gouy to become the second and last *Gourmet* chef. Over the next fourteen years, his recipes, which appeared in 133 articles, had a far greater impact on *Gourmet* readers than those of his predecessor. With the assistance of Helen E. Ridley, he made every effort to teach cooking fundamentals to his readers by identifying the ingredients, giving explicit instructions about how to find, prepare, and cook them, while warning about pitfalls that might arise in the process.

Recognizing that many of his readers knew little about this subject, Diat scrupulously explained the significance of various French dishes to the religious calendar of the Church, regional traditions, and seasonal festivities. He was also able to establish more continuity in his articles from month to month than his predecessor by writing several series based on such themes as “Tricks of My Trade” and “Menu Classique.” During his tenure, and with the return of peace and prosperity, the magazine gradually phased out “Gastronomie sans argent.”

Chosen at age twenty-five to become the first head chef of the New York Ritz Hotel, Louis Diat was present at the hotel’s 1910 opening, one of the seminal events in the early years of the American century. Already, the Ritz had gained a reputation as the last word in elegance. Guest rooms were comfortable and well appointed, while in the kitchens, professional chefs prepared dishes from the repertoire of international cuisine. In effect, the opening of the new hotel, the first Ritz-Carlton in America, was an acknowledgement that Americans were capable of appreciating European elegance.

Despite his age, Diat was already a veteran chef who had apprenticed at fourteen in a well-known patisserie shop, the Maison Calondre in Moulins, and served as soup chef at the Hotel Bristol, among other Paris hotels, and as saucier at the Paris Ritz. From there he moved to the London Ritz, where he labored for four more years as saucier under the watchful eye of Escoffier. In the tradition of Ritz chefs, Diat not only was a master of classical French cooking but added to his repertoire dishes often requested by his Anglo-Saxon patrons. He could prepare such American specialties as clam chowder, chicken pie, and lobster Newburg; indeed, he wrote proudly that an American diner taught him how to make clam chowder. From his days in England, Diat knew how to prepare steak and kidney pie. His flexibility endeared him to patrons, who remained
his supporters during a forty-one-year tenure at the Ritz. By applying for citizenship shortly after his arrival in the United States, Diat also expressed his commitment to the American way of life.48

Three decades after the opening of the Ritz, just as the first issue of Gourmet was going to press, Diat made his publishing debut with *Cooking à la Ritz* (1941). In view of the American entry into World War II several months later, his timing was poor. However, within six months of the end of the war, *Louis Diat’s Home Cookbook: French Cooking for Americans: La Cuisine de Ma Mère* (1946) appeared. By then the eager editors of Gourmet, no doubt dubious about De Gouy’s value to the magazine, had already published the two introductory chapters and the
conclusion. Impressed by the fact that Diat addressed his cookbook to American housewives who knew little or nothing about French cooking, they must have had him in mind as a successor to De Gouy.49

From March 1948 until his death in October 1957, Diat wrote an article in almost every issue of *Gourmet*. In addition, there was enough material left in his notebooks for Helen Ridley to supply the magazine with numerous articles during the next four years. Diat also collected and revised articles from the magazine to publish his short book on sauces in 1951, while, a decade later, Ridley pulled together those and other recipes from *Gourmet* to produce a comprehensive cookbook under the magazine’s imprint entitled *Gourmet’s Basic French Cookbook*.

The effectiveness of the articles and books owes much to the remarkable collaboration between Ridley and Diat. Ridley earned a B.S. in home economics at Columbia University and taught home economics and adult evening classes on homemaking in the New York City school system for seven years, as well as organic chemistry at Hunter College; she also wrote several articles on nutritional topics for *Hygeia* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. In view of her experience, the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency hired her in 1940 to publicize some of their food accounts, while, on the side, Ridley worked with Diat and at least one other author as a ghostwriter.50

In order to serve Diat well, Helen Ridley sought to learn the gourmet approach to dining and downplay her earlier training as a nutritionist. Between 1941 and 1961, she accomplished this task, as is evident in the gradual transformation in her perspective. Ridley’s own publications indicate this shift. In 1950, she wrote an article for *Good Housekeeping* on how to cook game—a far cry from her first article in the same magazine in 1938 entitled “The ABC of Keeping Cool” in summer.

The transformation was also evident in Ridley’s work for Diat. In 1941, she arranged the recipes for *Cooking à la Ritz*, although it is not clear who translated the manuscript. For *Louis Diat’s Home Cook Book*, Diat asked Ridley to translate and rewrite his recipes so as to make them accessible to the American housewife. To do this effectively, Ridley had to deepen her understanding of French cooking. As Diat’s apprentice, she not only watched the cooking process at the Ritz but took lessons from him in her home. They also worked together at his desk so that she would understand “the lore of French cuisine,” an important step in producing an effective English translation of the recipes. Accordingly, while the book was dedicated to his mother, Diat acknowledged “my sincerest appreciation to Helen Ridley, who in translating my thoughts, has accurately conveyed the significance of this book.”51
Ridley’s contribution to Diat’s third book, *Sauces French and Famous*, must have been significant, because he invited her to write a brief foreword. Three years later, Diat orchestrated Ridley’s first trip to France, where she met his brother, Lucien, chef at the Plaza-Athenée in Paris, and traveled to the Bourbonnais to dine with the Diats’ sister on potato pie, which Ridley herself had learned to make from one of Louis Diat’s recipes. As it turned out, he was traveling to the same places at the same time as Ridley. Following Diat’s death, his widow gave Ridley access to the chef’s notebooks, which enabled her to collect and edit the recipes for *Gourmet’s Basic French Cookbook*. Later Ridley assumed the role of author for *The Ritz-Carlton Cook Book and Guide to Home Entertaining* (1968) with the assistance of Charles Banino, chef of the Boston Ritz.52

One of the hallmarks of Diat’s approach was to introduce each article with an account of his own experience with the cooking processes and recipes he was explaining to readers. He first tested this approach with a brief personal note in the introduction to *Cooking à la Ritz* and then expanded it in his later books and articles. In creating this informal identity, Diat, most likely in conjunction with Ridley, sought to convince readers of the authenticity of the recipes and their accessibility to inexperienced cooks.

To accomplish these sometimes conflicting goals, Diat walked a narrow line. He must have realized that the title of his first book, *Cooking à la Ritz*, had been off-putting to many novice cooks. In order to convey his message more clearly, he entitled the second book *Louis Diat’s Home Cook Book*. In it, he adopted the posture he would maintain in the articles and books he wrote for *Gourmet*. To reassure housewives, he shed his Ritz-Carlton chef’s hat and presented himself as the eager disciple of his “smiling, friendly mother” dressed in “her white blouse and black skirt” in the modest kitchen of their Bourbonnais home. It was a sunny room, with a shiny stone floor and a big black stove. There she “guided the early years” and “inspired the later ones.” She loved fine food and turned her children “into little gourmets” by teaching them how to “taste with discrimination” and how to cook. Her memory accordingly inspired Diat in all his kitchen work. As he told his readers, “I like to roast chicken the way my mother did.”53

An important lesson of his childhood, which he applied in writing many of his *Gourmet* articles, was that gourmet dining did not require the expensive cuts of meat and rich sauces that were commonly served at the Ritz; rather, the true glory of French cooking lay in the basic dishes prepared by French provincial cooks. Together with Ridley, Diat therefore deemphasized *haute cuisine* recipes requiring excessive kitchen work and expense in favor of tasty dishes for everyday meals. To reassure his largely novice, feminine audience, Diat identified
himself with his mother’s kitchen and the simple dishes she cooked for her family. Through his cookbooks and articles, Diat’s readers, in effect, would become apprentices to his modest, small-town French mother, whose cooking instructions enabled her eight-year-old son to make an excellent leek and potato soup.54

Diat empowered readers by insisting that clear instructions were far more important than genetic makeup in the development of a good cook. As an illustration of this principle, he aimed his instructions at the inexperienced housewife rather than the professional chef in order to teach her how to make French sauces. And he rejoiced that learning to make these sauces in the quiet of the home kitchen would be much easier than working in the pressured environment of a restaurant kitchen. Indeed, he recalled preparing a venison marinade at a New Year’s Eve party for American friends. When the hostess followed suit the next day, her husband judged the new marinade to be better than Diat’s, “which only goes to show you how quickly a housewife can master the tricks of my trade—if she really wants to.” Given this approach, it was quite natural for Diat to question Brillat-Savarin’s dictum that cooks could learn their métier, while roasters were born to theirs. With good instruction and sufficient practice, he claimed, anyone could learn to roast.55

At every turn, Diat strove to minimize American assumptions about the mystery of French cuisine and to suggest ways of avoiding potential problems. He continually emphasized the accessibility of recipes, even for French dishes that Americans regarded as exotic, like sauces and soufflés. The former offered “no more problems than cooking most other foods” and would likely yield more pleasure. As for dessert sauces, they were no more difficult to make than those for entrees so long as the cook learned the basic sauces from which specialized sauces could be prepared with only slight variations in the ingredients.56

Before presenting advice on how to make soufflés, Diat reassured housewives that these recipes were not part of the haute cuisine repertoire, nor did they require expensive ingredients. In fact, his readers could prepare entrée soufflés from four eggs, Béchamel sauce (butter, flour, milk), and a purée made of leftovers. And so long as the hostess made sure that her guests were occupied with drinks and hors d’oeuvres, she could make a first-course soufflé in the kitchen and call the guests to table just as she removed it from the oven. Diat advised, however, that dessert soufflés, which required monitoring during the meal, would be difficult to serve at dinner parties.57

Where problems were likely to occur, Diat also put housewives on notice in advance. In the case of mayonnaise, for example, the mixture could separate and become a “curdled mass instead of emulsion,” when the cook added oil to the egg
yolks. No doubt, Diat deliberately recounted his own experience of such a disaster, which occurred in front of his mother, to reassure his audience that such mistakes could happen to anyone, even one of the world’s renowned chefs. Accordingly, his readers need not be discouraged by their own mistakes.58

Consistent with the approach of French home cooks like his mother, Diat advocated the adoption of a peasant mentality in his American readers. So that no food would go to waste, they should use leftovers for hors d’oeuvres and entrées. For the latter, Diat proposed eating meat leftovers with a sauce or grinding the meat to make a hash; cooks could also prepare a delicious, inexpensive meal from organ meats. The savings from these cost-cutting measures would then pay for more butter and cream, the staples of French cooking. In this way, his readers could eat well without dining “in the sophisticated elegance of the Ritz or Maxim’s on caviar and dinde truffée” (truffled turkey).59

All the same, too much emphasis on the simplicity and femininity of Diat’s background would have been counterproductive, since Gourmet readers expected their cooking instruction to come from an expert. To meet this expectation, Diat reminded his readers of the training he had received at prestigious hotel restaurants and the demanding clientele that he had satisfied over the years. Already as a young man at the Maison Calondre, he had prepared lavish hors d’oeuvres for the haut monde in the Loire Valley. Later, during a stint at the Bristol Hotel in Paris, Diat had served ris de veau financière (sweetbreads with truffles and ox tongue) to King Leopold II of Belgium and the future British king, Edward VII, famous for his sophisticated palate. At the same hotel, he had prepared a braised leg of lamb falling off the bone for King Carlos of Portugal.60

And, of course, Diat was immensely proud of his ascendancy to the head chef’s position at the Ritz and his achievements during a long tenure there. Nostalgically, he recalled such memorable events as the elaborate menu prepared for the opening of the hotel in 1910. Serving fifteen courses, each of which had to meet high standards, required a heroic effort on the part of the chefs; the diners, for their part, marshaled their appetites for a heroic effort of a different kind. Diat also spoke with pride of the approval he had received on several occasions from members of gourmet dining groups. Among them, André Simon extended his compliments for a spring lamb dinner served with seasonal dishes such as wild strawberries, while members of the Tastevin praised the Ritz dinner of May 3, 1948. (Even so, Diat confirmed Lucius Beebe’s report that he suffered considerable anxiety on that occasion.)61

On many occasions, however, the head chef of one of the world’s great hotels and the apprentice son of a Bourbonnais home cook dissolved into a single
person. As Diat often insisted, the processes he learned from his mother were the foundation for all French cooking. He could use them to produce simple, delicious dishes for the family or, with some elaboration, the complicated fare of haute cuisine. Hence, while Diat’s guests might have occupied the higher ranks of society, he could often prepare the food they enjoyed in a straightforward manner. Indeed, he braised the leg of lamb for King Carlos and roasted the chicken for Lord Beaverbrook precisely as his mother prepared them at home. Hachi Bourbonnais (Bourbonnais hash), a popular dish on the Ritz menu, was nothing more than ground, leftover pot au feu, which he had often eaten at home, while the Ritz’s baked puddings were part of his mother’s repertoire. Even the renowned crème vichyssoise, Diat’s most famous creation, was a cold version of the leek and potato soup he had learned to cook from his mother as a small boy.\(^{62}\)

It took Diat, aided by Helen Ridley, a number of years before he came to emphasize the teaching of kitchen fundamentals as the key to enabling American housewives to cook French dishes. In his first two cookbooks, there was very little attention to such techniques. Only after Gourmet hired him and more especially in the series entitled “Classes in Classic Cuisine,” launched in January of 1955 and continuing until September of 1957, did Diat explain in detail the important processes in French cooking. By then, he had developed not only a warm, semi-feminine persona to put housewives at ease, but a pedagogical strategy designed specifically to impart the skills necessary to cook French recipes. Diat’s great strength was to look at the teaching process from the point of view of the student. He lamented that cookbook writers and chef-instructors often took it for granted that “all readers know as much about this type of cooking as dedicated, experienced gourmet cooks.” To make this assumption was itself a recipe for failure.\(^{63}\)

Thus, Diat began the series on “Classic Cuisine” with the following suggestion to his audience: “You will be the apprentice and I the chef.” He advised that, while reading the articles in this series, the readers should feel as if they were actually watching him work. However, he recognized that this advice would only be helpful if he, Diat, could put himself in their shoes. Happily, he remembered how M. Calondre, pastry chef at the Maison Calondre, had taught him and six other apprentices pastry-making techniques in a large room he called a “laboratory.” Having saved the notes he had taken during this period, Diat consulted them in order to recall the techniques he had learned. Apparently, this exercise was not successful because, several months later, Diat borrowed a kitchen from an American friend, equipped with all the utensils he needed, including an
electric beater. Next, he tried out various techniques as a way of recalling them. Then, “I knew that I could pass on to you my pupils, all the tricks . . . that mean success or failure in classic pastry making.”

Diat had a keen sense of the appropriate starting point for a series of lessons on French cooking. He would first teach the most basic techniques, those for making soups and sauces as he had learned them. And before even laying out the techniques for making soup, he remarked in the prefatory section of the soup chapter of the Gourmet’s Basic French Cook Book, “As you learn to master these easy soups, you will be practicing many cooking skills and techniques that are used in other, more complicated cooking methods.”

However, it would first be necessary to learn how to make stocks, the foundation for both soups and sauces. Once his readers had mastered these techniques (“the hows and whys of the roux, the reduction, the finishing and so on”), they could apply them to making new soups and sauces with different ingredients. In the sauce category, home cooks should first learn the most basic white sauces, which would stand them in good stead as they studied the preparation of meat, poultry, and fish with which the sauces were often served. There would be no point, for example, in learning how to cook game without first having learned to make game marinades and sauces.

The meat, poultry, and fish section of Gourmet’s Basic French Cookbook, drawn from appropriate Gourmet articles, Diat entitled “Methods of Cooking.” Instead of breaking this chapter down by types of meat (beef, pork, lamb, etc.), he explored braising, boiling, broiling, roasting, sautéing, and deep frying, six different ways of cooking animal flesh. In each section of the chapter he offered general instructions on a particular cooking method, followed by specific information for the preparation of particular dishes, including the kind and size of pan to be used, the liquid in which the flesh would be cooked, the proper heat to be applied, and the length of cooking time. The advantage of Diat’s method of organization—quite similar to Escoffier’s in the Guide Culinaire—was that once the cook had mastered the cooking process for a beef dish, she could apply it to pork, fish, or other meats with certain modifications. Following the meat, fish, and foul section, Diat moved on to other protein cooking (shellfish and game) and then to vegetables and desserts.

After introducing readers to these kitchen fundamentals, Diat also emphasized the importance of practicing the steps in each process. In so doing, he drew once again on his experience as an apprentice, which forced him to master the techniques he learned through repetition until they were at his “finger tips.” He reiterated the same point in discussing methods to make crêpes: “it takes
practice to make good crêpes, but . . . once you master the technique you will not find it at all difficult.\textsuperscript{68}

In some detail, Diat addressed such mundane, but important, topics as selecting the proper cooking equipment, the best ingredients, and appropriate dishes for a menu. To ignore these topics, as some cookbook writers did, would discourage the neophyte cook. And since the most basic food was soup, he insisted on the purchase of a large (6 quart) soup kettle; to prepare the ingredients for the soup, the cook would also need a thick cutting board and good paring knives. Because the \textit{sauteuse} (frying pan) was still essential for frying meats and vegetables, he regretted that Americans were thoughtlessly throwing them away. In addition, he urged pastry makers to acquire a variety of heavy baking pans appropriate for their tasks, while recommending the electric beater to speed up the mixing process.\textsuperscript{69}

One of Diat’s constant refrains was to insist on choosing the best ingredients for any given recipe. Among other things, he would brook no substitute for butter; however, he recommended onions if leeks were not available. He also strongly advised hostesses to purchase fish in season and to check its freshness. Although Diat was quite impressed that out-of-season fruits and vegetables could be shipped long distances and were thus available year around, he doubted they could match the quality of seasonal produce raised locally. To ensure a source of fresh vegetables, whose potential for improving the taste and texture of their meals Americans rarely exploited, Diat found a retired French chef to grow what he needed near New York.\textsuperscript{70}

On a related matter, Diat regretted the American custom of serving vegetables with the meat course, which diminished their culinary value within the larger menu. At the same time, by encouraging the consumption of wild mushrooms and greens, properly cooked and sauced, he hoped to exploit the increasing variety of vegetables to improve the American diet. On that subject, Diat, remembering Brillat-Savarin’s prophesy to this effect, yearned to show his predecessor the splendid array of vegetables that were now available in Les Halles.\textsuperscript{71}

To guide hostesses in choosing ingredients for a dinner, Diat offered advice in the series entitled “Menu Classique.” First and foremost was to give priority to such seasonal items as oysters, partridge, and Brussels sprouts for a fall meal and lamb, shad/roe, asparagus, and sorrel in the spring. In addition, the hostess should seek a balance in the selection of menu items. It would be wrong, for example, to follow heavy hors d’oeuvres with a heavy soup or to repeat the same sauce for two dishes in the same meal. He also recommended that the meal planner select courses for the menu that would both contrast and harmonize with each other in taste and texture.\textsuperscript{72}
To facilitate the task of the home cook, Diat simplified some cooking processes. Instead of having cooks weigh ingredients for pastry dough, as was common in France, he urged them to measure the ingredients by volume as was the practice in the American system. The change would enable American cooks to do without a kitchen scale. He also eliminated the use of potato and rice flour, often added to wheat flour in France, to simplify the preparation of pastry dough.73

In order to fully grasp the similarities and differences between Diat’s and De Gouy’s approaches to writing recipes, it is useful to conclude with a comparison of their bouillabaisse recipes. De Gouy devoted his topical article in the March 1942 issue of *Gourmet* to “La Bouillabaisse.” In March 1948 Louis Diat launched his career as *Gourmet* chef with a “Bouillabaisse Ballet.” The articles, virtually identical in format, each devoted about five columns to presenting five different recipes for bouillabaisse, including one for the Marseillaise variety. De Gouy’s version ran thirty-five lines, while Diat’s was shorter by two lines.74

Applying the criteria that I previously identified for judging the adequacy of these recipes as instructions to inexperienced cooks, it is notable that neither chef explained how to clean and dress the fish. In fact, De Gouy ignored this subject altogether, while Diat suggested that the cook might ask the fish dealer to take care of this matter.

Far more significant was the treatment of ingredients in the two recipes. De Gouy insisted on an exact duplication of the fish used in Marseilles, such as gurnard, turbot, conger eel, and John Dory, most or all of which were unavailable to Americans. Even experienced American cooks would not have been able to cook this version of the dish. By contrast, Diat, settling for an approximation of the “real thing,” recommended red snapper, cod, and perch as substitutes for the Marseilles fish.

By specifying the number and size of the onions and leeks that would be incorporated in the dish, Diat provided a rough quantitative measure of these two items. De Gouy, instead, listed the quantities of these two ingredients in ounces, a more accurate way to measure, but one that would have required a kitchen scale.

As for the cooking itself, Diat gave several helpful pointers that were absent from De Gouy’s recipe. He instructed readers to include in the soup the lobster shell with the meat, to place the lobster and fish on top of the other ingredients in the pot, and to cook the soup at a rolling boil in order to form an emulsion between the olive oil and the fish stock. De Gouy provided only for boiling the ingredients. Both recipes called for serving the soup on slices of bread, but Diat specified that they be one-fourth of an inch thick.
Equally revealing were the introductions to the recipes. De Gouy devoted almost all of his five columns to recounting the charming myth of the origins of the soup. According to this story, bouillabaisse was the gift of the Sea God to two fishermen in recompense for their suffering at the hands of playful sea sprites who roughened the waters and drove them out to sea. For his part, Diat passed rapidly over the origins of bouillabaisse to establish its place in French cooking as a regional, rather than a national, dish. He noted that the ingredients changed from town to town according to the fish that were available, thus demonstrating that there were many local versions of bouillabaisse, which, in turn, justified substituting local fish when Americans prepared the soup in their homes. What was good for the goose was good for the gander. “With all of the fine fish and shellfish available in this country, isn’t it a little ridiculous to say we can’t make good bouillabaisse?” He added that many “homesick Frenchmen” enjoyed the soup that he cooked from the same recipe he was providing to *Gourmet* readers. Once again, Diat empowered his readers—this time to modify the original bouillabaisse from Marseilles, while insisting that they were making an authentic and tasty fish soup.75

In all likelihood, few upper-middle-class American women, the primary target of books and articles presenting gourmet recipes, actually learned to cook these dishes from either Diat or De Gouy. The obstacles to doing so, as is already evident, were serious. Not until 1948 did the magazine have a *Gourmet* chef whose recipes would have been accessible to the novice housewife. No doubt, readers of *Gourmet* who were interested in learning French cuisine fared much better with Diat than De Gouy. Unfortunately, I can give only circumstantial evidence for the claim that relatively few readers cooked from the *Gourmet* chefs’ recipes. Certainly, the enthusiasm that greeted Julia Child’s *French Chef* in 1963 and the rapid expansion of her book sales after she launched the program suggest that previous efforts to explain French recipes to Americans had, at best, modest success. No doubt, live cooking lessons, when clearly presented, are more helpful to an audience of would-be cooks than reading recipes from a book.76

The failure to convert readers into cooks, however, does not mean that the publication of French recipes in cookbooks and *Gourmet* magazine articles was an exercise in futility. The fact that many subscribers read these recipes and the accompanying cultural commentary is an important event in its own right that raised readers’ consciousness of French cuisine as part of a noble cultural enterprise. Learning about this culture would prepare readers to participate in the
good life through travel to France and/or to French restaurants in America’s large cities. Their new knowledge and more worldly orientation, in turn, cemented their claims to social advancement.

It is important to note that the two French cookbooks that would have been most helpful to novice American housewives were both the products of collaboration between their authors, Joseph Donon and Louis Diat, and American food writers, who were women. These successes suggest that, in most cases, American cookbook authors needed help from expert French chefs to obtain a full understanding of French techniques and recipes, while the latter depended on American collaborators to rewrite these recipes and techniques in a form more accessible to an American audience. Even for chefs Diat and Donon, who were accomplished professionals and had lived for more than forty years in America, the reformulating of their recipes was a prerequisite for success. Especially noteworthy was the collaboration of Ridley and Diat in devising a strategy for reaching American women by presenting the master chef as the humble and fortunate heir to his mother’s cooking. In addition, it is probable that editors Bakalar and Chamberlain helped Donon to lay out the basic processes of French cooking in a clear and logical fashion.

As will become evident, the successful collaborations between Diat and Ridley and among Donon, Chamberlain, and Bakalar created a model for transcending the cultural divide between France and America. These collaborations bridged not only the language gap but also the differences between the French culinary tradition and American foodways. In this sense, they provided a trial run for Julia Child’s collaborative cookbook.

While the presentation of recipes was an attractive feature of *Gourmet*, the broad and inclusive approach of the magazine was its greatest asset in expanding circulation during the 1940s and 1950s. The magazine’s readers could enlist in the gourmet movement from their armchairs, through their taste buds, as travelers, or, less frequently, as cooks, depending on their personal inclinations. By 1961, they could express their identities as gourmets by cooking or dining on not only French but increasingly American, Italian, and even British cuisine. All the same, the publisher and the staff, as well as most subscribers, understood that French cuisine was the standard by which gastronomers measured fine dining.

Although *Gourmet* built on the success of the dining societies, it offered a much wider array of options for Americans to help them assimilate elements of French culture and cuisine. The latter depended heavily on dinner and wine committees to educate their members. However, since the societies held their dinners from one to nine times a year, the exposure of society members was at
best occasional and ephemeral. The magazine, by contrast, enabled interested subscribers to maintain a small reference library, which they could consult at any time. Even armchair gourmets, who read the monthly articles by the Gourmet chef, could develop an understanding of what it meant to dine in the French manner. Reading travelogues and descriptions of dinners and the settings for these occasions further enhanced their understanding of French culinary ways. Even so, the printed word could never convey the flavor and texture of French dishes and wines or the ambiance in which they were served as well as a gourmet society dinner.

The easiest route from the armchair to a gourmet dining experience was through Gourmet’s restaurant reviews, which familiarized readers with French restaurants in New York, in other regions of America, and abroad. Reviewers sought to persuade diners to try out the better restaurants. It was far easier, however, for readers who lived in or close to New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco to take this journey than those from small-town and rural America.

Travel writers, in turn, sought to convert their readers into travelers or, for those who had already been to France, to rekindle the travel bug through their articles in the magazine. There is no reason, however, to assume that all readers opted for the adventurous automobile tours that Chamberlain pioneered. Those who were hesitant about speaking a foreign language or inexperienced in overseas travel must have preferred a package tour or a trip along the beaten path. Many of these trips offered opportunities to experience different types of French restaurants on French soil and to put the dining experience into a larger context. In visits to local farms and vineyards and town and city markets, travelers witnessed firsthand the way the French produced and distributed the ingredients for their dinners. And they were able to try out artisanal food at local patisseries and charcuteries, while contrasting small regional restaurants and Parisian haute cuisine. With sufficient time and language skills, travelers also learned much about French daily life.

With the advent of jet travel, shorter trips, and cheaper fares, more Gourmet readers could afford to visit France. However, many of them returned to the United States with relatively little exposure to French cuisine. In two or three weeks, it was difficult for Americans to adopt the leisurely approach that Chamberlain recommended and, thus, to observe and interact with their hosts.

By mastering cooking processes and the manipulation of kitchen tools, as well as the vocabulary of French cuisine, Americans found another way to access the cuisine and the culture of France. Of course, the learning curve for mastering kitchen techniques varied with particular recipes, but it was especially
daunting to the many *Gourmet* readers who possessed relatively weak kitchen skills. Those who persisted, however, acquired a “language” with which they could penetrate French culinary culture and better understand the high value Frenchmen put on the preparation and consumption of food. Ironically, the acquisition of this skill did not guarantee a full understanding of the dining culture or French daily life, unless it included a lengthy stay in France.

In its first two decades, *Gourmet* magazine transformed the gourmet dining scene in America. Building on the work of the gourmet dining societies, the magazine became a vehicle for spreading the word about fine dining beyond that small group to a largely upper-middle-class public of close to two hundred thousand readers. For liquor dealers, chefs, restaurant owners, travel agents, and hotel managers, *Gourmet* became a medium of communication that targeted their goods and services to a large, receptive audience and, in the process, helped to expand their businesses. At the same time, *Gourmet* readers not only became consumers of these goods and services but also embraced with varying degrees of enthusiasm the moral, aesthetic, and social agenda that the magazine advanced.