



# The Judicial Palate

By Susan E. Poppiti, Esquire



## Valentine's Day B & B

**D**espite the title, this edition does not contain bed and breakfast recommendations for Valentine's Day. Rather, it encourages you to celebrate Valentine's Day 2013 by honoring the culinary legend, Julia Child. Let me explain. Julia and her husband Paul Child lived a wonderful love story. They cooked together, traveled together, and worked together during their almost fifty year marriage. They even sent out Valentine's Day cards every year like other people send out Christmas cards or New Year's letters. Knowing his wife would appreciate the food imagery, Paul told Julia, "You are the butter to my bread."

To read a full account of the Childs' years together, I recommend reading *My Life in France*, a memoir written by Julia herself and her great-nephew, Alex Prud'homme. This novel tells the story of the Childs' move to France in connection with Paul's position with the U.S. Information Service, Julia's time at the Cordon Bleu, her discovery of her love of cooking and her writing of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. The memoir contains entertaining stories of dinner parties the couple hosted and ways in which Paul helped Julia experiment with recipes.

So, this Valentine's Day, follow Julia and Paul's example and make something with your butter to your bread with butter and bread. Yes, all of the below dishes feature butter and bread as key ingredients. Hopefully, some of you readers are baking your own bread based on my suggestions in prior editions as well as using French or Irish butter.

For breakfast, make a French Toast with brioche, a French bread made rich by significant amounts of eggs and butter. You will need one or two slices per person,

depending on how hungry you and your Valentine are. I cut the slices about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick, and to prevent the French Toast from becoming mushy, I use bread that is two days old or toast the slices prior to making the recipe. You will also need one egg per slice, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup milk, cinnamon, vanilla extract, and butter.

In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs with the milk. Mix in a few sprinkles of cinnamon and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of vanilla extract. Add several tablespoons of butter to a large non-stick frying pan on medium heat. When the butter melts, dip each piece of brioche into the egg mixture and place in the pan. Fry the brioche until both sides are golden brown. I suggest serving the toast with real maple syrup or honey and then top with slivered almonds and fresh berries.

For lunch, make a Croque Monsieur or a Croque Madame. You will need four slices of bread that have been lightly toasted and have the crust removed (the bread should be strong enough to hold up against the cheese and sauce), several tablespoons of butter, two tablespoons of flour, one cup of hot milk, sea salt, and fresh ground pepper. You will also need three ounces of Gruyère sliced thin, three ounces of grated Gruyère, and six ounces of ham sliced thin. For the ham, you can use Black Forest, Virginia baked, or even prosciutto. The traditional recipe also calls for a pinch of nutmeg to complement the nutty flavor of the cheese.

Preheat the broiler. Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium low heat and add the flour and stir for one minute. Then slowly whisk in the milk until the sauce thickens. Season with salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg and remove from the heat. Top two slices of the bread with the ham and sliced Gruyère. Then top the

sandwiches with the others slices of bread. Place a non-stick pan over medium heat and melt two tablespoons of butter. Place the sandwiches in the pan and cook on both sides until the bread is golden brown. Then place the sandwiches on a baking sheet and spoon on the sauce and grated Gruyère. Place the baking sheet under the broiler, but not too close, for about three to five minutes until the cheese browns. For a female Valentine, consider making a Croque Madame. The only difference between the two Croques is that the Madame is topped with a fried egg and is, therefore, even richer than her male counterpart.

For a dinner appetizer, make escargots. I buy the Roland cans of escargots which contain the perfect number of snails to serve two. You will also need scallions or a shallot, several cloves of garlic, butter, parsley, sea salt, and fresh ground pepper to taste.

Melt several tablespoons of butter in a sauté pan over low heat. Chop three scallions and several cloves of garlic. Rather than scallions, you can use a shallot for the onion flavor. Sauté the garlic and scallions or shallot in the butter for about three minutes. Add the escargots after draining the liquid and cook on medium-low heat until they are heated through, stirring to coat the escargots with butter. This should only take about five minutes. While the snails are cooking in the butter, toast two slices of bread—brioche would make an excellent choice to give the dish a hint of sweetness. Spoon the escargots over the bread and top with some chopped fresh parsley.

I wonder how Julia responded to Paul's sweetness. Please e-mail your ideas to me at [spoppiti@hotmail.com](mailto:spoppiti@hotmail.com). The best response will receive a prize—a copy of *My Life in France* and a can of escargots. ☺