

One down, 523 to go: Julie (Amy Adams) embarks on an epicurean epic in *Julie & Julia*



YAY FOR food porn!

FOODIES rejoice – we’re counting down to the launch of *Julie & Julia*, the new Nora Ephron movie. Based on a true story, the film ties together the stories of two women living separate lives in separate times: in the late 40s, Julia Child (Meryl Streep) is an American in Paris who, after attending the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu culinary arts school, goes on to become one of the most celebrated chefs

of her time; fast forward to 2002, and the disenchanted Julie Powell (Amy Adams) sets herself the task of cooking every recipe in Child’s renowned cookbook *Mastering The Art Of French Cooking*. She has one year in which to do it, and blogs about her experiences.

In the lead-up to the launch, *Grazia* talks to five inspiring women who have turned their passion for produce into incredible culinary careers.



Meryl Streep plays legendary cook Julia Child



Tammie (left) and Jodie sell 'good, clean food made with love'

ABOUT LIFE

I HAVE a second spoonful of decadent lemon slice halfway to my mouth. It’s like my grandma used to bake, topped with old Mrs Jurd’s lemon butter (but this one is gluten free). I slide the spoon into my mouth as Jodie Stewart appears. She’s the one responsible for this taste trip down memory lane, and one half of the About Life ownership team. Her sister, Tammie Phillips, is the other. They set up business in Sydney’s inner west 15 years ago.

“We don’t subscribe to low fat, or a diet of birdseed!” says Jodie, as I finish my mouthful and manage to mumble a question. “Just natural products – no artificial additives, good clean food made with love, and organic produce picked ripe, with its nutrition intact.”

About Life is a special store; people talk about it. One can source a particular oil or new-season organic vegetables as well as stocking up on necessities for macrobiotic menus or special dietary requirements. It’s a kind of gourmet grocer with a “food as medicine” bent. There’s a real emphasis on back to basics.

“There’s definitely a return to the style of cooking nanna used to do: pies, puddings. The Slow Food movement has a lot to do with it,” says Jodie.

The shop moved to the current premises in Rozelle five years ago and the operation now includes the store, naturopath, cafe and catering arm. This year, About Life opened at Bondi Junction. “We’re now a chain,” laughs Jodie. And there are plans and dreams for more stores in the future. With cookery classes; free nutrition evenings; great café fare; handy pre-packed snacks; an ever-changing selection of organic fruit and vegies; and groceries sourced from caring boutique suppliers, we say yes please! www.aboutlife.com.au ▶



Melinda's passion for food is 'a love affair'

PEDLAR

WE MEET Melinda on her home turf – a cute inner-city laneway with a green wall, cool graffiti and a set of old ornate doors – in Sydney's Surry Hills. Melinda Dimitriades runs online service Pedlar – Farmgate To Plate. Just mark what you want – Mary's farm eggs, Murringo lamb – from the weekly email product list and it will be delivered to your door. Pedlar also has a presence at inner-city markets, where Melinda describes herself as a hawker; she's almost evangelistic in her enthusiasm for beautiful produce. "I got into food accidentally," she says. "I left home young and got work in cafes and thought, 'I'll try to be as good at this as possible.'" All the

while she read incessantly. "My critical mind was very interested in technique and chemistry – an obsessive studying of recipe books." This morphed into a wider interest in food and provenance, the history and symbolism of ingredients. "It's about having an obsession with food and flavours," she says. "We live a lot of our emotional life through cooking. It's practically a love affair! And it's a way of life." Pedlar considers where things come from and how animals have been treated, focusing on a handful of specialty producers. With each email comes an idiosyncratic poetic rave about what's available, and great, rustic recipes. Read, salivate, order, cook. *Sign up at pedlar@optusnet.com.au*



Nicole (left) and Sophie with Cookes Food's rustic fare

COOKES FOOD

AS FATE would have it, Sophie Cookes became a chef. Add former fashion merchandiser and events manager Nicole De Bono to the mix and it's a recipe for success. The twentysomethings joined forces last year to launch Cookes Food – a boutique catering business in Toorak, Melbourne that also offers cooking classes, private dining, culinary newsletters, and a delivery service. The foodies recently opened a cafe serving seasonal dishes, and food store stocked with gourmet goods such as homemade preserves. The space is filled with vintage scales, wine barrels and an old-fashioned cash register; a slice of country, smack bang in the city. A weathered timber counter displays freshly baked mushroom tarts with gorgonzola and rhubarb pie with double cream. No fat-free labels here. Cookes Food supports sustainable farming, sourcing everything locally. "Dealing with smaller suppliers ensures exceptional quality and gives us a better understanding of the food's journey from farm-gate to plate," says Sophie, who studied in Paris and trained under the likes of Maggie Beer. "The atmosphere is homely, but there's no hassle of shopping, preparing or cleaning," Nicole says of the private dining experience, as Sophie serves up a hearty ploughman's lunch. Dig in. www.cookesfood.com.au ■

Food blogs

- More delicious food for thought:** blogs.salon.com/0001399 The blog that inspired *Julie & Julia*, the book and movie. 365 days. 524 recipes. One woman cooks her way through Julia Child's cookbook.
- www.mytartelette.com Suspiciously skinny ex-pastry chef does delicious dessert.
- chocolateandzucchini.com Parisian blog of recipes, restaurants, ingredients and food ideas.
- www.thejewelsofny.com Charming seasonal recipes and photographs by New York design and food styling duo.
- 101cookbooks.com Heavenly wholefoods.
- www.thekitchn.com Inspiring kitchen tours.
- backyardfarmer.com.au Aussie hints on growing organic backyard vegie patches and produce.

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