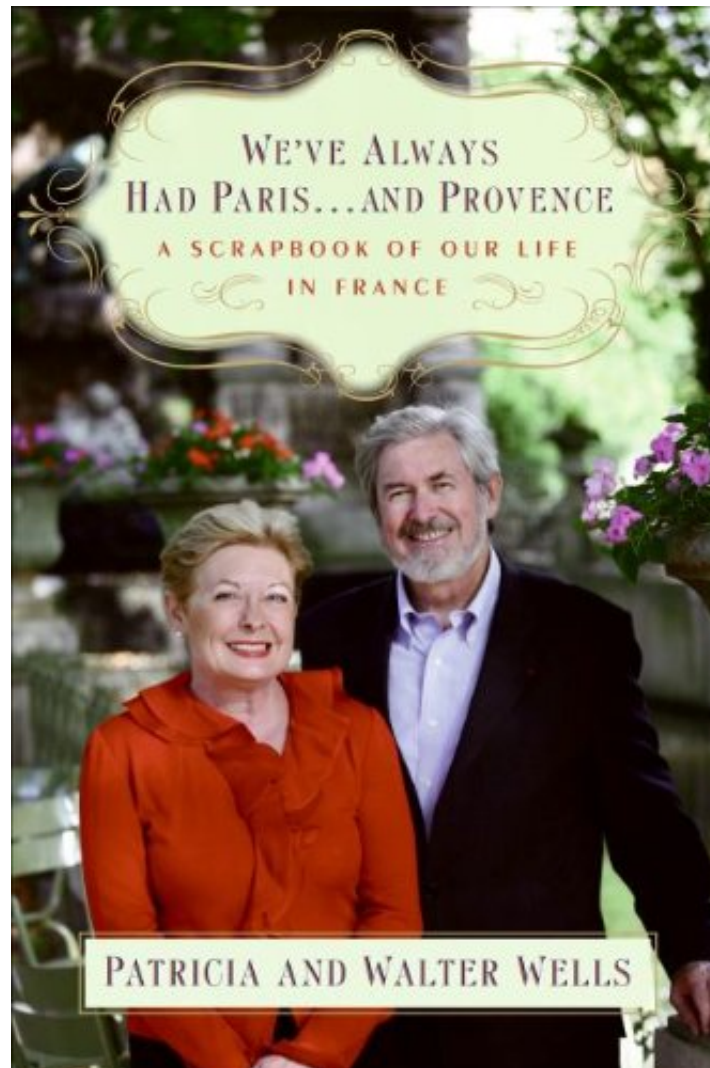


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We've Always Had Paris...and Provence: A Scrapbook of Our Life in France

by
Patricia Wells



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Synopsis

Patricia Wells, long recognized as the leading American authority on French food, and her husband, Walter, live the life in France that many of us have often fantasized about. After more than a quarter century, they are as close to being accepted as "French" as any non-natives can be. In this delightful memoir they share in two voices their experiences—the good, the bad, and the funny—offering a charming and evocative account of their beloved home and some of the wonderful people they have met along the way. Full of the flavor and color of the couple's adopted country, this tandem memoir reflects on the life that France has made possible for them and explores how living abroad has shaped their relationship. Written in lyrical, sensuous prose and filled with anecdotes, insights, and endearing snapshots of Walter and Patricia over the years, *We've Always Had Paris . . . and Provence* beautifully conveys the nuances of the French and their culture as only a practiced observer can. Literally a moveable feast to be savored and shared, including more than thirty recipes that will delight readers and cooks alike, the couple's valentine to France and to each other is delicious in every way.

Sort review

"Guaranteed to turn any foodie or Francophile vert with envy." Review "Guaranteed to turn any foodie or Francophile vert with envy." -- St. Petersburg Times "Entertaining....The passionate rapport and mutual respect between the spouses shines through every chapter...intimate and revealing." -- San Francisco Chronicle --This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition. From Publishers Weekly With charm and insightful anecdotes about the Parisian and Provençal food-driven life, cookbook author Wells and her husband, Walter, artfully recreate their quarter-century-long courtship with flavorful France. Their two distinct voices—complemented by black-and-white photos and more than 30 simple recipes for couscous salad, salmon tartare, and scrambled eggs with truffles—detail the couple's forays into going native. As they endeavor to adapt to the fashions and lifestyle of the French capital, Patricia takes on the task of researching a city's worth of tastes, textures and smells, visiting tea salons, pastry shops, boulangeries and chocolate makers for her *Food Lover's Guide to Paris*, while Walter settles into a new position as editor at the International Herald Tribune. Their Parisian interlude soon turns into a permanent French sojourn when they are seduced by the parasol pines and terraced vineyard belonging to an 18th-century farmhouse called Chanteduc. With their purchase of this northern Provençal abode, the remains of urban life fall to the wayside. This thoroughly enjoyable narrative describes the lavish, flavorful rewards of a life spent abroad. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. From Booklist Linking up with one another at the New York Times, Patricia and Walter Wells established their credentials in the vanguard of the 1970s' foodie movement. Fans of her many books will eagerly devour these personal reminiscences, where each partner in this marriage recalls in vignettes the most memorable and remarkable scenes from their lives in France. Abandoning Manhattan for new assignments in Paris, the couple fell in love with all things Gallic. Despite initial publisher resistance, Patricia embarked on a guide to France for gastronomes, and it became a best-seller. Other books and periodical articles began to pour forth. Some revelations here include Patricia's brief fling with vegetarianism before a food-writing career rendered that regimen moot. Recipes featuring in various stages of the Wells' careers conclude chapters, and most are easily reproduced save perhaps the truffle omelet. --

Mark Knoblauch --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.About the AuthorPatricia Wells and Walter Wells have lived in Paris for nearly thirty years. Patricia runs a popular cooking school in Paris and Provence, and is the author of ten previous books. From 1980 to 2007 she was restaurant critic for the International Herald Tribune. Walter retired as executive editor of the International Herald Tribune in 2005, having previously worked as editor and managing editor since 1980. He is one of the few non-French citizens to be awarded the French Legion of Honor.--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.Read more

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Look inside the book

We've Always Had Paris...and Provence
A Scrapbook of Our Life in France
Patricia and Walter Wells
For Rita and Yale Kramer, great friends who sent us on our way, and for Colette and Jean-Claude Viviani, who welcomed us into their French family
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SEDUCTION DINNER: POLENTA with CHUNKY FRESH TOMATO SAUCE
In the fall of 1976, when we were courting, Walter prepared an elegant dinner party, the one we soon began to refer to as the "Seduction Dinner." The first course was polenta shaped in a ring mold and topped with tomato sauce. Years after we were married I got up the courage to let him know a detail of that dinner. "Do you remember the polenta from the Seduction Dinner? I hate to tell you, but the polenta was rancid." That would have been the case back then, for what Americans then used as polenta was actually Quaker cornmeal from a cardboard canister. The cornmeal probably sat around on the shelves for ages, and of course became rancid. The original polenta recipe is lost to history. Walter remembers it coming from an obscure Italian cookbook. Here, then, is an updated recipe using real polenta.
EQUIPMENT: A nonstick 1-quart ring mold. 1 quart whole milk 1 teaspoon fine sea salt ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg ¾ cup instant polenta 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
Chunky Fresh Tomato Sauce (recipe follows)
1. In a large saucepan, bring the milk, salt, and nutmeg to a boil over high heat. (Watch carefully, for milk will boil over quickly.) Add the polenta in a steady stream and, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, cook until the mixture begins to thicken, about 3 minutes.
2. Remove from the heat. Stir in the cheese, blending thoroughly. The polenta should be very creamy. Pour into the ring mold and let cool. Unmold at serving time and fill with the fresh tomato sauce. Serve in thick slices with ample portions of the sauce.
8 servings
NOTE: The aphrodisiac effects of nonrancid polenta have not been established.
CHUNKY FRESH TOMATO SAUCE
This is a quick rustic tomato sauce that

can be put together in a matter of minutes, yet tastes as though you may have labored for hours. Just use the freshest, most flavorful tomatoes you can find. **EQUIPMENT:** A large heavy-duty casserole; a food mill fitted with the coarsest screen. 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil 3 pounds garden-fresh tomatoes, rinsed, cored, and quartered 1 tablespoon coarse sea salt Several celery leaves Several fresh or dried bay leaves 1 plump head fresh garlic, cloves separated and peeled Hot red pepper flakes to taste (optional) 1. In a large heavy-duty casserole, combine the oil, tomatoes, salt, celery leaves, bay leaves, garlic, and hot pepper flakes, if using. Cook, uncovered, stirring regularly over moderate heat until the tomatoes have collapsed and are cooking in their own juices, about 15 minutes. Taste for seasoning. Remove and discard the celery leaves and bay leaves. 2. Place the food mill over a large bowl. Using a large ladle, transfer the sauce to the food mill and purée into the bowl. (Store, covered, in the refrigerator for 3 days or the freezer for 3 months.) 5 cups sauce **NOTE:** What I learned: This makes a rather rustic sauce that will have seeds. If you prefer a more refined sauce, pass through the fine screen of the food mill.

OUR LEMON CHICKEN with ROASTED ONIONS

People often ask what Walter and I eat at home, when it's just the two of us. More often than not I'll suggest a simple roast chicken, and Walter will second that, and that has been true since our early days in Paris. In this sublime recipe, the chicken is stuffed with lemons, and halved onions are placed cut side down in the roasting pan, so they absorb all the delicious juices. Most often, we will serve this with a simple mushroom salad and steamed green beans. The next day I'll make chicken salad for lunch and a rich chicken stock from the leftover carcass. **EQUIPMENT:** An oval roasting pan, just slightly larger than the chicken (about 13 by 9 inches), fitted with a roasting rack. 1 fresh farm chicken (3 to 4 pounds), at room temperature, with giblets Sea salt Freshly ground black pepper 2 lemons, preferably organic, scrubbed, dried, and quartered lengthwise 1 bunch fresh thyme 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened 6 onions, halved but not peeled 1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. 2. Generously season the cavity of the chicken with salt and pepper. Place the giblets, lemons, and thyme in the cavity. Truss. Rub the skin with the butter. Season all over with salt and pepper. 3. Place the onions cut side down in the roasting pan. Place the roasting rack over the onions. 4. Place the chicken on its side on the roasting rack. Pour about ½ cup water into the bottom of the pan to help create a rich and pleasing sauce later on. Place in the center of the oven and roast, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Turn the chicken to the other side, and roast for 20 minutes more. Turn the chicken breast side up, and roast for 20 minutes more, for a total of 1 hour's roasting time. By this time, the skin should be a deep golden color. Reduce the heat to 375°F. Turn the chicken breast side down, at an angle if at all possible, with the head end down and the tail in the air. (This heightens the flavor by allowing the juices to flow down through the breast meat.) Roast until the juices run clear when you pierce a thigh with a skewer, about 15 minutes more. 5. Remove from the oven and season generously with salt and pepper. Transfer the chicken to a platter, and place on an angle against the edge of an overturned plate, with head down and tail in the air. Cover loosely with foil. Turn off the oven and place the platter, with the plate underneath at an angle, in the oven with the door open. Let rest a minimum of 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes. The chicken will continue to cook during this resting time. 6. Meanwhile, prepare the sauce: Remove the onions to a platter. Place the roasting pan over moderate heat, scraping up any bits that cling to the bottom. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, scraping and stirring until the liquid is almost caramelized. Do not let it burn. Spoon off and discard any excess fat. Add several tablespoons cold water to deglaze (hot water will cloud the sauce). Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until thickened, about 5 minutes. 7. While the sauce is cooking, remove the lemons, giblets, and thyme from the cavity of the chicken. Carve the chicken into serving

pieces and transfer to a warmed platter. Chop the giblets and add them to the platter. Squeeze the lemons all over the pieces of poultry, extracting as much juice as possible. Place two onion halves on each plate with the chicken. Strain the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve and pour into a sauce boat. Serve immediately. 4 to 6 servings

WINE SUGGESTION: When I think of roast chicken I often think of a light, young Beaujolais Villages, such as one from the village of Saint Amour.

CHIBERTA'S NOUVELLE CUISINE

RAW DUCK SALAD

In November of 1980 as one of my first pieces for the International Herald Tribune, I reviewed Chiberta, then the Paris restaurant of the moment. I wrote, "To be serious about food and miss Jean-Michel Bédier's superb nouvelle cuisine is akin to skipping a pilgrimage to Fauchon and Michel Guérard on Place de la Madeleine." I raved about his duck salad: raw paper-thin slices of magret de canard draped atop a bed of spinach, showered with shallots, chives, and sherry vinegar. This hardly seems daring today, but back then it was revolutionary. I like to set out the garnishes and allow guests to season their own duck. I also prefer lemon juice over vinegar as a seasoning, so I offer both options.

EQUIPMENT: An electric slicer or very sharp knife; 4 chilled salad plates. One 12- to 16-ounce duck breast (magret de canard), skin, fat, and silverskin removed

4 cups baby spinach leaves, rinsed and dried

Several tablespoons Classic Vinaigrette (recipe follows)

GARNISH AND SEASONING: 2 whole shallots, peeled, halved, and finely minced

Finely minced chives

Extra-virgin olive oil

Best-quality sherry wine vinegar or quarters of fresh lemon

Freshly ground black pepper

Fleur de sel

Toasted slices of crusty bread for serving

1. Wrap the duck breast in plastic wrap and place in the freezer for 1 hour, to make it easier to slice. With an electric slicer or a very sharp knife, cut the duck breast lengthwise on a slight bias into 16 thin slices. Transfer to a plate, cover with plastic wrap, and let thaw at least 10 minutes before serving. (The duck slices can be refrigerated for several hours before serving.)

2. Place the spinach leaves in a large bowl and toss thoroughly with just enough vinaigrette to coat them lightly and evenly. Taste for seasoning. Distribute the salad among four chilled salad plates. Drape the slices of duck breast on top of the greens. Allow each guest to select from the number of garnishes, as well as their quantity. Serve with crusty toasted bread.

4 servings

NOTES: Chiberta, on the Rue Arsène Houssaye near the Arc de Triomphe, is still a popular Parisian restaurant, now owned by chef Guy Savoy. The gourmet shop, Fauchon, is still on the Place de la Madeleine, but Michel Guérard's specialty shop is no longer there. Magret de canard can be found in some specialty markets in the U.S. and can be ordered online in the U.S. from D'Artagnan at www.dartagnan.com. Ask for moulard duck breasts, which weigh an average of 1.6 to 2 pounds.

CLASSIC VINAIGRETTE

EQUIPMENT: A small jar with a lid.

2 tablespoons best-quality sherry wine vinegar

2 tablespoons best-quality red wine vinegar

Fine sea salt to taste

1 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Place the sherry vinegar, red wine vinegar, and salt in the jar. Cover and shake to dissolve the salt. Add the oil and shake to blend. Taste for seasoning. The vinaigrette can be stored at room temperature or in the refrigerator for several weeks. Shake again at serving time to create a thick emulsion.

About 1¼ cups vinaigrette

JOHANNES'S PICNIC COUSCOUS SALAD

The day that I learned the remarkable French expression—*forbidden but tolerated*—we sampled this delicious couscous salad as part of a splendid picnic prepared by chef Johannes Sailer of restaurant Les Abeilles in the Provençal village of Sablet.

EQUIPMENT: A fine-mesh sieve; a food processor or a blender.

1½ cups medium-grain instant couscous

3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 pound red-ripe tomatoes, cored and quartered

1/8 teaspoon ground Espelette pepper (or dried Anaheim chile or ground mild chile)

1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

1 green bell pepper, cut into very fine dice

2 tablespoons chiffonade of fresh mint leaves

1. Place the couscous in a very fine sieve and rinse

thoroughly under cold running water. Place in a large bowl. Toss with a fork to fluff. Set aside.

2. In a food processor or a blender combine the lemon juice, oil, salt, tomatoes, Espelette pepper, and cayenne. Process to blend. Pour the mixture into the couscous and toss with a fork to blend. Fluff until the grains are evenly separated. Cover and set aside, occasionally fluffing and tossing the grains, until all the liquid has been absorbed, about 3 minutes.

3. Add the diced pepper and mint. Toss to blend. Taste for seasoning. (The couscous can be prepared up to 8 hours in advance, covered, and refrigerated.)

8 servings

WINE SUGGESTION: That day our current winemaker and friend Yves Gras brought several bottles of his white Sablet wine, a blend of Viognier, Grenache Blanc, and Bourboulenc grapes, offering a great balance of fruit and acidity.

JUDY'S NORTH CAROLINA PORK BARBECUE

Nothing satisfies like comfort food! Every now and then—especially during some of the tougher times—Walter and I would think back to what we missed from “back home.” My sister, Judy Jones, stepped in to save us with this Southern barbecue recipe. When we returned home on visits to Walter's family in South Carolina or to my sister, her family, and my mother in North Carolina, pork barbecue often played a role. We even brought back a slow cooker from Target on one of our many trips home. The first time I purchased the pork to make this in our Paris kitchen, the butcher asked me what I was going to do with it. I wanted to respond in a deep Southern accent, “Pork barbecue, honey.”

EQUIPMENT: A slow cooker.

PORK

1 lean Boston pork butt, about 4 pounds

1 cup cider vinegar

2 tablespoons light brown sugar

1 tablespoon fine sea salt

½ teaspoon hot red pepper flakes

BARBECUE SAUCE

3 cups cider vinegar

⅔ cup light brown sugar

½ cup ketchup

2 tablespoons hot sauce (Texas Pete brand is recommended, though we can't get this in France!)

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1. Combine the pork, vinegar, brown sugar, salt, and hot pepper flakes in the slow cooker. Cover and cook at a low setting for 10 hours. Remove the meat and chop, carefully removing and discarding any fat. Return the meat and juices to the cooker.

2. While the meat is cooking, prepare the barbecue sauce: In a large saucepan, combine the cider vinegar, brown sugar, ketchup, hot sauce, salt, pepper, and Worcestershire sauce. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and stir until the sugar melts. Let marinate for several hours, refrigerated.

3. Before serving, add the barbecue sauce to the cooked, shredded pork in the slow cooker. Cook on low for 30 minutes to 1 hour before serving. This dish freezes very well.

16 servings

BEVERAGE SUGGESTION: We enjoy this with a good, cold beer.

CELERY, TARRAGON, SPINACH, AND CHICKEN SALAD

I've already gone on record saying that I could eat chicken every day. The Paris markets are full of great poultry vendors. In fact, when we moved to Paris, the Rue Poncelet market had two meat butchers and three poultry vendors. We still get super-fresh chicken, with feet and head still attached to attest to their freshness. And since chicken stock is one of the most valuable ingredients in my everyday larder, I naturally have plenty of delicious, moist poached chicken on hand. This is one of my favorite ways to use that lean protein, with plenty of celery for crunch, tarragon for its fiery tang, and capers and cornichons for a finishing touch of acidity. The spinach adds great color, as well as flavor.

1½ cups diced celery

¼ cup finely minced fresh tarragon leaves

3½ cups cubed cooked chicken (about 1 pound)

2 tablespoons capers in vinegar, drained

12 cornichons, cut at a diagonal into thin slices

2 cups baby spinach leaves, washed and dried

¼ cup light cream

2 teaspoons French mustard

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. In a large bowl, combine the celery, tarragon, chicken, capers, cornichons, and spinach. Set aside.

2. In a small bowl, combine the cream, mustard, and salt, and whisk to blend.

3. Pour the dressing over the ingredients in the bowl and toss to evenly coat. Season generously with pepper. Serve.

4 servings

WINE SUGGESTION: A fresh-tasting Sauvignon Blanc is a great match for

tarragon's bright, herbaceous flavors. A house favorite is the Quincy from Domaine Mardon.

RED SEA SQUID PASTA

In all of our thirty years of marriage, Walter and I have been on a true, nonworking vacation only once. Walter has often noted that every trip we've taken over the years involved restaurant research and writing, endless moments spent reading menus, and the time came when, frankly, he wanted a break. So at the urging of friends who were avid—even professional—divers, we got our diving certification. Our one and only diving trip was to the Red Sea in 1988. We lived on a dive boat with five other couples and went on a dive two, sometimes three times a day to marvel at the glories below. While I shared with my fellow divers the beauty of schools of tuna passing overhead, I could not stop thinking that these were the freshest fish I had ever seen. By the fourth day of our trip I gave up and spent the rest of the time in the dive boat's kitchen with Netta Daiches, our thirty-two-year-old Israeli cook. This pasta dish—a sea-fresh blend of squid, walnuts, basil, and garlic—has been a family favorite ever since. I don't remember what pasta she used back then but we have found that little bow ties are perfect here.

EQUIPMENT:

The small bowl of a food processor, or a blender; an 8-quart pasta pot fitted with a colander.

4 ounces whole shelled walnuts

BASIL SAUCE

4 plump, fresh garlic cloves, peeled, halved, green germ removed, minced
1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt
4 cups loosely packed fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Coarse sea salt

1½ pounds small squid, gutted, cleaned, rinsed, and tentacles removed and reserved, tubes cut into ¼-inch rings (you can have your fishmonger do the cleaning for you)
1 pound farfalle (bow-tie pasta)

1. Toast the walnuts: Place the nuts in a large frying pan over moderate heat. Toast, regularly shaking the pan until the nuts are fragrant and evenly browned, about 2 minutes. Watch carefully! They can burn quickly. Transfer to a large plate to cool. Set aside.
2. Prepare the basil sauce: Place the garlic, salt, and basil in the food processor and process to a paste. With the machine running, slowly pour the oil through the tube. Taste for seasoning. Place in large shallow bowl that will hold the pasta later on.
3. Cook the squid: In an 8-quart pasta pot fitted with a colander, bring 6 quarts water to a boil over high heat. Add three tablespoons of coarse salt. Add the squid rings and tentacles and cook, uncovered, for 15 seconds, counting from the time the squid enter the water. Drain immediately. Rinse under cold running water. Set aside.
4. Rinse out the pasta pot and fill again with 6 quarts water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Add 3 tablespoons coarse salt and the pasta, stirring to prevent the pasta from sticking. Cook, uncovered, until tender but firm to the bite, about 11 minutes.
5. Drain the pasta thoroughly and transfer to the bowl with the basil sauce. Toss thoroughly to blend. Add the squid and the toasted walnuts and toss again to thoroughly distribute them. Taste for seasoning. Serve immediately.

4 main-course servings

WINE SUGGESTION:

We always love this with a bright rosé wine. A favorite is the Tavel rosé from Domaine de la Mordorée.

Walter and Patricia, in her Yves Saint Laurent gown, at a special IHT dinner in Versailles.

FRÉDY GIRARDET'S FRESH FOIE GRAS in VINAIGRETTE

In November of 1976, Craig Claiborne, food editor of the New York Times, wrote an article headlined "The World's Greatest Chef." That was Frédy Girardet, only just beginning to be discovered in his little Swiss village of Crissier, near Lausanne. Claiborne wrote of a "fantastic lobster stew, chicken with a splendid sauce of leeks and cream, an incomparable dish of sautéed duck liver, slightly crusty on the outside and melting within..." Claiborne quoted Girardet as saying "La Nouvelle Cuisine is nothing more than good taste. It is to prepare dishes to preserve their natural flavors and with the simplest of sauces." That is certainly the case here, with just the natural fat of duck, vinegar, salt, and herbs. Walter and I made our pilgrimage to Crissier in fall of 1979, experiencing the same pleasure and emotion. It seems that when we arrived in France in 1980, the streets were all but awash with foie gras. We sure ate a lot of it back then, cold as

well as warm. This is one of the easiest and simplest ways to appreciate the richness of this regal ingredient.

EQUIPMENT: 4 warmed dinner plates. 4 slices fresh duck liver (foie gras), each about 3 ounces
Fleur de sel Freshly ground black pepper 2 shallots, peeled and minced 3 tablespoons best-quality sherry wine vinegar Minced parsley for garnish Minced chives for garnish

Place several layers of paper towels on a large plate. Heat a large frying pan over high heat until hot but not smoking. Add the slices of foie gras and sear for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, or until cooked to desired doneness. Transfer to the paper towels to drain. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to four warmed dinner plates. To the fat in the frying pan, add the shallots, shaking the pan. Add the vinegar and cook over high heat about 1 minute. Spoon the sauce over the foie gras. Garnish with parsley and chives. Serve immediately.

WINE SUGGESTION: A Sauternes is king here, the older the better. **NOTE:** Fresh duck liver can be ordered online from D'Artagnan at www.dartagnan.com.

DRIED CRANBERRY and APRICOT BREAD Quick breads have long been a staple in our kitchen. Walter and I both grew up with mothers who were deft bakers, and this bread, along with our standard date and nut bread, are in our lineup of comfort food. We slice these breads and have them with cheese in lieu of dessert. And we enjoy them even when I'm not wearing any makeup.

EQUIPMENT: A nonstick 1-quart rectangular bread pan. 1 teaspoon best-quality walnut oil ½ cup quick-cooking oatmeal ¼ cups 1% milk ½ cups whole-wheat flour 1 tablespoon baking powder ½ teaspoon fine sea salt 1 cup dried organic cranberries ½ cup coarsely chopped dried organic apricots, or dried blackberries ½ cup honey 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon 1 large egg, lightly beaten 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Coat the pan with the walnut oil. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl combine the oatmeal and milk. Stir to blend. Set aside for 10 minutes.
3. Add the flour, baking powder, salt, dried fruit, honey, cinnamon, egg, and vanilla. Stir to blend. The batter will be quite thin.
4. Pour the batter into the pan, evening out the top with the back of a spatula. Place in the center of the oven and bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of the bread comes out clean, 40 to 50 minutes.
5. Remove the pan from the oven. Let cool for 5 minutes. Turn the loaf out and place it on a rack to cool. Do not slice the bread for at least 1 hour, for it will continue to bake as it cools. The bread can be stored for up to three days, tightly wrapped in plastic. Serve in very thin slices. 1 loaf, 24 thin slices

A portrait for a New York magazine: Note the shoulder pads!

PEACH WINE Whenever I make this fruity wine, it brings back memories of that wacky night in Avignon. Then Walter and I get to laugh about that meal all over again.

EQUIPMENT: A food mill fitted with the finest screen; 4 clean clear wine bottles. 18 ripe peaches Six 750-ml bottles white wine 3 cups sugar 750-ml bottle vodka

1. Prepare a large bowl of ice water. Set aside.
2. With a small, sharp knife, cut a cross at the stem end of the peach. (This will make them easier to peel.) Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Plunge the peaches into the boiling water and boil until the skins begin to peel away from the flesh, about 2 minutes. With a large, slotted spoon, remove the peaches from the boiling water. Immediately plunge them into the ice water. As soon as they are cool enough to handle, peel them. Cut them in half. Remove and discard the pits.
3. In a large casserole, combine the peaches and the wine and simmer gently for 25 minutes.
4. Pass the mixture through the finest screen of a food mill. Stir in the sugar and the vodka. Place in clean clear wine bottles, seal with corks, and store in a cool place. Serve as an apéritif or with a peach dessert. Makes 4 bottles

MICHEL GUÉRARD'S SALADE GOURMANDE In the early 1980s, almost every serious restaurant in Paris offered some version of Michel Guérard's Salade Gourmande, a very simple and sublime first course that always included a slab of rich duck foie gras and steamed or blanched green beans. The original recipe also included asparagus tips. The dressing included walnut oil, an ingredient that was brand new to most of us back then.

EQUIPMENT: A 6-quart

pasta pot fitted with a colander.6 tablespoons coarse sea salt1 pound very fresh green beans, rinsed and trimmed at both ends24 asparagus tipsVINAIGRETTE2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil4 teaspoons walnut oil2 teaspoons red wine vinegar2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley leaves2 teaspoons minced fresh chivesFine sea saltFreshly ground black pepper8 large lettuce leaves, preferably red trévisé, washed and dried1 shallot, finely minced4 ounces foie gras, fresh or mi-cuit from a jar1 black truffle (about 1½ ounces), canned or fresh, cut into very thin slices (optional)1. Prepare two large bowls of ice water. Set aside.2. Fill the pasta pot, fitted with a colander, with 5 quarts of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Add 3 tablespoons coarse salt and the beans and cook until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. (Cooking time will vary, according to the size and freshness of the beans.) Immediately remove the colander from the water, allow the water to drain from the beans, and plunge the colander with the beans in it into the ice water so they cool down as quickly as possible. (The beans will cool in 1 to 2 minutes. If you leave them longer, they will become soggy and begin to lose flavor.) Transfer the beans to a strainer, drain, and wrap in a thick towel to dry. (The beans can be cooked up to 4 hours in advance. Keep them wrapped in the towel and refrigerate.)3. Rinse out the pasta pot and fill again with 5 quarts of water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Add 3 tablespoons coarse salt and the asparagus tips and cook until crisp tender, just 2 to 3 minutes. Immediately remove the colander from the water, allow the water to drain from the asparagus tips, and plunge the colander with the asparagus into the ice water so they cool down as quickly as possible. (The asparagus will cool in 1 to 2 minutes. If you leave them longer, they will become soggy and begin to lose flavor.) Transfer the asparagus to a strainer, drain, and wrap in a thick towel to dry. (The asparagus can be cooked up to 4 hours in advance. Keep them wrapped in the towel and refrigerate, if desired.)4. Prepare the vinaigrette: In a small jar, combine the lemon juice, oils, vinegar, and herbs. Cover securely and shake to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper.5. Place the lettuce in a large bowl and toss with just enough vinaigrette to coat the lettuce. Do the same for the green beans and the asparagus.6. Arrange two lettuce leaves on each of four salad plates. Arrange a mound of green beans on top. Arrange the asparagus tips on top of the beans. Decorate the salad with the foie gras and the truffle slices, if using. Serve.4 servings

ALMOND MACAROON and **FRESH BERRY CAKE**I feel fortunate that I inherited neither the shoe gene nor the sugar gene. Think of all the money and calories saved over the years! I rarely engage in stress eating, but during those first few days of taking driving lessons in Paris, sugar seemed to offer a touch of solace. I can usually pass on dessert, but there is something about this cake—sort of Miss Almond Macaroon meets Mister Angel Food Cake—that makes one want to **EAT THE WHOLE THING!** Use any kind of berries in season, or in off months, use frozen berries. Note that since the quantity of egg whites is important here, go by the liquid measure of the whites, not the number of egg whites.

EQUIPMENT: A 9½-inch springform pan; a heavy-duty electric mixer fitted with a whisk.1 teaspoon almond oil or vegetable oil for preparing the pan1 cup egg whites (6 to 8 large)1 cup raw sugarA scant 2 cups almond powderGrated zest of 2 lemons, preferably organic3 tablespoons cornstarch¼ teaspoon fine sea salt2 cups fresh raspberries or other small berriesFresh fruit and seasonal sorbet for serving1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.2. Brush the springform pan with the oil. Set aside.3. Place the egg whites in the bowl of a mixer fitted with a whisk. Beat at low speed until frothy. Gradually increase the speed to high, slowly adding the sugar, and whisking until the egg whites are stiff but not dry. At low speed, carefully add the ground almonds, lemon zest, cornstarch, and salt and mix until blended.4. Spoon the mixture into the prepared pan. Sprinkle the berries on top. Place the pan in the center of the oven and bake until the cake is firm and golden, and begins to pull away

from the side of the pan, 35 to 40 minutes.5. Remove from the oven and transfer to a rack to cool. After 10 minutes, run a knife along the side of the pan. Release and remove the side of the springform pan, leaving the cake on the pan base. Serve warm or at room temperature, cut into wedges. Serve with additional fresh fruit and a favorite seasonal sorbet.8 servings

LA CAGOUILLE'S SALMON- TARTARE

La Cagouille, a casual fish restaurant in Paris's 14th arrondissement has been a favorite for decades, and I've reviewed this popular spot many times. Chef-owner Gérard Allemandou all but seems to have fins, he loves fish so much! This recipe is a personal favorite, and like so many great and simple things, the hardest part is to keep from embellishing. The fish can be cut a few hours in advance and kept well chilled. At the very last minute, drizzle the lemon and oil mixture on a chilled plate, arrange the salmon, then add a final drizzle and seasoning. I like to vary the final seasoning, sometimes cutting Japanese seaweed sheets (nori) into a fine julienne, or simply topping the salmon with sprigs of fresh chervil.

EQUIPMENT: A small jar with a lid; 4 chilled salad plates.

1 pound very fresh skinless salmon fillets
6 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
Fleur de sel
6 tablespoons best-quality extra-virgin olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
A fine julienne of dried Japanese seaweed (nori) or fresh chervil sprigs for garnish
Toasted country bread for serving

1. Up to 5 hours before serving the salmon, carefully cut the fish into small rectangles, about 3 by ½ inches. Arrange on a plate, cover with plastic wrap, and chill until serving time.

2. In a small jar, combine the lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon fleur de sel and shake to dissolve the salt. Add the olive oil and shake to blend.

3. At serving time, drizzle each of the four chilled salad plates with a light coating of the lemon and oil dressing. Arrange the rectangles of salmon on each plate. Drizzle with another light coating of dressing. Season generously with fleur de sel and freshly ground black pepper. Garnish with a fine julienne of seaweed or with sprigs of fresh chervil. Serve with plenty of freshly toasted country bread.

4 servings

WINE SUGGESTION:

A fine, flinty Sauvignon Blanc would be my choice here, a wine with enough zest to stand up to the salmon but not smother it.

FETTUCCHINE with VODKA and LEMON

For weeknight dinners, our lineup sounds like airline choices: chicken or pasta? But in truth, who can resist a glorious, golden farm chicken turning on the spit in the oven, or a bowl full of lovingly dressed pasta? As often as we can, we make dinner together, Walter deftly chopping and slicing (he is much more exacting than I am) and me acting as producer. We open a bottle of wine, turn on some music by our friend and crooner Todd Murray, and count the seconds until we'll be sitting on our stools lingering over our home-cooked dinner. We always have dried pasta in the pantry, and light cream, lemons, and cheese for grating in the refrigerator, so this is a common last-minute dish.

EQUIPMENT: A large nonstick frying pan with a cover; an 8-quart pasta pot fitted with a colander; 6 warmed shallow soup bowls.

3 tablespoons coarse sea salt
1 pound fresh or dried fettuccine
¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
¼ cup lemon-flavored vodka
1 cup light cream
½ cup freshly grated black pepper pecorino cheese
About **1** cup pasta cooking water
Grated zest of **2** lemons, preferably organic
Freshly ground black pepper

1. In the pasta pot fitted with a colander, bring 6 quarts water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add the salt and the pasta, stirring to prevent the pasta from sticking. Cook until tender but firm to the bite, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Remove the colander and drain over a sink, shaking to remove excess water. Reserve some of the cooking water for the sauce.

2. In a large nonstick frying pan, warm the lemon juice, vodka, and cream. Add the drained fettuccine and toss to evenly coat. Add the pasta cooking water, tablespoon by tablespoon, until the pasta stops absorbing the liquid. Add half of the cheese and toss once more. Taste for seasoning. Cover and let rest for 1 to 2 minutes to allow the pasta to thoroughly absorb the sauce. Toss again. Taste for seasoning.

3. Transfer to individual warmed shallow soup bowls. Season with the lemon zest and freshly

ground pepper. Serve immediately, passing the remaining cheese and the pepper mill at the table.6 servingsWINE SUGGESTION: We like the zest and minerality of a good Pinot Grigio here.FISH CHEEKS with POLENTA and PARMESAN CRUSTOnce I had lost weight, I concentrated on creating a healthy series of low-fat, high-protein recipes. This is one of them. One Saturday morning our fishmonger in Vaison, Eliane Béranger, went back to her cooler, handed me a little bag of goodies, and said, “Try these.” She said they were rare skate cheeks, a delicacy sent by her fish supplier in Brittany. At first I turned up my nose. What could they taste like? I took them home, cooked them according to her suggestion, and became an instant convert. Fish cheeks are extremely tender, tasty morsels. They are light and have a fine, firm texture. In fact, many people consider the cheeks the best part of the fish because of their concentrated sweetness. The flavor is delicate, and so a minimum of embellishment is called for here. If fish cheeks are not available the same method can be used with fish fillets cut into three-inch squares or with fresh scallops.EQUIPMENT: 4 warmed dinner plates.2 egg whites¼ cup instant polenta¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese¼ teaspoon ground Espelette pepper8 fish cheeks (halibut, monkfish, or skate) about 1 pound total2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oilFleur de selFresh lemon wedges for garnish1. Place the egg whites in a shallow bowl. Combine the polenta and cheese in another shallow bowl. Season the polenta mixture with the pepper.2. Dredge the fish in the egg whites. Dredge them in the polenta mixture. Place on a large plate.3. In a large shallow frying pan, heat the oil over moderate heat. When hot but not smoking, add the coated fish cheeks, cooking them until golden and cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. Season with fleur de sel. Serve immediately, with fresh lemon wedges for garnish.4 servingsNOTE: Alaskan halibut cheeks can be ordered online from Great Alaska Seafood, www.great-alaska-seafood.com or by phone, 866-262-8846. They arrive frozen in one-pound vacuum-sealed packages.ROLANDO’S EGGPLANTOne evening in late June, my friend Rolando Beramendi—expert in all things Italian—created this stacked eggplant dish from our garden. This recipe is simply a blueprint: Use the eggplant as a starting point, but stack all manner of vegetables, cheese, and herbs and most of all, enjoy!EQUIPMENT: A nonstick baking sheet.2 small, firm fresh eggplant, washed but not peeled (each about 8 ounces)Extra-virgin olive oilCoarse sea salt to taste2 to 3 large ripe tomatoes, cut into thick crosswise slices for 24 slicesAbout 4 ounces soft goat cheeseSeveral tablespoons tapenade32 large fresh basil leavesFleur de sel1. Preheat the oven to 475°F.2. Trim and discard the ends of the eggplant. Cut the eggplant crosswise into slices about ¼ inch thick. You should have 16 slices. Place them side by side on a nonstick baking sheet. Brush lightly with oil and season lightly with salt. Place on a rack in the center of the oven and roast for about 5 minutes. Turn and season the other side with oil and salt. Small eggplant should cook in 10 minutes. Larger eggplant will take a little longer.3. Remove the eggplant from the oven. Arrange a slice of eggplant on each of 8 salad plates. Place a slice of tomato on top of the eggplant. Top with cheese. Brush the cheese with tapenade. Place two basil leaves on top of the tapenade. Repeat for another layer. Top the final tower with a slice of tomato and two more basil leaves. Drizzle with olive oil and season with fleur de sel.8 servingsCOLETTE’S VINAIGRETTEOur friend and Provençal neighbor Colette Viviani makes the very best vinaigrette. Like most home cooks, she never uses a recipe and just creates meals by feel. I finally insisted that she make this dressing in front of me, so I could write down the proportions. I was surprised at the small amount of vinegar she used. This is so delicious, I am a convert!1 teaspoon French mustardFine sea saltFreshly ground black pepper¼ teaspoons best-quality red wine vinegar½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

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What people say about this book

Opinionated, "Really interesting. You get a real feel for living there.. I am obsessed by culinary, Paris and France so learning how the Wells's life evolved was great. Curiously, given Walter's background, the book could have had a better copy editor to catch the misspelling and incorrectly worded sentences. This was aggravated by some display issues in the Windows phone edition of the Kindle version of the book."

Gingko42, "A Duo Autobiography of Patricia and Walter Wells. The story of their journalistic and cooking adventures in France. Interesting for the details of maintaining dual citizenship and yet, embedded in the culture of French cooking. Lively development of friends, jobs and putting down new roots. Recipes are excellent, too."

Rose L. Beranbaum, "A JOY READ. what a joy to catch up with an old friend and live vicariously the Wells' life in France."

M. Meyer, "Excellent!!. Just as described. Excellent!!!"

Queenie, "on time and as expected. on time and as expected"

Ebook Tops Reader, "Love real life stories!. Wonderful book, great cooking, gardening,remodeling ideas, I couldn't put it down!"

Julia, "Ahhhh, Paris. For anyone who is a fan of the Julia Child era, here is another warm story of Patricia Wells and her husband's life in France. Great stories (and recipes!). Hadn't followed Patricia with her career and cookbooks, but certainly will now."

Patricia Jeffery, "Just what I needed to send to a friend who Just what I needed to send to a friend who lives in France, and thoroughly enjoys the intricacies of French cooking."

The book by Patricia Wells has a rating of 5 out of 4.3. 31 people have provided feedback.

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