



French Women for All Seasons: A Year of Secrets, Recipes, and Pleasure

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From the author of *French Women Don't Get Fat*, the #1 National Bestseller, comes an essential guide to the art of joyful living—in moderation, in season, and, above all, with pleasure.

Together with a bounty of new dining ideas and menus, Mireille Guiliano offers us fresh, cunning tips on style, grooming, and entertaining. Here are four seasons' worth of strategies for shopping, cooking, and exercising, as well as some pointers for looking effortlessly chic. Taking us from her childhood in Alsace-Lorraine to her summers in Provence and her busy life in New York and Paris, this wise and witty book shows how anyone anywhere can develop a healthy, holistic lifestyle.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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From Reader Review French Women for All Seasons: A Year of Secrets, Recipes, and Pleasure for online ebook

Rachel says

I just remembered I'd read this as I was thinking today how weird it is that my "guilty pleasure" reading category is the "how to be like a French woman" mini-oeuvre. For some reason I find these books unaccountably soothing, possibly because they transport me to an alternate universe in which I'm effortlessly superior to my real self in every way.

In this universe, though, I'm embarrassed to admit to reading these things.

On a practical level, I didn't try any of the recipes in this book (yes, there are recipes), so I can't rate that aspect of it, just the soothing, alternate-universe-transporting aspect.

Suzanne says

It is my worst kept secret that I don't exactly admire post-Enlightenment France. Well, that and the fact that I rarely ever floss (bringing me into alignment with another European country with whom I have issues). Still, I don't want to throw out the bébé avec l'eau de bain. Americans are a remarkable, brilliant people but we are a young country and we are still sorting some things out culturally and included on this list is how we should eat. It is becoming abundantly clear that we are doing it wrong. Of course, being Americans, we're pretty set on figuring this out and then owning it.

Following the tremendous success of her first book, Giuliano's follow-up is even more interesting yet annoying which pretty much encapsulates my feelings about her homeland and fellow countrymen. But the advice is solid and the recipes look tasty and simple. Bottom line: following her advice (and not a diet) I lost 5+ pounds that I had put on after a recent trip to Michigan. These were not typical vacation pounds that go away after a week of returning to a normal diet. These were pounds put on by the most comforting kind of Church Lady foods known to man. And lots of it.

Beyond the 5+, I have curbed a long time and very distressing habit of munching on handfulls of this that and the other all day long. To the detriment of any attempt to stave off the inevitable weight creep that most women can anticipate if they have the good fortune to live long enough. How? I ask myself, "Is this a quality way to eat? Is this handful of Doritos really going to be enough? After I've eaten these will I be able to say, 'That was just the right amount of Doritos and I couldn't possibly eat another' or am I far more likely to want one more handfull and still not be satisfied? Am I hungry enough to sit down with a piece of fruit and a small chunk of high quality cheese?" Etcetera.

And I have felt free to indulge as long as I compensate for it sometime later in the day or at least manage to establish equilibrium by the end of the week. Eat very indulgently one day and then very lightly another day. I've been enjoying my food more because I'm eating better food, more slowly and less of it overall without feeling deprived. Win. I have also stopped eating in the car or on my feet. If I don't have time to sit down and taste my food, it can wait.

Yes, the French egotism is in here as is the inexplicable devotion to government oversight given her position

in the corporate world (high, very high). But, if I can get past it most others will have no issues with it. It does help to harbor romantic notions of a pre-Enlightenment France (I do, I confess it) and a fondness for the language but those aren't necessary. But, if you just have a knee jerk reaction to all things French this won't work for you and you probably didn't click on this review anyway.

Guiliano and I do part ways on one very important matter. Exercise. I run about 20 miles a week, give or take. She thinks such exertions are insane. I could bench press a Renault. She probably drives one. She's right that exercise isn't critical to weight loss or maintenance though a certain level is critical to overall health. I prefer to subscribe to a lifestyle I read somewhere else, "Eat like a French girl, exercise like an Aussie." Maybe it's my Australian heritage speaking. More likely, it's my American desire to select the best of everything and create the ideal amalgam after some trial and error. And, at the end of the day, if everyone hates me for it that's okay. I'm still going to be there to help them rebuild their city after the Germans wreck it. And I'll be fast enough and strong enough to do all that lifting.

Sheena says

This book is not as good as "French Women Don't Get Fat" and the oft repeated phrase will make you cringe fairly quickly as you progress through the pages. This one is a real slog to get through and basically repeats everything covered in the first with a lot more padding. I found the section on wine to be the most interesting and informative. Despite the fact that I do applaud her sentiments and the sound principles of moderation, I heartily dislike this woman. She really is a condescending snit that barely disguises her disgust for Americans. In fact she doesn't seem to like anyone other than her own countrymen. Even then if they should be even slightly plump they are branded "uncomfortable in their own skin".

Helynne says

Mireille Guiliano's 2006 followup to her 2005 best-seller *French Women Don't Get Fat* is again filled with tasty, low-calorie recipes for not only a slimmer, but also a more elegant, French-style eating. She also reiterates her advice to control food portions (even cut them in half!) and advocates exercise and attitude changes over the years so that one will always feel *bien dans sa peau* (comfortable in one's own skin). "The body acccustomed to less finds that indeed less is more," the author states. "In fact, a body conditioned to enjoy less will naturally find excess unpleasant" (43). Her chapters discuss the healthiest offerings and recipes for each season. I especially enjoyed her winter chapter with its recipes for banana mousse and hot chocolate soufflé. For wine lovers, she also has a chapter called "Wine is Food." Chapter 7 is entitled "*Recevoir: Entertaining à la Française*," and has some especially nice recipes for quiche lorraine and chocolate brioche. And again, Guiliano beseeches all of us to drink more water. "The idea that a meal might taste better with a diet soda than a glass of water is utterly alien to French women" (341).

Carmen says

But one small bite of the first one was enough to tell me these truffles were not very good, let alone first-rate. I discreetly left the rest on my saucer. An observer might have imagined that I was exercising astonishing self-control, but it was really quite easy to pass on something that offered little or no pleasure.

This book is a big step-down from Giuliano's first book, French Women Don't Get Fat: The Secret of Eating for Pleasure. Let's break it down:

THE GOOD:

- Exercise is not a compensation for eating; eating is what we do to fuel an active body. Yes, we should all be more active, but 'hitting the gym' to offset your calories is backward thinking.

True. You have to do A LOT of exercise to burn calories that go down very easily.

- When I came to America, the coffee was simply awful: poorly made, often from inferior blends, over-roasted beans, stale grounds. It was burned in percolation and reburned in keeping it warm all day.

True, you're likely to get better coffee in Europe. Especially 40 years ago.

- It's sad to imagine summer as an event to be escaped, but in more and more places it has become that. It occurs to me that we used to make less evasive accommodations to nature, such as screened-in verandas, fans, and plenty of lemonade; in the course of an agreeably slower but still active way of life, we would tolerate a bit of sweat (not the social abomination Madison Avenue makes it seem).

True, nowadays we hide inside all winter and then we hide inside all summer, complaining that it's 'too hot.'

- The opening quote. I also enjoy really good food, and if food is shitty, I just don't eat it. So I understand her mindset here. Either I'm really going to enjoy the hell out of it, or why bother? This isn't a 'get thin tactic' for me, simply the way I view life. I don't know why I would waste time or stomach space eating stuff that doesn't make me very happy. I like quality.

"My tastes are simple: I am easily satisfied with the best." - Winston S. Churchill. This quote is me. :)

THE BAD:

Sigh.

- She puts 40 pages of text about wine in the book. 40 pages. FORTY PAGES. I understand she loves wine and wine is a hobby of hers, but goodness gracious. o.O Maybe this is interesting to some people. I was bored out of my skull.

- Real wine lovers don't get fat.

Lies.

- She talks about orchids, a lot about scarves and scarf-tying, fashion, jewelry, face masks, cold showers, etc. and I was really bored during these parts.

- She doesn't understand overeating, or why people overeat, AT ALL. So we get inane comments like this: *For good health, eat the darkest chocolate you can find. Taken sparingly and as needed, you should never get fat from chocolate.* You just don't get it! This kind of thing just shows how far off she is from the whole mindset of someone who overeats. A small piece of very dark chocolate is not satisfying in the least bit and I'm always shocked to hear diet books act like it is. If people were satisfied by one small piece of very dark

chocolate occasionally, then EVERYONE would be thin. Goodness gracious me. Fail. Why didn't the readers think of this obvious 'fact??!?"

- She, with a straight face, suggests everyone start eating raw apples with a knife and fork. Cut them up, put them on a plate, and eat them with a knife and fork. It's stuff like this that makes me think this woman is off her gourd. o.O Seriously?

- *More and more it is possible for a little French girl in New York, or anyone else, to buy a bag of wild dandelions (or pick some along roadsides or unkempt lawns!).*

Don't tell people that!!!! Do you want them to die from weed-killer poisoning!?!??!?!?

- She suggests French women don't get fat because - get this... - they practice Lent! Hahahahahahahaha! I've never heard anything so ridiculous.

- I feel like she partly uses this book to defend herself from criticism she received from the first one. And that's bad.

- She continues to think all people can live like she does if they just TRY HARD ENOUGH. However, I have other, more practical things to think about: like, I don't know, MONEY.

THE UGLY:

The ugly in this book centers around two main concepts. One: Guiliano insulting and looking down upon fat people (and Americans). Two, stories Guiliano tells about herself in which she acts like an asshole. She obviously doesn't realize how assholish she's coming off in these stories, but I was like o.O Let's take a look at some examples.

- Talks about how children in NYC can't even recognize and identify an apple.

- I witnessed a surreal spectacle I wish I had videotaped. People all around me were gulping down hamburgers, fries, and pizza and knocking back big tubs of soda or coffee as they tapped away on their laptops, talked on cell phones, and flipped through newspapers. Most remarkable: it was 10 a.m. Why were they even eating? I asked myself. Breakfast? Early lunch? Or just a way to pass the time? It looked more like stuffing than eating, actually. And most of the people I saw were significantly overweight. Plus, I could not detect pleasure on a single face.

"Argh," I said to myself. "If this book continues to just be insulting and pitying Americans who are like stupid pigs at a trough apparently, I am DNFing." I fail to see why she just... spends her time looking at other people and pitying them and judging them. It happens throughout the book. Maybe I'm just not this type of asshole, but I never look at someone eating a meal and think, "How sad. That person shouldn't be eating because they are fat." Or some shit. Just weird to me that this is how assholes operate. It must be lonely knowing you are the only sensible, smart, and impeccably thin person in the room. If only you could teach these peasants the secret to being thin!!! Oh, wait...

- Edward always took his coffee with a teaspoon or two. That's how he was raised. One day when he was about to put a heaping teaspoon of sugar into his cup, I asked him if he could drink his coffee without sugar. He looked at me and asked, "Would you eat french fries without ketchup?" I said, "Yes, I do."

Then she challenges him to stop taking sugar in his coffee. I would hate being married to this woman. The fact that she feels a need to take this simple, small pleasure away from her (Thin! It's super-important to stress that he's THIN! Because fat people don't even deserve to have pleasure) husband is baffling to me. Seemingly this is to illustrate a point that people can learn to like coffee black, but I mean... why? He's happy, he's thin, he likes putting a teaspoon of sugar in his tea... I just don't see why she feels like she has to take this away from him.

- And I heard myself, perhaps the kid in me, say, "You know, Edward" - actually in France I call him Édouard - "I could eat pasta every day." I really could, but I don't."

Aah, the pretentiousness, it burns!!!!

- This part where she makes a delicious chocolate cake *I served a small piece to each of our guests and offered no seconds...* and then sees her male friend eyeing the cake before leaving. She gives him the rest of the cake (half), ostensibly because she's leaving for Europe. Then she is surprised, disappointed and a bit put-off by getting a thank you call from her friend the next day saying he ate it in the car. Sigh. Again with just not understanding what I see as basic.

- Fairly or not, my father had little sympathy for creatures that let themselves go. Living well and in balance was the way to earn his admiration.

That's because your father was an asshole. See the first book for more evidence of this.

- Early this spring, I was reminded of his distinction as I watched people shuffling out of a movie theater on Broadway. To my sadness I saw many women and men lumbering hefty, grazing without a thought, looking for all the world like city pigeons.

This makes me very angry. Fat people have no value and actually don't enjoy anything about their miserable lives - is basically what she keeps saying in this book. Since that is SO FAR from reality I end up just feeling sorry for her. But even more sorry for the fat people she encounters in her daily life. She probably stages many 'interventions.'

- The French woman's art of useful deception to the rescue: plate in the kitchen, serve in the dining room, and call it a French chicken chasseur. I'm pretty militant about truth in advertising, so this was a very rare exception. Fortunately no one caught on and everyone loved it. To this day, I am sure a couple of those guests would swear they have never eaten rabbit.

This part where she lies to the people at her dinner party that she's serving them rabbit - calling it 'chicken' instead - really infuriates me. And as she often goes to restaurants and asks the waiters how dishes are prepared so she can make good, informed decisions about what she decides to put in her body, it's insane that she would think it's okay to do this. And she portrays as 'cute.' Like, 'hahaha, look what I did, isn't it adorable? Some people balk at eating rabbit, isn't that SILLY?' o.O Really disturbing.

- She also tells a story of a party she went to where two ladies 'over the age of fifty' joined the group. She describes one as thin, well-dressed, joyful. The other she disparages as wearing clothes that are too young for her and being pudgy. I just... can't. How rude. o.O

Tl;dr - Sigh. If you are going to read a book of hers, read French Women Don't Get Fat: The Secret of Eating

for Pleasure and not this. While she makes some good points, this book is too rife with fat-hatred, judgmental garbage, and frankly just plain incorrect ideas. Not to mention she loads the book with fashion advice and a whole forty pages of wine-education.

It's terrible when you come off as an asshole in your own book that you wrote yourself about yourself. I've seen it before in memoirs. Oh, well.

There's a lot of recipes in here, I didn't make any of them for this review, I hope you forgive me. She also includes 'A week in spring' 'a week in winter' etc. etc. sample menus for the day, which I thought was kind of nice.

Vivienne says

It was disgustingly arrogant, so no, thank you. I've never finished this book.

Natalie says

I read this, as well as French Women Don't Get Fat, and I browsed them, rather than truly reading them. I enjoyed the laid back tone, which indulged my desires as a francophile to become more francophile. The recipes, I admit, I never tried, but I loved reading them! I enjoyed the simplistic advice about portion control and eating simple, healthy foods in the first book. I enjoyed the descriptions of European ways of daily life, like walking and drinking fresh lemonade, etc. etc. that were infused in this book for all seasons. It was just a pleasure to flip through and enjoy.

Allison says

I love her books and pretty much all of her common sense advice rings true to me. It's mostly things people might already feel to be true but I feel like she gives me the courage to have that relationship with food that I know is the best for me. I feel as though even though I don't live in the NYC/Provence/Paris world that she lives in, there are ways to incorporate what she says into my life. A lot of people found this book to be too stuffy or feel as though she thinks she's superior but she's really just very French and I find it completely endearing. Maddening at times in her first book, but endearing. And I for one loved all of the scarf sections. :) As I said, even if she isn't saying anything entirely new (which she doesn't claim to do in the first place), she gives one courage to have the correct relationship with food, as cheesy as that might sound for me to say.

Jen says

I always feel a little ridiculous admitting that I've read (and own a copy of) French Women Don't Get Fat: The Secret of Eating for Pleasure, but I love the way Mireille Guiliano writes about food. Coming to love eating and cooking relatively late in the game (mid-20s), I enjoy reading about healthy eating from someone who obviously loves good food.

Mireille is all about enjoying your pleasures and indulgences, but in moderation. Nothing new, of course, and my dietician friends have been ranting *against* diets and *for* balanced eating for years now. It's still good to be reminded of it in a way that leaves you excited for all the ways in which you can enjoy your meals. Reading this book leaves me wishing I wasn't quite so busy these days and had more time to cook.

A few things I love specifically about this book:

The 50-percent idea.

The seasonal organization of the first half of the book, complete with recipes and sample menus.

The intro to wine chapter.

Small disclaimer: I'm sure there are some who would be turned off by Mireille's overabundance of french pride, but I love her slightly snobby, but-of-course all french women know this attitude. I find it amusing and, let's be honest, I think the french have more than earned the right to be uppity about food.

Bloodorange says

While I haven't read (and after reading this, have no intention of doing it) the first book, it seems pretty obvious to me that 'French Women for All Seasons' was written to milk the 'French Women...' cow just a little more. The very structure indicates it's all about odds and ends; the "seasons" part is the decent lifestyle mag fare; the recipes are ok, but mostly nothing to write home about, and the irritating scarf-tying tips punctuate every chapter. The three chapters that follow feel like accidental appendages - a very informative chapter on wine (Ms Guillano works in the wine industry and this **shows**), a less interesting chapter on entertaining (skimmed that, since I find entertaining everything but), and a French-English phrasebook (of all things...).

On the whole, the book is, at times, quite informative, but I couldn't enjoy it seeing how the material was thrown together to create an impression of a coherent whole. Moreover, though I'm ready to adopt the "eat only food that matters!" attitude, I see far too many anorexic teens to be as enthusiastic about "eat half your food" principle.

Danika says

I'm not quite done with this book, but I have a few comments already. First: the good. Some interesting recipes and I certainly agree with her idea of enjoying what's local and in season. She's obviously not the 1st person w/ this idea. I also think she's right on as far as enjoying and savoring food versus stuffing yourself. It's not worth eating crappy food and the good stuff deserves to be appreciated. I also like her section on wine- lots of good info here, esp for someone who doesn't have a ton of knowledge.

The bad. I'll admit, I have a few gripes. Like Laila, I couldn't care less about how to tie a scarf. And for the life of me, I can't figure out why they didn't add some simple diagrams to these sections! The author has the eating requirements of a bird. She probably eats about 1,000 calories a day. Sorry, but I'm too athletic for that. I also don't like how she's constantly saying it's not necessary to go to the gym and sweat. True, if Americans got out and walked for 30+ minutes a day it would be a huge improvement. But what's wrong with a little exertion? I guess it's not feminine enough for her.

And seriously, cutting up a HALF banana (saving the other half for later) with a knife and fork to make it last longer? What is she ON?

Jenn says

Well - I appreciated the lush descriptions of the growing up in the French countryside stories. And I like the ideas of eating and lifestyle. But the main issue for me - she lives in a Neiman-Markus world and I'm in a Target world. My pocketbook can't afford a lot of her lifestyle suggestions. Yes I can eat less and I try to eat healthy and well. But this lifestyle is less attainable in the US....we don't shop for food daily or have places to bike all the time. And while I liked her "the best XXX I ever ate was at..." - I'm unlikely to get to Alsace to have that same meal. Sigh.

Sarah Bringhurst says

I picked this one up for free, and it's been sitting in my bathroom for the past month, so I've leafed through most of it.

In the interest of full disclosure, I haven't read the book that put Giuliano on the bestseller list, *French Women Don't Get Fat*, although I was aware of its basic premise. It's hard for me to imagine anyone really being able to take her seriously. Giuliano's tone is supercilious at best. Her constant exaggerated descriptions of her own self-control (the chocolates she didn't eat, the half of a banana she saved for later, etc.) are bizarre to the point of being red flags for an unhealthy food obsession. And her constant assumed superiority in everything from fashion to stress management (not to mention the broad and blatant cultural stereotyping) make this book virtually unreadable.

However. It is peppered with quite a few recipes, based on seasonal produce, which look to be both delicious and fairly easy to make. And she also includes quite a few "recipes" for natural skin and hair treatments. Which is why I've not thrown away my copy, and also why I've given the book one star more than its writing deserves. If you can get past the author's egregious attitude, there's some good stuff inside.

Jill says

I really like her books because she focuses on eating for pleasure, but in moderation with local, seasonal, organic foods. She talks about how, essentially, the French do not have the puritanical mindset when it comes to food, so they are able to eat what they like and make allowances for that in other areas of their consumption because they can be honest with themselves about their eating. In this book she has more recipes, and includes ideas for entertaining, exercising, and dressing with the ease and aplomb of a Frenchwoman rather than the tortured, self-denial/punishment of a typical American woman. Her book gives some very useful information about menu planning and wine selections to go various foods. That part of the book functions as more of a reference book. You would need to have it on hand in order to use it effectively. I have made a couple of her recipes and used the leftovers according to her instructions and it was GOOD. They are going into the regular rotation.

Sherry says

As others have already voiced here, I too was rolling my eyes as I read her recommendations on cutting your banana in half or eating just "magical leek soup" (i.e., broth) for a weekend as a cleanse. Also, the occasional descriptions on how to tie scarves in nifty ways seemed to come from left field even if appearance and fashion were a secondary focus of the book. That said, after having read this cover-to-cover I can appreciate the overall collection of simple recipes, insights into French culture and attitude vis-a-vis food, and the discussion of *joie de vivre* through food. I really liked the section describing wine and food pairings and plan to try some of her recommendations. As someone who lived in France for a year, the cultural descriptions seem spot-on and the idea of focusing on quality instead of quantity makes a lot of sense when it comes to enjoying what you serve at the dinner table. Despite my initial skepticism and mild annoyance in the beginning chapters, I grew to appreciate what the author had to offer in this book, including personal stories from her own life. I look forward to trying some new recipes, and moreover enjoying food even more than I already do.
