



THE COOK'S ATELIER

ISSUE THREE / ESSAY

Words by Marjorie Taylor Photographs by Young & Hungry

“Burgundy is heaven on earth”

MARJORIE TAYLOR WAS SO INSPIRED BY THE TRADITIONS AND CULTURE OF BURGUNDY, SHE IS NOW LIVING HER DREAM AND RUNNING THE COOK'S ATELIER IN BEAUNE, FRANCE.

There are people in life that are compelled to leave both the place where they were born and the culture in which they were raised, all in the name of love. That's what I did, but it wasn't for a man. I moved to Beaune, France, for the love of good food, family traditions and the pursuit of something special: a life rich in simplicity, the French markets and a culture passionate about its culinary traditions.

Tucked away on a tiny street in the historic center of Beaune is the Cook's Atelier, a small cooking school devoted to exploring the regional culinary traditions, local food artisans and the small family farms in Burgundy. Beaune is a well-preserved medieval city in the center of the Côte d'Or winemaking region. It's the perfect small French town with quaint cafes, wonderful *patisseries* and *boulangeries* that still bake bread from scratch. It's an international town with a quiet, fierce, Burgundian pride, rooted in traditions.

For a cook, Burgundy is heaven on earth. Having left the restaurant business, I traveled to France to immerse myself in the culture and was given the opportunity to work with noted teacher and cookbook author, Anne Willan, at her chateau in Burgundy. It was such a life-changing experience for me that I flew back to the States, sold everything and moved to France full-time to pursue my dream. I imagined a special place where people could learn to cook, a business that supported the local artisan food producers and sustainable agriculture; I have been passionate about the connection between the farmer and the cook since long before it was popular. Most importantly, I wanted to create a *lieu de convivialité*—a place where people come together, cook and have a good time.

As you open the door to the Cook's Atelier, you quickly realize you are in for a special treat. Guests are

welcomed by aromas from the kitchen and are greeted with a glass of chilled *crémant*, the region's sparkling wine. The table is set with fresh flowers, and plenty of candlelight fills the room. Fine glassware mixes with vintage French linen napkins, and an assortment of winter squash adorns the fireplace. The apartment is a light-filled space, and the *décor* is simple, with wooden floors and pale walls. The season's offerings are casually displayed on creamy white vintage French platters, and they fill the apartment with the colors of the season. There's a large bowl filled with apples just picked from the garden, and Madame Petit's cornichons are displayed on the dining room buffet. Open shelves, lining the walls in the *atelier*, are filled with vintage finds from the local *brocantes*, homemade *confiture* and favorite cookbooks. Vegetables gathered from the morning's visit to Madame Loichet's garden fill the table in the kitchen.

The Cook's Atelier is a magical place where people come together to celebrate real food, made from scratch. No chef's whites here; it's real cooking in the tradition of French grandmothers rather than *haute cuisine*. The Cook's Atelier is much more than a traditional cooking school; the convivial aspects and the friendships that are formed are just as important as the recipes. You never know with whom you will be sharing dinner —guests come from all over the world to cook and share a meal together. We honor the relationships that we have with the people who spend their lives growing good food, as well as the traditions passed down from generations of cooks. We work with locals such as Monsieur Méneger, a chef and farmer who is passionate about heritage breeds of pigs and chickens; Madame Loichet, who gathers the produce from her garden for the Saturday morning market in Beaune; Monsieur Vossot, an artisan butcher who takes pride in preserving the craft of the traditional French butcher; Madame Petit, who always has fresh eggs; and Madame Pechoux, who grows the most beautiful winter greens I have ever seen. It's more than just a cooking class; it's a unique experience that fosters the connection between the farmer and the cook. Lifelong friendships are made among the guests as they share a meal and a good glass of Pinot Noir. They learn the techniques of traditional French food in a relaxing and convivial environment, and they learn the importance of connecting with the people who grow the food that they eat.

Good food is so much more than recipes. It's about sharing a meal with those you love, learning new traditions and creating traditions of your own. So pour yourself a glass of wine and prepare a special dinner for your family and friends in celebration of simple food and good company around the table.

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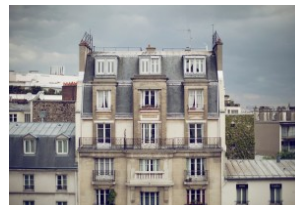
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