



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

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

*Mireille Guiliano*

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Book by Guiliano Mireille

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**Mireille Guiliano**

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477 pages

Extrait

**Ouverture**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Thus Charles Dickens began his *Tale of Two Cities* a century and a half ago. The cities he imagined were Paris and London. The countries he was contrasting were revolutionary France and late-eighteenth-century England. Two opposing worlds, two points of view. And two divergent destinies. When I wrote *French Women Don't Get Fat*, I had in mind two disparate worlds of eating: the French and the American. Also, to a lesser extent, two cities, Paris and New York. What I did not realize at the time was that I was in fact writing a tale of two global cultures increasingly without borders. For better and worse, where you live no longer dictates how you eat. It's up to you.

Even in our ever more complex world, it is still possible to have our cake and eat it too, to enjoy our days to the fullest in many ways while embracing a time-tested, back-to-basics approach to life—one filled with quality, sensitivity, seasonal foods, and pleasure. I don't want to live in the past, but I *do* want to learn from it, and I believe that the culture of moderation, painstaking attention to taste, and healthy eating and living that I absorbed growing up in France can be adapted to today's world and pursued just about anywhere. This is not to say I don't understand or appreciate firsthand the challenges women these days face: the pressures of too much to do in too little time, of mega portions and industrially produced food often eaten on the run.

For a long time, this clash of cultural and lifestyle perspectives and outcomes took shape in my mind as a contrast between on the one hand fundamental elements of French culture and on the other behaviors I learned in America. But with the appearance of *French Women Don't Get Fat* in language after language, I have come to understand that what I thought of as a national divide is really only an emblem for a conflict of two world orders. While I certainly don't think I have all the solutions to this conflict, or any highly specialized expertise—I try not to take myself too seriously—I still have more experiences and secrets (and many more recipes and weekly menus) to share that will help people enjoy a better quality of life—and almost certainly lose weight.

Last fall a French reporter followed me through the Union Square Greenmarket in New York, where we encountered a class of eight-year-olds with their teacher. The kids were participating in a program called Spoons Across America, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to educating children, teachers, and families about the benefits of healthy eating and the value of supporting local farmers and sharing meals around the family table. As it was fall, apples of many varieties were abundantly available. But when the reporter, half kidding, picked one up and asked a little boy what it was, the child drew a blank. Forget the variety; he did not know it was an apple. This city kid had apparently never seen one in real life. It gives one pause. I would bet, though, that he could recognize the packaged apple pie at the McDonald's just opposite the greenmarket.

The world where I grew up—and my experience of apples—in Alsace-Lorraine could not have been farther from this little boy's in New York City. As I recall it, all our neighbors had at least one fruit tree, and we had numerous apple trees in our garden. Come apple-picking time, my job was to place the different varieties we grew into little flat crates called *cagettes*, which we put into the cold cellar for winter storage—a centuries-old practice now mostly gone. What sweet and glorious aromas filled that cellar when I deposited all those baskets! (Tellingly, in French the word for smell, *sentir*, also means feel.) Today I recall the apple smell even more powerfully than the old footage of that autumn ritual I carry around in my head. And, of course, the

harvest meant my mother would once again make an apple pie, *une tarte aux pommes alsacienne*.

In our garden we also had bushes of *groseilles*, tart red currants that are a regional specialty. My mother and I loved to make pies with these tiny berries. The season for red currants is short, and we quickly made jam (*confiture*) or jelly (*gelée*) or pies, and sometimes a sauce (*coulis*). And oh, how we looked forward to this once-a-year treat, which somehow exemplifies for me the French woman's psychological pleasure in food. It is the anticipation and joy that we gain from a pleasure we cannot take for granted and know we will soon lose. Tasting such seasonal bounty heightens our awareness of what we put into our mouths and contrasts with routine, mindless eating that provides little pleasure and often unwanted pounds.

## **Leeks Mozzarella**

*Serves 4*

### Ingredients

2 pounds leeks, white parts only

1 cup fresh basil leaves

8 ounces mozzarella

1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon wine or sherry vinegar

Salt (preferably freshly ground — fleur de sel works magic) and freshly ground pepper

1. Preheat the broiler.
2. Clean the leeks thoroughly, and boil in salted water 6 to 10 minutes, until cooked but still firm, then drain.
3. Put the leeks in a baking dish, and cover with a layer of basil leaves. Cut the mozzarella into 1/4-inch slices, and place atop the basil layer. Put the dish under the preheated broiler, and watch carefully. In 3 to 5 minutes the cheese should start to melt and brown; at this point, remove the dish.
4. Mix the oil and vinegar and drizzle over the mozzarella. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately with a slice of country bread.

## **Mackerel with Carrots and Leeks**

*Serves 4*

*Mackerel, another salmon alternative, offers fine taste and excellent value. It reminds me of fresh tuna twenty years ago, when it was relatively cheap because few wanted it — before the sashimi-sushi craze, when tuna became “toro” and the price went through the roof, leaving only lesser cuts for those of us not wielding a sushi knife. A mackerel mania may not be far off, so get with it while the getting is still good. The best fishing begins in May or June, and the season runs into fall. (Ditto for sardines.) A lovely Spanish lady who works at a Union Square Greenmarket fish booth gave me the following very simple preparation for this delicious, underappreciated fish.*

## Ingredients

3 tablespoons olive oil  
4 tablespoons minced fresh rosemary  
2 tablespoons minced shallots  
Juice of 1 lemon  
1 1/2 pounds mackerel fillets  
Salt and freshly ground pepper  
Carrot-leek mixture from previous recipe

1. Make a marinade by combining 2 tablespoons of the oil with the rosemary, shallots, and lemon juice. Pour over the mackerel, and marinate 10 to 20 minutes.
2. Warm the remaining oil in a large skillet, and cook the mackerel over medium heat, about 3 minutes on each side.
3. Season with salt and pepper to taste (be careful not to oversalt, as mackerel is already salty), and serve with the carrot-leek mixture. *Revue de presse*

### **Praise for *French Women Don't Get Fat*:**

“You’ve heard it before. . . . But somehow, when the advice comes from Mireille Guiliano, you actually listen. A perfect, slim (and slimming) read for dieters and bon vivants alike.”

–*Marie Claire*

“She spurs readers to give up the guilt and dieting extremes, to eat smarter and more joyfully. . . . Her writing, like her three-meals-a-day diet, is all part of her joie de vivre.”

–*Women’s Wear Daily*

“The past few years have been dominated by ‘scientific’ diets . . . I welcome this break from the usual kind of quick-fix diet book . . . Will this book transform one’s eating habits? Its good sense is unanswerable – and, personally, I love the bit about not going to the gym.”

–Lynne Truss, bestselling author of **Eats, Shoots & Leaves**

“Mireille Guiliano’s book is slender, elegant, well-spoken, sensible, and unembarrassed by the frank embrace of stratagems – just like the French women whom she holds up to the reader to admire and, if we can, to emulate.”

–Adam Gopnik, author of **Paris to the Moon**

“**French Women Don’t Get Fat** is not only charming and witty, but useful. It made me want to run out and buy a pound of leeks and a bottle of Champagne!”

–Sharon Boorstin, author of **Cooking for Love** and **Let Us Eat Cake**

“Through stories and recipes, Mireille Guiliano shares her tricks, just like a good girlfriend should. And since it reads like one big juicy secret, you’re inclined to listen.”

–*The Globe and Mail*

“A charming, humorous look at the healthy food habits that French women have had for years.”

–*Canadian Living* Présentation de l’éditeur

For the legions of fans who asked for seconds after devouring **French Women Don’t Get Fat**, a charming and practical guide to adding some joie to your vie and to your table, every day of the year.

By letter, by email and in person, readers of Mireille Guiliano's phenomenal bestseller **French Women Don't Get Fat** have inundated her with requests for more advice. Her answer: this buoyant new book, brimming with tips and tricks for living with the utmost pleasure and style, without gaining weight.

More than a theory or ideal, the French woman's way is an all-encompassing program that can be practised anytime, anywhere. Here are four full seasons of strategies for shopping, cooking and moving throughout the year. Whether your aim is finding two scoopfuls of pleasure in one of crème brûlée, or entertaining beautifully when time is short and expectations are high, the answers are here. And here too are 100 new simple and appetizing recipes that feature French staples such as leeks and chocolate and many more unexpected treats besides, guaranteeing that boredom will never be a guest at your table.

Woven through this year of living *comme les françaises* are more of Mireille's delectable stories about living in Paris and New York and travelling just about everywhere else – in the voice that has already beguiled a million honorary French women. Lest anyone still wonder: here is a new compendium of reasons – both traditional and modern – why French women don't get fat.

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