

Julia Child My Life In France

Julia Child's "My Life in France": A Culinary Journey Through Parisian Life

** Julia Child's "My Life in France" is more than just a memoir; it's a captivating exploration of a life transformed by passion, perseverance, and a profound appreciation for French culture. This guide delves deep into the book, examining its various facets – from the author's personal experiences to the lessons it offers for aspiring cooks and travelers alike. We'll explore how Child navigated Parisian life, the culinary discoveries she made, and the enduring impact of her journey. A Glimpse into Parisian Life: Beyond the Kitchen

Child's memoir isn't just about cooking; it's a vivid portrayal of daily life in postwar Paris. She meticulously details the challenges of adapting to a new environment, from learning the language to navigating social customs.

- **Cultural Immersion: The book underscores the importance of immersing oneself in a new culture. Child doesn't shy away from the initial awkwardness, the frustrating language barriers, and the subtle social cues that shaped her experience.**
- **Social Dynamics: Child's descriptions of Parisian social gatherings, from intimate dinners at friends' homes to grand parties, offer valuable insights into the social fabric of French life. For instance, the importance of "the art of the table" is meticulously portrayed, highlighting etiquette and conversation nuances.**
- **Personal Growth: The book reveals Child's personal growth and transformation as she embraces French culture and learns to navigate her new identity. This aspect is crucial; it shows that personal evolution is interconnected with cultural understanding.**

Navigating the Parisian Culinary Landscape: A Step-by-Step Approach

Child's journey wasn't just about cooking; it was about understanding and appreciating French cuisine.

- **Understanding the Fundamentals: Child emphasizes the importance of basic techniques. Learning to properly chop vegetables, master sauces, and prepare stocks, forms the bedrock of French cooking. Her approach is practical; she doesn't shy away from the hard work required to achieve mastery.**
- **Exploring Local Markets: Child vividly portrays her experiences exploring Parisian markets, highlighting the freshness and variety of local ingredients. Visiting a local market, like the Marché des Enfants Rouges, becomes a crucial part of the culinary experience. This emphasizes the importance of sourcing fresh, quality ingredients.**
- **Mastering French Techniques: The book showcases techniques like deglazing and sautéing. Child's precise instructions, while often playful, offer practical guidance. Learning these techniques is crucial for replicating the flavors and textures she describes.**

The Culinary Disclosures: Recipes and Beyond

Child's experiences weren't just about acquiring recipes; they were about developing an appreciation for the art of French cuisine.

- **Beyond the Recipe: The book doesn't just list recipes; it's a detailed description of the entire experience – the preparation, the atmosphere, and the social context.**
- **Tasting and Experimentation: Child encourages experimentation and a willingness to adapt recipes to personal tastes. This is evident in her willingness to adjust dishes based on individual preferences.**
- **The Importance of Patience: Understanding the intricacies of French cooking necessitates patience. Mastering techniques like blanching and poaching requires practice and repetition. Child demonstrates this commitment to honing skills.**

Best Practices and Common Pitfalls

- **Best Practice: Patience and Perseverance: French cooking isn't always quick and easy. The rewards, however, are well worth the effort.**
- **Best Practice: Immersion and Observation: Engage in the process by learning from the local chefs and experienced cooks. Observation is a powerful tool to absorb techniques and refine your understanding.**
- **Common Pitfall: Overcomplicating the Process: Don't get overwhelmed by the sheer number of techniques. Start with basics and gradually build upon them.**
- **Common Pitfall: Ignoring the Context: Remember that French cooking is deeply intertwined with French culture. Understand the context, and you can better appreciate the nuances of the dishes.**
- **Common Pitfall: Lack of Ingredient Knowledge: Familiarity with French ingredients is crucial. Learning about**

different types of cheeses, vegetables, and herbs can elevate the culinary experience. A Lasting Legacy Julia Child's "My Life in France" transcends the realm of a simple memoir. It's an inspiring guide for anyone interested in cooking, traveling, and immersing themselves in a new culture. The book highlights the importance of patience, perseverance, and an unwavering passion for food and experience. It's a testament to the transformational power of embracing new challenges and cultural immersion.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is the significance of Julia Child's memoir for aspiring cooks? Child's book inspires a deep understanding of French culinary traditions. Her detailed descriptions and practical advice offer a blueprint for aspiring cooks to explore and master techniques, ingredients, and social etiquette associated with French cuisine.

2. How can the book help one navigate Parisian life? The book unveils practical and interpersonal insights into navigating French social interactions, from restaurant etiquette to everyday conversations. It's a useful toolkit for understanding cultural nuances, mastering the language, and building relationships in a new environment.

3. What are some crucial takeaway techniques described in the book? **The book offers a practical toolkit for mastering techniques such as sautéing, deglazing, and making stocks and sauces. These techniques, presented in a digestible way, can translate into various culinary styles.**

4. How can the book influence one's culinary approach? The book emphasizes the importance of appreciating the entire culinary experience, encompassing ingredient sourcing, preparation, and appreciation. This creates a more immersive and nuanced understanding of the art of French cuisine.

5. What is the significance of Child's personal experiences in the book? Child's personal experiences provide a relatable framework for readers to connect with her passion and determination in navigating a new culture. This relatability transcends generational differences, creating an enduring appeal for both new and seasoned cooks and travelers.

Ah, [Julia Child and France](#) – a pairing as iconic and delicious as a perfectly roasted chicken with pommes de terre sarladaises. For many of us, our first real introduction to the culinary world wasn't through a Michelin-starred restaurant or a fancy cookbook, but through the booming, infectious laughter and unwavering enthusiasm of Julia Child herself. And the heart of that enthusiasm, the place where her culinary journey truly began and blossomed, was France. Her memoir, *My Life in France*, isn't just a story about food; it's a testament to passion, perseverance, and the transformative power of embracing a new culture.

My Life in France: A Culinary Awakening

Before she became a household name, a television pioneer, and a culinary icon, Julia McWilliams was a Californian girl with a decidedly uninspired palate. Her early life, as detailed in *My Life in France*, reveals a woman who was, by her own admission, not a natural cook. This is precisely what makes her story so relatable and inspiring. It wasn't about innate talent; it was about discovery, dedication, and, most importantly, a profound love affair with French food and culture that ignited later in life.

The Spark of Inspiration: Post-War Paris

The catalyst for Julia's culinary transformation was her husband, Paul Child, and their move to Paris in 1948. The end of World War II marked a new era, and for Julia, it was a sensory explosion. She describes her first meal in France – sole meunière – with a vividness that transports the reader directly to the Parisian brasserie. That single dish, perfectly prepared and utterly delightful, was the spark that ignited her lifelong passion. It wasn't just the taste; it was the entire experience – the setting, the service, the sheer artistry of it all. This initial encounter with authentic French cuisine was the pivotal moment that would shape her future.

Le Cordon Bleu and the Birth of a Chef

Driven by her newfound passion, Julia enrolled in Le Cordon Bleu, the prestigious Parisian culinary school. Here, amidst the clatter of copper pots and the fragrant aroma of simmering stocks, she began her rigorous training. *My Life in France* paints a picture of a dedicated student, sometimes stumbling but always determined. She faced challenges, grappled with French culinary terminology, and poured over recipes with the intensity of a scholar. Her classmates, a diverse group of aspiring chefs, became a supportive community, and her instructors, often stern but knowledgeable, guided her through the intricacies of classic French cooking. This period was crucial in laying the foundation for her future endeavors, equipping her with the technical skills and a deep understanding of culinary principles.

Paul Child: The Supportive Partner

It's impossible to talk about Julia's journey without acknowledging the unwavering support of her husband, Paul. A man of intellect and quiet encouragement, Paul was instrumental in her success. He embraced her passion wholeheartedly, even when it meant sacrificing a more conventional life. His own diplomatic career took them to different parts of France, and each new location offered Julia fresh culinary discoveries and opportunities to hone her skills. His belief in her, his willingness to taste her experiments (both successful and not-so-successful), and his understanding of her dedication were the bedrock upon which her culinary empire was built. Their shared love for France and its gastronomy was a cornerstone of their marriage.

The Birth of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking"

Perhaps the most significant achievement born from Julia's French sojourn was the creation of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Co-authored with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, this groundbreaking cookbook was more than just a collection of recipes; it was a mission to demystify French cuisine for the American home cook. Julia's firsthand experience at Le Cordon Bleu and her years of meticulous testing and refinement were poured into its pages. *My Life in France* offers a fascinating glimpse into the arduous process of writing and publishing this monumental work. The years of testing, re-testing, and translating complex French culinary techniques into accessible English were a testament to their collective dedication. The book's success was phenomenal, forever changing the landscape of home cooking in America and beyond. It made sophisticated French cooking approachable, turning even the most intimidated home cooks into confident culinary adventurers.

The Challenge of Translation and Adaptation

One of the greatest challenges in creating *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was translating the nuances of French culinary language and techniques for an American audience. Julia, with her keen understanding of both cultures, was the perfect bridge. She didn't just translate words; she translated the *spirit* of French cooking. She insisted on using readily available ingredients and provided detailed, step-by-step instructions that left no room for ambiguity. This meticulous attention to detail, evident throughout *My Life in France*, is what made the cookbook so revolutionary. It empowered readers to recreate authentic French dishes in their own kitchens, a feat previously thought impossible for the average home cook.

Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle: The French Connection

The collaboration with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle was essential to the success of the cookbook. These two French women brought their deep knowledge of French culinary traditions and their own testing kitchens. *My Life in France* portrays the evolving dynamic between the three women – their shared passion, their occasional

disagreements, and their ultimate respect for each other's contributions. This intercontinental collaboration, fueled by a shared love for food and a desire to share it with the world, is a beautiful aspect of the narrative. It highlights how diverse perspectives can lead to something truly extraordinary.

From Page to Screen: The Television Star

The publication of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was just the beginning. The book's immense popularity naturally led to television. Julia's appearance on a book review show in 1963 was serendipitous. Her natural charisma, her unpretentious demeanor, and her sheer joy in cooking captivated the audience. This led to the birth of "The French Chef," a groundbreaking television program that brought Julia Child and French cuisine directly into American living rooms. *My Life in France* touches upon this transition, portraying Julia's initial hesitations and her eventual embrace of this new medium. She remained true to herself, her infectious enthusiasm undimmed by the cameras. The success of "The French Chef" was extraordinary, making Julia Child a national treasure and a beloved figure in American culture. Her ability to connect with viewers on a personal level, to make cooking seem fun and achievable, was her superpower.

"The French Chef": A Revolution in Home Cooking

Through "The French Chef," Julia democratized French cooking. She wasn't afraid to make mistakes on air, to laugh at herself, or to offer practical tips and advice. Her signature sign-off, "Bon appétit!", became an iconic catchphrase, synonymous with good food and good company. The show's enduring legacy lies in its ability to inspire generations of home cooks to experiment in the kitchen, to embrace new ingredients, and to find joy in the process of creating delicious meals. *My Life in France* provides context for this television phenomenon, showing how her early experiences in France directly informed her on-screen persona and her teaching style.

Julia's Enduring Legacy and Impact

Julia Child's influence extends far beyond her cookbooks and television shows. She championed fresh, quality ingredients, encouraged experimentation, and reminded us that cooking should be an act of love and generosity. *My Life in France* is a testament to her belief that anyone can cook, given the right guidance and a willing spirit. Her approachability, her humor, and her genuine passion for food continue to inspire chefs, home cooks, and food lovers alike. She proved that a life dedicated to a passion, no matter how unconventional, can lead to extraordinary fulfillment and a lasting impact on the world. Her life story is a delicious reminder that it's never too late to discover your passion and to embrace new adventures.

Reading *My Life in France* is like sitting down for a delightful meal with Julia herself. You'll find yourself chuckling at her anecdotes, marveling at her dedication, and perhaps even inspired to don an apron and whip up a batch of her famous boeuf bourguignon. It's a book that nourishes the soul as much as it does the stomach, a true celebration of life, love, and the enduring magic of French cuisine. For anyone who has ever enjoyed a perfectly cooked meal or dreamt of culinary adventures, Julia Child's journey in France is an essential and utterly charming read.

The Transformative Journey of Julia Child in France: A Life Redefined

Julia Child's time in France was far more than a brief sojourn—it was a profound transformation that reshaped both her identity and the American culinary landscape. Arriving in Paris in the early 1960s, she immersed herself in a

world where food was not merely sustenance but an art form deeply rooted in tradition, precision, and passion. This pivotal period marked the beginning of her lifelong connection with French cuisine, a relationship that would inspire generations of home cooks and professional chefs alike.

Roots of Culinary Awakening in Paris

Upon her arrival, Julia Child was struck by the elegance and discipline of French cooking, a world vastly different from the casual American kitchen. She dedicated herself to mastering the fundamentals—learning classical techniques, understanding the role of ingredients, and embracing the patience required for mastering sauces and pastries. Her time at Le Cordon Bleu and experiences in renowned kitchens provided more than technical training; they ignited a creative spark that would redefine how Americans approached cooking. Rather than seeing food as a chore, she embraced it as a journey of discovery, discipline, and joy.

Cultural Impact and Legacy of a Culinary Visionary

Julia Child's presence in France was instrumental in bridging cultural divides through food. Her seminal work, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, published in 1961, became a cornerstone of American culinary education, but her deeper influence stemmed from the philosophy she brought to the table: that cooking should be accessible, joyful, and rooted in respect for tradition. In France, she became a symbol of American authenticity, not by imitation, but by genuine admiration and deep study. Her ability to convey the soul of French cuisine with warmth and clarity earned her respect among culinary purists and everyday cooks, fostering a mutual appreciation between French and American gastronomy.

Applications and Lasting Benefits for Modern Cooks

The insights gained from Julia Child's French years continue to resonate in today's kitchens. Her emphasis on technique, ingredient quality, and methodical practice remains a vital foundation for both novice cooks and seasoned chefs. From the precise folding of a béchamel sauce to the delicate balance of flavors in a coq au vin, her principles underscore the importance of patience and attention to detail. Moreover, her belief that cooking is an act of love—rooted in curiosity and respect—inspires a more mindful, creative approach to food preparation. This philosophy has empowered countless individuals to explore culinary arts with confidence and curiosity.

The Future of Julia Child's Culinary Vision

As home cooking continues to evolve, Julia Child's legacy in France endures as a guiding light. Her journey reminds us that true culinary mastery begins with humility and a willingness to learn. In an era where convenience often overshadows craftsmanship, her vision offers a powerful counterpoint—encouraging cooks to slow down, engage deeply, and celebrate the art of transformation. Whether through her timeless recipes, her television presence, or the enduring cultural bridge she built, Julia Child's presence in France remains a testament to how food can unite cultures, elevate lives, and inspire generations to cook with passion and purpose.

A Culinary Odyssey: Unpacking Julia Child's "My Life in France"

Julia Child's *"My Life in France"* is more than just a memoir; it's a vibrant tapestry woven with the threads of culinary discovery, personal growth, and the enduring power of passion. Published in 2006, a year before her

passing, this posthumous work offers an intimate glimpse into the formative years that shaped the iconic chef and television personality. For fans of Julia Child, food history enthusiasts, and anyone seeking inspiration, "My Life in France" is an indispensable read, illuminating the journey of an American woman who dared to embrace a foreign culture and, in doing so, revolutionized the American kitchen.

This detailed analysis delves into the heart of Child's narrative, exploring its key themes, its literary merits, and its lasting significance. We'll uncover the ingredients that made her French sojourn a culinary awakening, the challenges she overcame, and the profound impact her experiences had on her subsequent career and legacy. This exploration will also highlight how "My Life in France" continues to resonate with readers, offering timeless lessons in perseverance, the joy of learning, and the transformative power of good food.

The Genesis of a Culinary Icon: From Wartime Service to Parisian Dreams

"My Life in France" begins not with a whisk or a perfectly browned soufflé, but with Julia McWilliams, a spirited and adventurous young woman from California. The early chapters paint a picture of her pre-French life, including her service in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II. It was in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and China that she met and married Paul Child, a sophisticated diplomat who would become her steadfast partner and champion. This wartime experience, though seemingly distant from the gastronomic world, instilled in Julia a sense of independence and a willingness to embrace the unknown, qualities that would serve her exceptionally well in France.

The pivotal moment arrived in 1948 when Paul's diplomatic career took them to Paris. For Julia, who had never been particularly interested in cooking, this move was a cultural shock and, unbeknownst to her, the beginning of a profound transformation. The sheer sensory overload of Paris – the aromas wafting from boulangeries, the vibrant markets, the exquisite flavors – captivated her. She describes her first taste of sole meunière with an almost religious fervor, a culinary epiphany that ignited a lifelong passion. This early encounter with authentic French cuisine was the spark that would ultimately lead to the creation of "The Joy of Cooking" reimagined for the American palate.

The Parisian Apprenticeship: Embracing the French Way of Cooking

Central to "My Life in France" is Julia's immersion in the rigorous and often demanding world of French culinary education. Upon arrival, she enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu, the renowned Parisian cooking school. The narrative vividly recounts her initial struggles: her height (she was over six feet tall) making it difficult to navigate the compact kitchen, her initial awkwardness with French culinary techniques, and the linguistic barriers she faced. However, Julia's innate determination and her unyielding curiosity propelled her forward. She wasn't afraid to make mistakes; in fact, she embraced them as learning opportunities.

The book details her rigorous training under esteemed chefs, her participation in a group of women who shared her burgeoning passion – Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle being the most significant. These friendships were crucial. Together, they embarked on the monumental task of compiling a comprehensive cookbook that would demystify French cooking for the American home cook. The meticulous research, the countless recipe tests, and the collaborative spirit are palpable in Child's writing. She conveys the sheer joy and camaraderie that came from this shared endeavor, a testament to the power of collective effort in achieving ambitious goals. This period of intense study and experimentation laid the groundwork for her later success, demonstrating the importance of foundational knowledge and dedicated practice.

"Mastering the Art of French Cooking": A Culinary Landmark

The journey to publishing "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" is a significant arc within "My Life in France." Child's account of the rejections, the revisions, and the eventual triumph of finding a publisher (Alfred A. Knopf) is a compelling narrative of perseverance. The book itself, published in 1961, was a revelation. It was not simply a collection of recipes; it was a culinary bible, replete with detailed instructions, clear explanations of techniques, and an encouraging tone that made French cuisine accessible. Julia's authentic voice, her humor, and her unpretentious approach shone through, resonating with a generation of American women eager to explore new culinary horizons.

"My Life in France" provides the behind-the-scenes context for this groundbreaking cookbook. It highlights the collaborative efforts, the painstaking attention to detail, and the unwavering belief these women had in their project. The book's success was not an overnight phenomenon; it was the result of years of dedication and a deep understanding of what American home cooks needed to succeed. The detailed descriptions of recipe testing, from perfecting the béchamel sauce to achieving the ideal consistency for a Hollandaise, offer invaluable insights into the meticulous process of cookbook creation. It emphasizes the importance of clear, actionable instructions and the power of a well-tested recipe.

The Television Years and Beyond: Bringing French Flavors to America

While "My Life in France" primarily focuses on her early years, it naturally segues into the beginnings of her television career. The unexpected success of "The French Chef," which premiered in 1963, is recounted with Julia's characteristic humility and surprise. She describes how her on-screen persona, so different from the polished television hosts of the era, struck a chord with audiences. Her willingness to be herself, to make mistakes and recover with grace and humor, made her relatable and inspiring. The show, filmed in her own kitchen, brought the magic of French cooking directly into American living rooms, breaking down the perceived barriers of complexity and pretension.

The memoir touches upon the impact of her television work, the subsequent cookbooks, and her enduring influence on American culinary culture. She remained a champion of home cooking, advocating for fresh ingredients, proper technique, and the sheer pleasure of preparing and sharing food. Her approach to cooking was always about empowering individuals, encouraging them to experiment and to find joy in the process. The book captures her infectious enthusiasm and her belief that anyone could cook delicious food with the right guidance and a little bit of courage. This period solidified her status as a beloved cultural figure and a culinary innovator.

Themes and Enduring Legacy: More Than Just Recipes

"My Life in France" offers a rich tapestry of interwoven themes that contribute to its enduring appeal. At its core, it's a story of **embracing the unfamiliar**. Julia's willingness to step outside her comfort zone and immerse herself in French culture and cuisine is a powerful testament to the rewards of curiosity and open-mindedness. Her journey highlights the importance of **lifelong learning**, demonstrating that age and prior experience are not barriers to acquiring new skills and passions.

Another significant theme is the **power of friendship and collaboration**. The deep bonds forged with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle were instrumental in the success of "Mastering the Art of French Cooking." Their shared vision and mutual support underscore the idea that great achievements are often the result of collective effort. Furthermore, the memoir is a celebration of **passion and perseverance**. Julia's unwavering dedication to her culinary pursuits, despite numerous challenges, serves as an inspiring example for anyone pursuing a dream. Her resilience in the face of setbacks is a crucial element of her story.

Finally, "My Life in France" is a profound exploration of ****finding one's voice and purpose****. Julia Child, an unlikely culinary figure, discovered her calling later in life. Her story shows that it's never too late to pursue what brings you joy and fulfillment. Her authentic, unpretentious, and often humorous persona resonated deeply with audiences, and her legacy continues to inspire home cooks and aspiring chefs alike. Her emphasis on the joy of cooking and sharing food remains a vital message in today's fast-paced world. The book, and her life's work, continues to influence culinary education, food writing, and the very way Americans approach their kitchens.

In conclusion, Julia Child's "My Life in France" is a delicious and insightful read that offers a compelling narrative of transformation, discovery, and enduring passion. It's a reminder that the path to mastery is often paved with challenges, but with dedication, curiosity, and a good dose of humor, even the most daunting culinary adventures can lead to extraordinary achievements. The book remains a vital piece of culinary literature, offering a timeless testament to the woman who brought France into American kitchens and inspired generations to cook with confidence and joy.

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Questions & Answers About julia child my life in france

No	Question	Answer
1	What's the most surprising thing Julia Child reveals about her early life in France?	Julia Child shares that before culinary adventures, she had no interest in cooking and was initially quite clumsy in the kitchen. Her love for food and cooking bloomed only after moving to France with her husband, Paul.
2	Beyond the food, what's the emotional core of 'My Life in France'?	The book is deeply about embracing a new culture, finding passion later in life, and the enduring love and support between Julia and her husband, Paul, as they navigate their Parisian life together.
3	How did Julia Child learn to cook, and what was her breakthrough moment?	Julia learned by immersing herself in French culture and taking classes at the prestigious Le Cordon Bleu. Her breakthrough came when she and her friends, Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, decided to create a French cookbook for American audiences.
4	What challenges did Julia Child face in writing 'Mastering the Art of French Cooking'?	Besides her initial lack of cooking experience, she faced skepticism from publishers, the daunting task of translating complex French techniques for American home cooks, and the sheer volume of testing and writing required.
5	What's Julia Child's perspective on the difference between French and American cuisine at the time?	She saw a significant gap, noting that American food was often simpler and less refined. She was dedicated to demystifying French cooking, emphasizing fresh ingredients and proper technique to elevate home cooking.
6	How does 'My Life in France' capture the essence of post-war Paris?	The memoir vividly describes the sights, sounds, and tastes of Paris in the late 1940s and 1950s, painting a picture of a city rebuilding and a culinary scene that captivated Julia with its richness and tradition.
7	What role did Paul Child play in Julia's culinary journey?	Paul was an incredibly supportive husband who encouraged Julia's passions. His diplomatic career led them to France, and his refined palate and appreciation for good food provided constant inspiration and a loving partnership.
8	What's the lasting message or takeaway from Julia Child's memoir?	The enduring message is that it's never too late to discover a passion, to embrace new experiences with gusto, and that with dedication and a bit of courage, anyone can achieve extraordinary things.

Julia Child life in France, Julia Child French cooking journey, Julia Child Paris culinary life, Julia Child Paris food adventures, Julia Child in France culinary experiences, Julia Child and French cuisine influence, Julia Child's life in France culinary legacy, Julia Child living in France gastronomy, Julia Child Paris life and recipes, Julia Child France cooking philosophy

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They offer continuity amid change.

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