The intercom squawks: “Julia? Judith Jones is on line 1.”

Julia walks slowly across the kitchen, breathing audibly, and presses the speakerphone button.

“Hi there!” she says.

The voice of Judith Jones replies, “Hi! Just checking to see how you’re doing.”

“Well, we’re just measuring a large pinch,” Julia says. She’s matter-of-fact.

A restrained giggle, a pause, and then Judith’s voice again:

“I think that depends upon who’s pinching whom.”

“We are talking about salt,” says Julia. “And we’re doing pretty well, I think.”

October 5 was one of six sessions that I had with Julia in 1998 to discuss, edit, and occasionally test recipes. This day had more talk and less cooking than some of the others, as it was our last meeting before Julia went to Europe and then to her Santa Barbara home for the winter. We hoped to review as many of my drafts as possible so that she could take and revise them.

In most respects, however, the excerpts here are no different from scores of others that could be drawn from our workdays on Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home. They would all show, I think, how hard she worked at age eighty-six; illustrate her professional standards; and resound with her unique voice and stylistic speech. I do hope that these selections show the particular challenges of making this book, an unusual collaborative effort for the main authors, the editor, and me. Listening to Julia’s voice, I appreciate anew how she adapted to the restrictions and realities of the team process (and her own limitations) but did not compromise on the substance that she wanted in the book.

Nearly everything that follows was actually said. But because this is a subjective selection from our conversations and not a scholarly work, on occasion I have had to guess at garbled or missing words, and I have sometimes changed the order of our statements (though never the tenor of the discussion). In a very few instances I have collapsed statements that Julia made at different moments into a single passage. I frequently suggest, in brackets, the tonal quality, actions, emphases, expostulations, and pauses that I hear, in the hope that they make the printed words more vital and meaningful.

Those readers with a copy of Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home can check the book to see how the various matters that Julia addressed on October 5, 1998, were resolved (or not) in print. More significant than any one thing we did that day, however, is that in the months following our conversation Julia took over writing her commentaries and added a score of recipes on her own as well as several lengthy informational sections.

Julia was writing again, more than she had in years. Judith Jones always seemed happy to tell me that Julia had completely rewritten one of my drafts. On our next project, Julia’s Kitchen...
Wisdom, Julia immediately rewrote whatever I sent in. Unfortunately, she can’t change what I’ve put down here.

Excerpt 1: *Pan Bagnat*—Sandwich Recipes Are NOT Written in Stone!

Many of the recipes considered this day were for sandwiches, which were the subject of an entire TV episode. One we discussed at length was a draft recipe for the Provençal style salad-in-a-sandwich, *pan bagnat*. The version Julia and Jacques assembled on camera incorporated lettuce, slices of tomato and Brie, black olives, and anchovies—saturated with olive oil and a quick vinaigrette—inside a large focaccia round. Judith had already made edits and expressed concern about what kind of bread to specify.

JC: I am looking at this *pan bagnat*. I think we don’t worry about finding the exact thing—I mean the bread. We should say, “Get something as close to it as you can”; or “Just use your imagination”; or something like that.

DN: That big focaccia on the show was a special focaccia from an artisan bakery near BU [Boston University], quite distinctive. Right now the ingredients list [reads]: “A round of focaccia, or other flat bread, about 10 inches in diameter.” But Judith said they’ll think that might mean a *pita* kind of flat bread—so she wrote…[shuffling of papers]…“or other fairly flat bread.”

JC: Well it isn’t flat. What’s another word for “flat”?

DN: *I first tried “low.”*

JC: But it’s risen…when you get them in France, it’s kind of like on a hamburger bun—about like that [indicates height]. You get them in a charcuterie, already made. And it’s an individual one. When you eat it, it all drips down your elbow. It’s really like a salad niçoise in a hamburger bun—tuna and eggs and salad and olives. Full of oil and garlic and vinaigrette…I think you say that you can use a hamburger bun perfectly well. We have a hamburger bun recipe in *The Way to Cook*, I think, which is fine.

DN: But this is a big one…

JC: You can make it individually. I think we should say that you can use a hamburger bun if you can find one that isn’t too squishy…and even if it is squishy, it doesn’t make too much difference because there’s so much oil and flavor.

The important thing with these recipes is, as we say, NOT written in stone. USE what you can get that will work. DON’T be fussy.

DN [trying to keep up]: Well, actually, what Judith really wants is to give a focaccia recipe. Do you have one? I know there’s one in *Baking with Julia*. And Judith has one, from her bread book. We made it in Vermont. It’s really good.

JC: Let’s use hers! That would be fun! Judith Jones’s Focaccia!—or you could use a hamburger bun.

Excerpt 2: Lobster Rolls—Just Mayo for Julia

Jacques put together two different lobster rolls on the sandwich show: one with cooked lobster chunks bathed in warm butter; and a cold lobster roll with chilled chunks tossed with shredded lettuce, chopped celery, and shallots in a ketchup-mustard-mayo dressing. Julia describes her kind of lobster roll here for the first time, and it became part of her sidebar commentary in the book.

This conversation touches on the subject of homemade mayonnaise, which both Julia and Jacques made on camera (see p.31). But we had barely any recipes in which homemade mayo was used, and this sandwich seemed promising.

JC: Now the lobster rolls. Let’s see the cold one…This is Jacques’s…[pause]…I’d rather not have all that. I think it’s nice to have but I wouldn’t do it that way.

DN: *How would you make the roll?*

JC: I would just do it with a good mayo…and I don’t cut [the lobster] in chunks, I cut the tail in slices. And spread each slice with a bit of mayo.

DN: So you wouldn’t toss the slices with dressing…do you season them?

JC: I season them with salt and pepper and a little lemon juice; you could toss them with that. And of course the mayo is nicely seasoned.

DN: Oh, so this is the kind of thing you would make a homemade mayo for!
The Kitchen Debate: Mayonnaise

Julia’s high regard for Hellman’s became evident during the taping of the mayonnaise segment (in the salad episode) of Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home. Jacques whipped up mayo by hand; Julia made mayonnaise in a food processor. This exchange (jotted down years ago, from uncut tape) followed the conclusion of the segment, with the cameras still rolling:

JC: Hellman’s is still pretty good, I think.

DN: The only thing I object to is too much sugar.

JC: No. I don’t use a homemade mayo a great deal anymore. Do you?

DN: I am now! For the book I mean. That’s one of my questions, when is it worth doing?

[Julia doesn’t answer right away but describes how she reassembles the lobster tail in a split-top hot dog bun, lined with a lettuce leaf. We return to the subject in a few moments.]

DN: But do you doctor up or season Hellman’s [mayonnaise] for this; do you add anything?

JC: I don’t, because the lobster is going to be tossed with the lemon, salt, and pepper, so it doesn’t need it.

[silence for a few moments]

I love Hellman’s, I must say. My dearest French friend—I’m going to be in Paris next Monday—and I am taking her a BIG jar of Hellman’s. She loves it [Julia imitates]: “Le ’ellmans! Le ’ellmans!”

Excerpt 3: A Properly Cooked Lobster

On the television show, no one ever talked about cooking a lobster. So where would the reader get lobster for the lobster rolls? I filled the information gap with a brief sidebar of instructions on steaming a lobster, based on Julia’s method in The Way to Cook. But she wanted more information than I’d included. Indeed, she wanted more information than was found in The Way to Cook.

JC [forcefully]: One thing! It’s terribly important that you open up the lobster to see if it is done. There is no way you can tell by just looking at it or pressing it. The tomalley has to be green—if it isn’t done it’s all black. The only way to tell, I think, is test one and twist the tail and open it up so you can see!

DN: This is really supposed to be short. I’ve abbreviated your basic information, just to go with the lobster rolls. We don’t have lobsters anywhere else in the book…

JC: Well, if you’re going to cook a lobster at all, you should do it properly. And we can do other things with it.

DN: OK. We need to add a line about testing for doneness. So, you want to tell them to…?

JC [deliberately]: When the tomalley has turned green and the roe has turned red, it is definitely done.

DN: Please clarify this for me. I want to be sure I get this right…so they have to twist the tail off?

JC: No, you hold it that way [shows me with her hands]—and twist and open it up so you can see. But you can’t possibly see otherwise! At least I can’t.

DN: But then if you don’t have a female and there’s no roe…

JC: You know how to pick the lobster, though. And you buy them yourself—or have someone pick it for you who knows. And the female is always a little wider…and has those…those [searching for the word]…

DN: Swimmerets…

JC: Yes, swimmerets with fringes. And you can always tell, if you think of it: that those swimmerets [on the female] are there to push the eggs into the stomach. And the ones that are pointy [on the male] are for poking, to help poke them in.
DN: Oh...so you want to suggest looking for a female...

JC: If you want to have lobster bisque, to have that pink sauce, that's what you have to have.

DN: But let's say, if you've bought a male and there's no roe, can you really see the tomalley, just by twisting? Isn't it higher up in the chest? Don't you have to split it to see? You have a really helpful picture somewhere...[flips open The Way to Cook]. Oh, look what you say here [reads, quickly, page 105]: “When are they done? Pull off one of the little legs, and suck out the meat—and if it's done, the lobster's done.” Wouldn't that work, what you wrote before?

JC: But can you really tell from that? You can only really tell when you open it up. 'Cause it's terrible when all that is just black and you've already started...[pauses, looks at the photo in The Way to Cook]...That's a nice bunch of roe in there, isn't it?

[Note to the reader: As this conversation continued, Julia said she wanted to write a recipe for lobster stew. As we explained to Judith when she called that afternoon, we could then add a proper steamed lobster recipe and lobster stew to the fish chapter, rather than a quick steamed lobster summary in the sandwich chapter.

Moreover, we told Judith, Julia was willing to participate in a photo shoot of how to eat a lobster (that was my idea). Eventually, Julia added yet another recipe for lobster à l’américaine and a full page of lobster facts: see pages 248 to 253 in Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home.]

Excerpt 4: Beurre Blanc and a Break before Lunch

We next address a tricky recipe section called “Beurre Blanc Two Ways.” Julia had first presented white butter sauce with precision thirty-seven years earlier in volume one of Mastering the Art of French Cooking, but we had problems now in reconciling the on-camera episodes and book content. Judith wanted extensive additions to my draft, including details of a story Julia had mentioned on camera: how she learned to make authentic beurre Nantais from the legendary cook Mère Michel in Paris in the 1950s. In this segment of tape, after three hours of editing and talking, Julia sounds tired. I suggest that she just glance over an explanatory memo. She could take the rest of the papers to work on later. She seems reluctant to read, however.

DN: Would you like me to read this to you?

JC: Yes.

DN [reads bits from the printed memo]: “Judith and I have decided to present two beurre blanc recipes in a section of sauces for fish. You made the sauce twice...on two different TV segments...and you refer to two methods, the classic ‘slow way’ as done by Mère Michel, and a faster way at the boil.”

Here's the problem, Julia [reads from memo again]: “The two on-camera methods were in fact pretty similar, and neither is what Mère Michel did in her enameled pot. We need you to take the poaching liquid from the poached red snapper and turn it into classic beurre blanc.”

JC [tired]: So the classic method was left out?

DN: Yes. I’ve printed up a recipe format that you can fill in with the amounts. And write the instructions in your words.

JC [tired]: Fine.

DN [gathering papers]: ...Would you like to make some lunch? Take a break?

JC [slightly less tired]: Soon maybe—let’s do something else. What have you got?

[DN shuffling papers]

JC [now rather chipper]: My colleague, Louisette, who really didn’t...You know some people can’t work with other people at all and Louisette really couldn’t. So she never produced anything in that Volume 1 at all. But she did comment on the beurre blanc with Mère Michel...she pointed out that Mère Michel threw the butter from there [gestures?] into the pot.

DN: From a great height?

JC: Yes...and she felt that made a difference.
[For the book, Julia wrote in detail about her visit to Chez La Mère Michel with her Mastering partners, Louisette and Simca. The essay (pages 238 to 241) also serves as a recipe for “classic” beurre blanc. It does not mention throwing the butter from on high, however. On the tape, we discuss a couple more recipes, then Julia excuses herself and moves her chair.]

JC: I think I will go up for a few minutes. What shall we have for lunch? Do you want to make a croque-monsieur?

DN: Yeah, great! Do you have…?

JC: I have ham and cheese in the fridge…just root around.

DN: Good. I'll turn the oven on. We can do a test.

JC: Fine. [She’s rooting around in the fridge.] We have some artichokes. I cooked them last night…for some reason, very very tough artichokes…and some tomatoes…

[Julia heads for the elevator that takes her upstairs; the tape recording stops.]

Excerpt 5: Croque-Monsieur and Lunch

Making croque-monsieurs for lunch was an opportunity to test a recipe for another sandwich from the TV show. Julia uses a two-stage croque-monsieur method: first she browns the outsides of the sandwich in a buttered skillet, then pops the skillet into a 300° oven to properly melt the Swiss cheese inside (a trick she invariably credited to an old edition of Joy of Cooking). On camera, she said that the croque-monsieur would need 3 to 4 minutes in the oven—but the videotape timing was unreliable.

The audiotape resumes when Julia is again seated at the kitchen table. I've assembled and toasted the croque-monsieurs on the stovetop; the skillet is in the oven. Julia sounds refreshed and is quite relaxed. Our conversation throughout lunchtime rambles from specific recipes to larger issues about the book to personal subjects.

DN [opening the oven, bringing the skillet of sandwiches over]: This is about four minutes now. Let's see…[checking]…still kind of cool in the center I think.

JC: No, the cheese hasn’t melted. Put them back…I think you [must] explain, if you have higher heat, you risk browning the bread too much.

DN: That’s a good point [closes oven]. We’ll give it a couple more minutes. I’ll put in a greater range of time.

JC: And say, “You have to judge by looking at it.” And—I always think it’s useful in a recipe to say “I”. “the last time I did it” or “I always like to do this”...

DN: The more you say it the better. You can say it, but I can’t say it on my own.

JC: But you can say it for me.

DN: What would you like with your artichoke? Some melted butter? Or vinaigrette? Or mayonnaise?

JC: Hmm…I would just like a little olive oil and lemon on the table. Very simple.

[rummaging sounds; silence]

DN: A particular bowl or plate for the artichokes?

JC: Anything that works [more silence; then musing]…It’s hard to give directions for timing. It’s hard to say how many minutes for things…[artichokes come to the table]…I have never seen such tough artichokes as these were…[munches]…They’re good though [munches]…The water evaporated a little too soon, so…[munch]…so you have a slight taste of scorch [the skillet comes out of the oven]. Are they done? How long did they take? About five minutes?

DN: Actually…more like eight minutes. I have to change the draft.

JC: And explain why you keep it at 300°, so the bread won’t burn...

DN [preparing a sandwich plate]: Would you like a slice of tomato on the side?

JC: On the side of the sandwich? Yes, a bit…What is your girlfriend’s name? She seems very nice.

DN: Her name is Molly. Molly Welch.

JC: Has she been married before?

DN: No. She has not been.
JC: Would you like to marry her or not?

DN: No…I love her very much. But I still feel like I’m not ready to be married again. It might change…

JC: When did your wife die?

DN: She died five years ago.

JC: Hmmm…Well it’s nice that you don’t have to marry anymore.

DN: Yes, we’re fortunate in that.

JC: I would certainly never want to marry again…but then at my age, I don’t think it’s necessary [the croque-monsieur plate arrives]. That’s very nice [munches]…and that cheese certainly melted.

DN: It could have come out a bit earlier, in fact. I think I’m going to say, “six or seven minutes.”

JC: Or—“six minutes or until…”

DN: Right. Always “or until…”

Excerpt 6: Baked Potatoes, Well Poked

Viewers of the TV series have seen Jacques turn baked potatoes into a butter-rich dish called pommes de terre Macaire (which, when glazed with crème fraîche and Gruyère, become even more luxe pommes de terre Byron). The initial step of baking a potato was not filmed or discussed; logically it had to be in the book. Julia and I first talked about how she baked potatoes in May and in this excerpt; she reviews my draft recipe and Judith’s notes, which ask for suggestions about microwaving.

JC: Now, with baking potatoes, I always poke ’em. I take a potato and do like that [she must gesture]—about twenty stabs with a fork.

DN: You told me and I wrote that in a sidebar section called “How to Bake a Potato.” I sent it to you all a while ago. It was just a description, not a real recipe. Do you remember? But Judith said, “I want a recipe; it needs to be a recipe.” And Jacques looked at it and said, “I don’t do this! I never poke my potato!”

JC: He should do it his way.

DN: OK—that’s what I told Judith: give Jacques’s method as a recipe and Julia’s as a comment…Here’s what you say [reads over her shoulder]: “Before I put them in the oven, I pierce each one deeply with a kitchen fork, on all sides—I will give it a dozen good stabs…” I can change it to twenty stabs.

JC: That doesn’t make any difference. But here…[reads from draft]: “another important question…do not wrap…in aluminum foil [tone of dictating an insert] because it picks up what I call a stifled taste…because the steam does not escape.”

DN: Which is the exact reason you poke them, you say: to avoid the stifled taste.

JC: That’s right. And you have the same problem with mashed potatoes if after you’ve mashed them and so forth, you cover them hermetically—they will pick up that off taste. So you leave them a little bit open; put a spoon under the lid [pauses]. I was so mad—I was doing them for BU and explained all the things about [mashed potatoes] and so on [another pause]. You know people will go by your pot and put the cover on—and you didn’t ask them to…but they do that!

DN [sympathetically]: Somebody did that to you?

JC: They did that to me. I was ready to scalp them! And I am very definitely for microwaving. I just did one last night, first poking all those holes in it. Then I cook it just until it begins to yield to pressure. And then, you have a potato that is sort of a fat oval—on the fat side I cut it open and give it a squoosh…to open it up. Then I put on salt and pepper and a little butter and I finish it up in the oven. That’s nice.

DN [taking notes]: Oh!…so you cook it till it is tender…

JC: Almost—not quite tender.

DN: …“almost, not quite”…

JC: At that point, you could use it for hash browns. I want to give a recipe for Beard’s hash browns, too.

DN: How long does it take in the microwave to get to that point?
JC: This was a big one, so I did it for five minutes. That wasn’t quite enough, so I gave it two minutes more. That was just fine.

DN: Really? So…[still taking notes] “well-poked”…“finish it in the oven”…

JC: …don’t forget “until almost but not quite tender”…

DN: It’s an interesting coincidence, actually. When Jacques was talking to me about this [baked potato] recipe, he said: “When we’re cooking at home, we occasionally cook potatoes in the microwave oven first. Then into the regular oven.” Isn’t that quite similar to what you do? People will find it instructive that you both…

JC [dismissive]: But he does it differently than me—because he doesn’t poke it.

[Note to the reader: Julia and Jacques give several dressed-up versions of plain baked potatoes in the book. In my final draft, I included the informal method Julia described above—an almost-not-quite-tender potato, split and seasoned, then baked. Unfortunately (in my opinion), it was cut: Julia might well have deleted it herself. But potato-loving readers should try it. It’s nice, as Julia said.]

Excerpt 7: Beans and Okra

We speak about Jacques’s simple and delicious “ragout” of navy beans, which are flavored and thickened after they’ve cooked to tenderness. He found no advantage in soaking the beans before boiling them, he said, an idea at odds with Julia’s habits and one she decided to test shortly before lunch. At her direction, I found several old, partly used bags of dried beans in the cupboard and set them to cooking, unsoaked, as we worked.

The following conversation took place as lunch concluded leisurely. As in the preceding excerpt, Julia is notably relaxed and candid about a variety of topics. And she is munching throughout the discourse—it sounds like apples.

DN: Jacques can be very hard to pin down sometimes. Like when to add things, the cream to the [sautéed mushrooms] or the [pancetta, garlic, and herbs] to the beans. He might say, “I can’t tell you that. I do it when it is right.” Or, “Some days I will do it this way and some days I will do it another way.”

JC: Exactly. This is true. And maybe with him, you just have to write a recipe, and if he doesn’t like it, he will change it.

DN: I have great respect, though, ’cause he makes an interesting philosophical point. “What I do,” he says, “is on a day when I make something, I will time it and give the exact time and exact ingredients. On another day, it might be different.” He’ll say, “Of necessity you are forced to pick a moment in time. And present the recipe as you have done it that time.”

JC: I know just what he means. When you are cooking, it depends on the day, on how you feel. And there are so many ways to do things. You can pick one way, or maybe give two ways…

DN: This is really what this book is about, I think, all these choices…

JC: It’s just like learning to cook—you do the way the recipe says. But after you’re a cook, do it any way you want. If we get that point across…You have to start somewhere. You start with some rules…[she’s shuffling her papers]…now where are my cooked beanies?…I wrote that all down; what time we started the beans…but where is it?

DN: It’s already over an hour. And I had to add another cup of water just now. What we’re finding is this is not enough water [if you haven’t soaked them]…

JC: Have they softened at all?

DN: I’m going to get a spoon…

JC: When I soak them, I soak them until you can bite through one and it makes kind of like a fresh taste…[she bites one from the spoon]…yup, they’re softening…

DN: I should have started with more liquid. This is not a very good test…but this is a very nice recipe. I think it’s a good introduction for people, how simple it is to take a pot of beans and make them a wonderful side dish.

JC: Or as a main dish! With sausages or something.

DN: It absolutely could be.

JC [heartfelt]: Wouldn’t you HATE to be a vegetarian?
DN: It would be very hard...though there are some wonderful things...

JC: Oh, there are some nice dishes, but...

DN [trying not to laugh?]: These last few weeks...we eat so many vegetables now at the end of summer. I've got tons of tomatoes and herbs; I'm throwing everything into sauces...the other day, you know what was nice at the market? Okra.

JC: Mmmmm. Love okra. Not many people do. How do you cook 'em?

DN: I throw them into the tomato sauces. But one year I pickled them, and recently I fried them. Actually, that was a real mess, dipped in cornmeal.

JC: Did you cook them whole? I put them in whole, with peeled cloves of garlic. And cook them very gently in a covered pan, in olive oil. And they stay whole. And they're just awfully good.

DN: Wow. What happens to the gooey stuff?

JC: It doesn't get gooey. I think when it's cooked whole, very gentle, you don't have that problem. But once you cut them—you got goo!

Excerpt 8: Pinch of Salt

Though most dishes in the book were identified as Jacques's or Julia's, all recipes were to have a common format. Typically, on camera and in our discussions, Julia specified salt additions (if at all) with words like “a pinch” or “a sprinkle.” Jacques, however, gave precise amounts (most of the time) as small as 1/8 teaspoon.

Judith asked me to use teaspoon fractions as the standard for all ingredient formulas, if possible. I mentioned this to Julia after lunch on October 5, and she readily assented. But she wanted to establish a precise conversion from her personal measures to numerical ones. So it was that when Judith phoned from New York, Julia was spilling salt in measured spoonfuls on the table, then carefully picking it up in pinches.

It was a jolly and productive call about our work that day. Judith would lend her focaccia recipe for the pan bagnat; she'd expand the fish chapter with an expanded steamed lobster recipe and a forthcoming lobster stew. “How to eat a lobster” went on the list of photos to be shot in November. On tape, Julia clicks off the speakerphone and heads back to the table.

JC: It is not often that you get a hands-on editor like Judith, is it?

DN: She's unique in my experience, but that's not as extensive as...

JC: Well, I've never had another editor, so I don't really know about them [she resumes her seat and task]...Now. A big pinch...it's not a quarter teaspoon; it's not even half of a quarter.

DN: Another way to do it is to figure out how many big pinches does it take to fill up the quarter teaspoon...

JC: That's a good idea. ok: one, two, three, four...[she's dropping her pinches into the tiny measuring spoon]. I'm not doing this very well. Let's do it again.

DN: Here's a piece of folded paper. Drop it on this, and we'll spill it into the spoon.

JC: ok...[she counts to herself]...that's four. Measure that now.

DN: ...Just about exactly one-quarter teaspoon. Each pinch is one-quarter of a quarter teaspoon. That's one-sixteenth of a teaspoon.

JC: You might write that down...a big pinch is one-quarter of a quarter teaspoon...[waits until I start writing]...and a small pinch is half of that. And then let's also write down about my feeling about salt...[waits until I catch up; in a tone of dictation]: JULIA ON SALT...

DN: Now remember, Judith says you are going to write this. But let's hear it.

JC [chuckles; dictates]: From my point of view, salt is salt. I use regular table salt for cooking. I don't go in for these fancy salts at all. Some people say sea salt has more flavor; I say, just add a little more regular salt.

I use coarser kosher salt only for special occasions when you want a coarse salt, such as on a boiled dinner, when you want the grains to stick out. Or, because it is easy to pick up in your fist, to throw into a big pot of water. Otherwise I never use kosher salt for regular salting...Period.
DN: Done!

JC: Pepper!…We might as well put down pepper also [dictating again]. I always use white pepper when I do not want black speckles in my food. People say that [white pepper] doesn’t have as much flavor—just add more.

DN [she’s stopped dictating]: I read in a catalog recently that white pepper is actually a bit hotter. It’s the same seed but aged a little more, and then they remove that outer husk…do you ever find that it has more heat?

JC [dismissively]: I don’t go in for that much of a distinction. I use black pepper or white pepper—as long as they’re fresh and good quality…And I just don’t want to be bothered with three kinds of salt and such things. There’s enough clutter in the kitchen anyway.

DN: So the gourmet salts, sea salt from this lagoon or another…

JC [gaily]: Fuck ’em! Fuck ’em all! I think some people like to use those things because it makes them feel special. Like those special olive oils that cost so much for a half-pint…Maybe some people need them, but I do not. And I think there’s a lot of fussy fakery that goes on. I think you should rely on your own tastes and not be influenced by sales pitches…Now, what shall we do next? ☺