

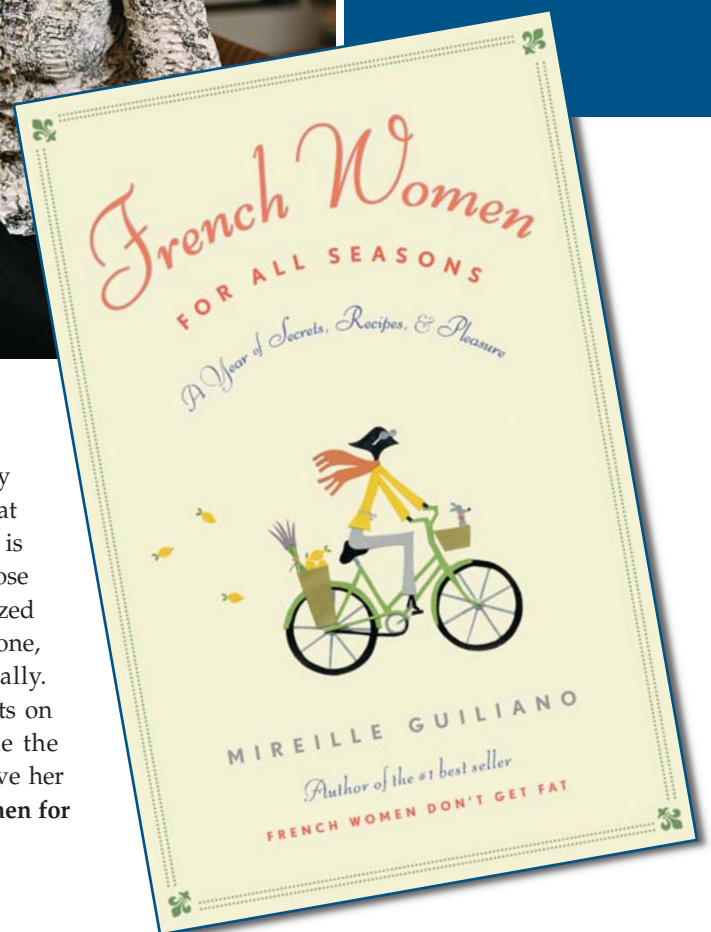
French Women Don't Get Bored

They enjoy life yet challenge themselves as they go, says Mireille Guiliano.

RICHARD L. ELIA



By now it is eminently clear to any one even remotely interested in health, weight, and lifestyle books that Mireille Guiliano is an industry. Yet she is more: she is a splendid writer, a literary person, a wordsmith whose prose is effortless. Her first book, *French Women Don't Get Fat* seized the imaginations of readers as no such book has ever done, with millions of hard copy and paperbacks sold globally. Her website receives millions of hits, with even more hits on other sites generated on or about her. She has become the doyenne of the publishing world, and this month she gave her publisher, Alfred Knopf, an early holiday gift, **French Women for All Seasons** (\$25) — the best of stocking stuffers.



Book Review

FRENCH WOMEN FOR ALL SEASONS: A YEAR OF SECRETS, RECIPES, AND PLEASURE

by Mireille Guiliano

Knopf, 2006

368 pages, hardcover; \$22

ISBN: 0307265234

Guiliano is about to launch another television, media, and global travel tour of epic proportions. As with her first book, this one will take her to virtually every corner of the literate world, where her books have been translated into dozens of languages. All the major talk and radio shows, along with the press, are lining up for interviews. The effort is Herculean, and Guiliano performs her feats tirelessly and with grace. Amidst the glitter and financial fame, Guiliano has remained herself. Money hasn't changed her, nor does it motivate her. She is still the woman who approaches each day hoping to make a difference. She starts her book, significantly enough, with a quotation from Thoreau, who mentions the need to make the most of everyday, of making the morning dew your diet drink, of taking control of your life, of making a difference.

French Women for All Seasons is more global in approach. Her first book was a tale of two cities: Paris and New York. She soon learned that Middle America — the world in fact — wanted her message, not just the well-heeled in two great urban sites. With the new book, Guiliano understands this. Further, the text is a practical and pleasing guide to putting some *joie* back into your *vie*. Like Thoreau, she would remind us “not to call our lives bad names,”

but to live it as fully as one can. Her book is not about imaginary ideals of life, or another attempt of “life imitating art,” but about actual strategies for women who want to eat well and live well — life's best revenge — through all the seasons, all the year, all the time. It's about dozens of happy, easy recipes. (Invariably with Guiliano there will be leek recipes, which her readers crave — she has become the queen of leeks, of fresh vegetables, soups, potatoes, and all that's good and flavorful.)

Part of living and eating well, says Guiliano, is entertaining, sharing, giving, and pairing good dinner guests for good conversation and laughter, something everyone needs to do more of. Start, she advises, with the great mood enhancer, a glass of Champagne, which for us cures all ills. Guiliano is not Martha Stewart; she's not a personality, dabbling with the impossible in search of the unique. Rather, she's a teacher, a motivator who understands that teaching is removing mystique, of challenging and cheering her readers. Says Guiliano, “a secret” to enjoying life is not to embrace a mindless hedonism, but “to cultivate a life of ongoing experimentation, exploration, and self-discovery.” Women do this by embracing the seasons, by savoring

your life, by challenging yourself, by changing habits. For example, she asks in her first book, “do you really need to finish everything on your plate, or can you adopt the ‘50 Percent Solution’,” by perhaps eating only half of what's on your plate, and eating more slowly? Finishing everything on your plate is a concept generated over the centuries by hardworking, impoverished people, for whom every morsel of food was vital. This is hardly the case for 21st century readers of this book. We're never too old to change our habits or our prejudices. *French Women for All Seasons* reinforces this.

Guiliano's approach is soft-sell with style and charm. This is exactly how she created Veuve Clicquot marketing, making the Champagne — one that had no market 25 years ago — the best-selling one in the country. This is how the collection of stories and recipes in *French Women for All Seasons* is presented: they are designed to encourage, to motivate. Guiliano has firm opinions and high standards. Readers were eager to emulate many of them in her first book; they'll find many more in this one. Her only agenda is to remind women about themselves, about being all they can be, about living in each season as it passes. ♪