

WHERE WOMEN COOK

THE HEART & SOUL OF COOKING

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CREATED BY JO PACKHAM

ENGINEER OF HER CAREER:

Julie Hartigan

Chef **Julie Hartigan** founded Cooking with Julie to create fun and fresh culinary content for brands and fans. As an engineer-turned-professional chef, she brings her smarts and enthusiasm for cooking, health and entertaining to the table and has worked with some of the biggest names in food and lifestyle. Julie has tested and published thousands of recipes, has scripted and been featured in video segments, developed cooking gear buying guides and blog posts, contributed to corporate social media initiatives, Facebook Live and Instagram, and consulted on brand launches. She has worked with Weight Watchers, Bed Bath & Beyond, "Real Simple," as well as "Shape" and "Fit Pregnancy," and loves sharing tips and tricks to make cooking and hosting easier and more fun.

Photography Julien Roberts





I run my business from home,

which makes balancing work, life and fun a lot easier. I split my time between Hoboken, New Jersey, which is right across the Hudson River from New York City, and my beach place in Asbury Park, New Jersey, about an hour south of there. I love spending time in both places and having such easy access to NYC food culture and clients, as well as a relaxing beach vibe.

I grew up in a blue-collar family about an hour outside of New York City. My dad was a welder who loved tending his garden, jarring pickles and frequenting local farmers markets way before it was trendy. (He's the original farm-to-table advocate.) He was a huge influence on my love of local, seasonal cuisine. My mom came from an Italian family that I've always been very close to—their celebratory celebratory food culture helped shape my love of cooking and entertaining.

I can remember helping in the kitchen and collecting recipes from family members and magazines from a very young age. I wrote my first recipe at age 8. It was my grandmother's infamous rhubarb crunch. I was the kid who always wanted to try new things (How many 8-year-olds do you know who are up for trying rhubarb?) I'd ask friends' grandparents how they made their staple cultural dishes, be it empanadas or moussaka.

I was always fascinated by restaurants and worked at several in high school and engineering school. In graduate school, I started taking on cooking projects just for fun. I would experiment with recipes until I perfected them. Even though I traveled most of the work week as an engineer and tech consultant, I spent my weekends in the kitchen or helping friends cater parties—or throwing my own. I loved entertaining and hosting so much; I was jokingly referred to as “Julie Partygan.”

When people asked, “Where do you want to be in five years,” I'd often surprise them by saying, “Running a B&B or catering company.” Cooking and hosting were my “happy places,” and I always dreamed of making a career of it. But as a successful female engineer with a master's degree, it seemed like too huge of a leap to make. That changed when I had my daughters. When I looked ahead, I couldn't imagine paying a nanny just to work long hours at a career I wasn't very interested in, meanwhile continuing to work for the weekend and vacations. For years, I'd had my eye on a culinary school in NYC that offered a work-study program where you could serve as a classroom assistant in exchange for tuition. I started when my girls were toddlers and worked some insane hours. But working and stewarding for a professional culinary school staffed by some of the top chefs in NYC gave me incredible exposure to so many cooking techniques and styles. I loved soaking it all in and immersing myself in the culinary world. I felt like a kid in a candy store.

While in culinary school, I launched a personal chef business, working for several families in Hoboken. That taught me kitchen organization and helped me fine-tune my cooking style. I also led food-tasting tours in NYC and started teaching cooking classes for adults and children. I've always loved sharing what I know about food and cooking with others. I took extra classes in recipe development, food styling, and cooking video production while in school—food media seemed like a great fit with my business background and the work-life balance I was seeking.

After graduation, I chose to intern in “Saveur” magazine's test kitchen and at Food Network to learn the inner workings of recipe development, testing, food photography, and cooking video production. Not long after that, I started doing recipe development for Weight Watchers. That's when my business really started taking off. It's grown largely through referrals, which I credit to my enthusiasm, professionalism and consulting background. I'm always looking for different ways to go above and beyond for my clients. Sharing my love of cooking with home cooks through my recipes, tips and videos brings me so much joy. It makes me so happy to hear that I've helped someone else learn to cook or enjoy cooking and entertaining. My career now truly reflects “the real me.”

P.S. I LOVE THIS

The most sentimental items in my kitchen are the ones from my grandma. I have her mixing bowl that's been used over so many years for so many meals. I can remember helping her mix up meatballs in it as a little girl, and I think of her every time I use it. I also have her 1950s retro glassware, which I love serving cocktails in.



RECIPES



Zoodles with Crumbled Sausage, Favas, Mint and Two Ricottas

Shrimp & Cucumber Bites with Wasabi Aioli

No-Bake Strawberry Cheesecake Shooters



These days, I spend a lot of time tinkering with and testing new recipes at home. My daughters, boyfriend and friends love being my taste testers. I weave my work into my personal life and often work on recipes when other people are around, to make it more of a party. When I travel and visit new places, I'm all about exploring the local food scene, trying the regional specialties, and picking up new ingredients, cooking gear, cocktail ideas or tableware to incorporate into my life and work.

I love bright, fresh flavors and colorful dishes with a unique or special touch, be it a different spice, fun twist or vegetables used in different ways. Weaving ethnic flavors into everyday dishes, finding sneaky ways to make a dish lighter, or using something bright to finish a dish are also trademarks of mine. I also always look for ways to streamline a recipe and reduce steps, cooking time, or cleanup. I'm all about trying to make cooking easier and more fun.

I find inspiration everywhere. I may try a new dish or cocktail at a restaurant; see a different flavor combination in a cookbook or blog; decide I want to modernize a classic dish; or just freestyle with what's left in the fridge. I'm constantly soaking in and experimenting with new ideas around flavors, food culture, ingredients, cocktails and techniques.

I've developed hundreds of recipes for Weight Watchers over the past eight years and am often asked to lighten up desserts that are traditionally high in fat and sugar. Finding ways to re-create one of those can require countless attempts at combinations of ingredients or substitutions, and it can get frustrating. But when I nail it—and people can't believe how rich and delicious a dessert is while being so much lower in fat, calories and sugar—I'm really proud of my work. It also brings me so much satisfaction to know that my recipes help people enjoy foods they love while also leading a healthier lifestyle.

● **Slash prep with pre-made, pre-packaged zoodles and frozen favas. Just cook favas 1 to 2 minutes in hot water and remove their outer skins.**

Zoodles with Crumbled Sausage, Favas, Mint and Two Ricottas, P. 72



JULIE'S FAVORITE QUOTE

“ I enjoy cooking with wine. Sometimes I even put it in the food!

—Julia Child

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● Aioli can be made and chilled up to three days ahead.

Shrimp & Cucumber Bites with Wasabi Aioli, P. 72

Shrimp & Cucumber Bites with Wasabi Aioli

16 BITES TO SERVE 8

They'll never guess what a cinch it was to make these bright and beautiful party bites! Pickled ginger and an easy wasabi aioli elevate simple poached shrimp into something special.

- ½ cup light mayonnaise
- 2 tsp wasabi paste
- 2 tsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 English cucumber, sliced into 16 slices
- 16 medium shrimp, poached and tails removed
- 16 1" pieces pickled ginger (⅓ cup)
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp black sesame seeds for garnish

1. In medium bowl, combine mayonnaise, wasabi paste, and sesame oil.

2. On a platter arrange cucumber slices.

3. Top with pickled ginger and one shrimp.

4. Top shrimp with a dollop of wasabi aioli on top of shrimp. Garnish with scallion and black sesame seeds.

NOTES: For a pretty presentation put the wasabi aioli in a sandwich baggie, snip the corner, and drizzle on top of shrimp. Aioli may be made and kept chilled up to 3 days prior to serving. This dish can be prepared a few hours before serving—just cover loosely with plastic wrap and keep refrigerated.

Zoodles with Crumbled Sausage, Favas, Mint and Two Ricottas

SERVES 6

As featured on ABC's The Chew! Take your zucchini noodles over the top with this easy-yet-impressive one

pan supper. Trust me, the bright springy flavor combo of lemon-mint-chili never fails... and it only gets better paired with tender favas, savory sausage, and a decadent double-dose of ricotta! Because really, you can never have too much ricotta.

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 lb Italian sausage, casing removed
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- ¼ tsp red pepper flakes, plus additional for garnish
- ¼ cup sweet vermouth
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 8 cups zucchini noodles (~4 small zucchini)
- 2 cups cooked and shelled fava beans
- ½ cup torn mint leaves
- ½ cup fresh ricotta
- ½ cup crumbled ricotta salata

1. Add olive oil to a large skillet over medium-high heat.

2. Add onion and sausage and cook, breaking sausage up with a wooden spoon, for 7 to 10 minutes, until browned.

3. Add garlic and hot pepper flakes and cook for 1 minute.

4. Add vermouth and cook until nearly evaporated, scraping up brown bits.

5. Add chicken broth, lemon juice and zest, zucchini noodles, and favas and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, tossing with tongs, until zoodles are tender.

6. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with mint leaves, both ricottas and additional red pepper flakes for punch (optional).

NOTES: Slash prep with pre-packaged zoodles from your market (they're becoming widely available!)

Frozen favas are another lifesaver if you can't find fresh at the market. Just cook for 1 to 2 minutes in hot water and remove the outer skins.

No-Bake Strawberry Cheesecake Shooters

MAKES 16 SHOOTERS

These mini cheesecake parfaits are the perfect little treat to end your party on a sweet note! They take just minutes to put together with no cooking necessary and can even be made up to a day ahead. So easy...you'll feel like a guest at your own party!

- 8 oz light cream cheese
- ⅓ cup vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup confectioners sugar
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp lemon zest
- 1 cup whipped topping
- 1 Tbsp salted butter
- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- Pinch of salt
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- Fresh mint for garnish, thinly sliced

1. In a large bowl, beat together cream cheese, yogurt, confectioners sugar, milk, lemon juice and lemon zest. Fold in whipped topping until just combined.

2. Place butter in small microwave-safe bowl, microwave until melted.

3. Add graham cracker crumbs and salt. Mix gently to combine.

4. On a work surface, line up 16 small glasses. Layer each with 1 tablespoon of crumb mixture, a heaping 3 tablespoons cheese mixture and 1 tablespoon strawberry slices. Serve or refrigerate until ready to use.

All recipes tested and submitted by Julie Hartigan. If you have any questions please go to CookingwJulie.com.

Feed off the enthusiasm of born-entertainer and cook Julie Hartigan on her blog, CookingwJulie.com, or on Instagram and Facebook @CookingwJulie.

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