



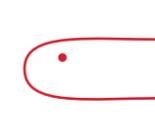
Courage

I applied to the CIA (Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York) program for professional chefs. I wasn't a professional. I was a housewife who faked her way into the program (and that may have to be a conversation for later). Myrna Young, former director at Everywoman Opportunity Center, had convinced me that I could succeed in the program. I couldn't believe it when they accepted me. I was scared stiff when I left Buffalo—so scared I had a 104° temperature. I drove myself to the hospital that morning but they couldn't find anything wrong, so off I went with a huge headache and major butterflies in my stomach.

I had on white canvas Topsider sneakers with red socks covered with polka dots of black, yellow, orange, and green, and the required checkered pants and a chef's jacket. The only woman with thirteen big men. I weighed around ninety-eight pounds and the guys were giant, Navy chefs and head chefs for big hotel chains. These were seasoned, tough guys. The professor chef waltzed in speaking French. Okay for the first few minutes, but three hours later? No. I went out with the big guys who were taking a cigarette break and asked all of them, "Hey guys, how many of you speak French?" The one from Montreal did and so did the guy from Mexico City. Everyone else just shuffled their feet and stood silent. "Really? None of you speak French?" They didn't care. Their companies were paying. I just spent \$600 of the total \$1,000 I had in the world to get into the class. I couldn't speak French. My French was *éclairs*, *Chevrolet*, and *filet mignon*. I was in deep trouble. I was ready to fold up the tent and go home.

The second half (three more hours) was the practical side. The chef started yelling orders to everyone in French. We were making bouillabaisse. The two guys who spoke French did their best to help us but we were dying. Finally, the chef looks right at me and he yells, "Madame, the Griswold, the Griswold!" I was almost at the point of hysterics. I screamed back at him a swear word or two and said, "I don't speak French and no one else does either!" He said rather quietly, "Well, why didn't you say so earlier? Or ask me to speak in English?" I was the hero. The big guys treated me like gold. I rose to the top of the class. Be brave and ask a lot of questions. Sooner than later. And don't ever wear sneakers in the kitchen—it's very dangerous. Hot liquids can go through canvas and iron pots can crush toes. Never be embarrassed about what you don't know. We can't all know everything. Successful people are the most curious. Some of us question authority which isn't the same as asking questions. Most of all, be brave and courageous.

I tell the bouillabaisse story whenever I want people to speak up for themselves. Still, they see me today and they have a hard time believing I was/am ever afraid of anything.



Bouillabaisse

Ingredients

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Sprigs of fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups crushed, canned tomatoes (plain)
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 teaspoon saffron
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ cup parsley (¼ cup reserved for topping when serving)
- 1 small lobster, cut into pieces (or leave in shell)
- 12 mussels, well scrubbed and debearded (leave in shell)
- 12 raw shrimp, cleaned, peeled and deveined
- 12 scallops
- 1 pound red snapper or cod, cut into serving pieces

Supplies

Cast iron pan (*Griswold—that's the name of a company that produced the best cast iron pots*)

I use white Ironstone covered individual dishes for serving (or soup bowls). White china is best to show off the meal.

In a large cast iron pot, heat the oil, onion, garlic, fresh thyme, and bay leaf and cook for five minutes. Add the tomatoes, wine, saffron, salt, pepper, and parsley and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the seafood and cook 15 minutes longer or until mussels open and fish is tender. Serve in warmed, white individual oval casserole dishes with tops or heated soup bowls, with crusty french bread and green salad.