

Dear Interviewer:

Who doesn't love a good cookie? And when asked to pick a favorite cookie, who doesn't mention chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, or good ol' sugar cookies? With the follow-up to her best-selling book *Cookie Swap*, **Julia M. Usher's Ultimate Cookies** (November 2011; Gibbs Smith; \$24.99), America's doyenne of cookies shows us there's a lot more out there than chocolate chip. Let Julia introduce you to new flavor combinations, luscious icings, easy-to-learn decorating techniques, and 43 awe-inspiring projects that will bring your cookies to a higher level.

With the holidays just around the corner, everyone is looking for delicious recipes and creative party and gift ideas that will impress family and friends – and Julia's book is sure to provide endless inspiration. What's more, Julia's cookies are ideal presents in this time of continued belt-tightening. Not only do they taste incredible, but they also do double duty as beautiful decorations and centerpieces, eliminating the need for other expensive party décor. In *Ultimate Cookies*, Julia unveils every bit of the magic behind her edible works of art, making them approachable for everyone from novice to expert decorator. Here are just a few of her tricks that I thought would interest you most:

- **Tools No Decorator Should Be Without:** Julia pinpoints the must-have tools of the trade – such as parchment pastry cones, graduated cutter sets, silicone baking mats, non-tapered rolling pins, and small craft paintbrushes – and leads you to her favorite sources and brands.
- **7 Steps to Flawless Rolled Cookies:** Julia shares her secrets to rolling, cutting, and baking the perfect cutout cookie time after time.
- **15 Bottom-to-Top Decorating Techniques:** The book walks you through all of them; in an interview, Julia will demonstrate a few: top-coating, marbling, stenciling, wafer-papering, rubber-stamping, and/or dipping. Take your pick!
- **The Icing on the Cookie:** Once baked and iced, cookies are always better if bedazzled. Julia reveals her top timesavers: readymade decorations, such as sugar gems, confetti, crystallized flowers, pre-printed wafer paper, and more.
- **Beyond Bedazzled:** Learn how to make edible ribbons, bows, ropes, leaves, and even 3-D cookies to give your treats extra dimension – and class.
- **Cookie U:** After the basics are down, Julia teaches five themed master classes, each loaded with cookie projects that will wow:
  - **Party Girl:** Design a *Jewel Box Gem* so pretty that no one will want to eat it; then fill it with *Pendant Perfect*, *At Your Fingertips*, and other edible bling.
  - **Incredible Edibles:** Feast on *Breakfast in Bed* or cookie pasta. Or if you have a sweeter tooth, *Take the Cake* with beautiful “cakes” embellished with tasty touches of the season.
  - **Where the Wild Things Are:** Julia's *Turkey in the Straw* makes an elegant centerpiece for a Thanksgiving table, whereas *Lounge Lizards* and *Snake Charmer* offer more whimsical table-top twists. Each can also be turned into a DIY party game.
  - **So This Season:** Send a sweet Valentine to your special someone with *Love Letters* in an *Open Your Heart Box*. Or offer up a cookie *May Day* or *Easter Basket* in springtime.
  - **Yuletide Yummies:** *Snow Honeys*, *Boughs of Holly*, *Snow Globes*, *O Christmas Tree*, and an edible *Counting the Days* advent calendar will bring holiday cheer to folks of all ages.
- **How the Cookie Crumbles:** Last but not least, Julia provides foolproof recipes for everything from sugar cookies and shortbread to macarons and meringues, and rounds them out with flavor variations and recipes for royal icing, ganache, and Italian buttercream.

I hope that you are now craving cookies more than ever. Please contact me to set up an interview with Julia M. Usher. I can be reached by phone at (212) 866-2906 or you can email me at [ron@mmpublicity.com](mailto:ron@mmpublicity.com).

Cheers,

*Ron*

Ron Longe, Account Director

**For Immediate Release**

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**The Queen of Cookies is Back!**

# **Julia M. Usher's Ultimate Cookies**

By **Julia M. Usher**

Photographs by **Steve Adams**

Move over, cupcake! It's time for cookies to share the spotlight! With over 40 wildly creative cookie projects and 20 tempting cookie and icing recipes, ***Julia M. Usher's Ultimate Cookies*** (November 2011; Gibbs Smith; paperback; \$24.99) proves that cookies can be every bit as show-stopping and delicious as cupcakes.

In the course of five themed chapters, learn how to make edible jewelry, caterpillars and lizards, Christmas snow globes, Easter baskets, jack o' lantern votives, and even breakfast in bed with fried eggs, orange slices, and bacon! Young or old, male or female, beginner or decorating whiz, you will find plenty of projects to sweeten your life and every occasion throughout the year.

Julia begins the journey with a chapter devoted to tools of the trade – all of the accessories and equipment no baker should live without. She breaks them down not only by price but also by priority, clearly distinguishing the essentials from the nice-to-haves. From there, she reveals her baking and decorating secrets for transforming ordinary cookies into works of art. Step-by-step instructions and nearly 300 carefully illustrated photos make her projects as doable as they are inspirational. And whether you're top-coating, marbling, or rubber-stamping a cookie, Julia's comprehensive discussion of 15 decorating techniques and other cutting and construction tips will instantly put you at ease! She even includes handy templates at the end of the book.

***Julia M. Usher's Ultimate Cookies*** promises to give you enough insight and experience to impress your friends and family at holiday cookie swaps, birthday parties, baby and wedding showers, school bake sales, family reunions, and nearly any type of gathering where the perfect cookie will be welcome. And who wouldn't love to be on the receiving end of a box full of these gorgeous creations?

So what are you waiting for? Delve into a world of cookie magic, with Julia as your expert guide in the making of sensational cookie masterpieces. Hurrah for ***Julia M. Usher's Ultimate Cookies*** – at long last, cookies are rightfully getting their time in the limelight!

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## **Praise for Julia M. Usher's *Cookie Swap*:**

*Winner of three Cordon d' Or Culinary Academy Awards*

"Julia Usher's gorgeous and doable ideas inspire us not only to trade cookies at holiday time but the whole year through. Filled to the brim with mouthwatering recipes and delectable photographs, *Cookie Swap* is a sweet treat to savor and celebrate."

—Nancy Wall Hopkins, Deputy Food Editor, *Better Homes and Gardens*

"Usher produces a wealth of eye-catching bakery, decoration, and entertainment ideas for hosts of all experience levels . . . sure to appeal to fans of the Barefoot Contessa and Martha Stewart."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Her whimsical designs and ideas make this book as fun as it is informative. Open it to any page—you're bound to be inspired."

—Tish Boyle, Editor, *Dessert Professional*

"Move over, Martha. This book, with its cute-named cookies, stunning food styling, and personalized party ideas, establishes Usher as a serious pastry party authority."

—YumSugar

### **About the Author:**

**Julia M. Usher** is a celebrated pastry chef, food writer, and food stylist whose work, both written and edible, has appeared in *Vera Wang on Weddings*, *Bon Appétit*, *Fine Cooking*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Mary Engelbreit's Home Companion*, *Gastronomica*, and nearly every national bridal magazine. Julia is Contributing Editor at *Dessert Professional*, a 2008 James Beard Foundation Journalism Awards finalist, and an entertaining and party planning consultant for *St. Louis AT HOME* magazine. Julia's first book, *Cookie Swap: Creative Treats to Share Throughout the Year* (2009), is currently in its ninth printing and was the winner of three prestigious Cordon d' Or Cookbook Awards. Julia is also author of the popular site [juliausher.com](http://juliausher.com), where she regularly shares tips for one-of-a-kind dessert and party design. When not baking or writing, Julia serves as President-Elect of the International Association of Culinary Professionals. She is also a founding member of the St. Louis chapter of Les Dames d' Escoffier International and a three-time President of the St. Louis Culinary Society. Julia happily divides her time between St. Louis, Missouri and Stonington, Maine.

### **About the Photographer:**

**Steve Adams** is a well-known food and beverage photographer based in St. Louis, Missouri. His clients are international in scope, including Nestlé, Bacardi, and Kraft Foods. When not shooting beautiful food, Steve enjoys cooking in his wood-fired oven and traveling. Visit him at [steveadamsstudio.com](http://steveadamsstudio.com).

### **About Julia's Product Line and Partner:**

Julia is pleased to announce her partnership with ***fancyflours.com***, her tour sponsor and also the supplier of many of the readymade cookie decorations that grace the pages of *Ultimate Cookies*. Together, Julia and ***fancyflours.com*** are developing a line of custom cookie cutters and kits that will supplement *Ultimate Cookies* and launch in Fall 2011.

### ***Julia M. Usher's Ultimate Cookies***

**By Julia M. Usher**

**Photographs by Steve Adams**

Publication Date: November 2011

Publisher: Gibbs Smith

ISBN: 978-1-4236-1934-5

272 pages; more than 20 recipes; more than 40 projects; 300 full-color photographs; \$24.99

## Suggested Interview Topics/Demonstrations:

**NOTE:** As described below, each of the following topics is designed to fit a short (3- to 4-minute) demo format. Each can also be adapted, if desired, to fit a longer (1/2- to 3-hour) hands-on or demo-style cooking class format.

### 1. Easy and Eye-Catching Decorating Techniques

Tired of the same old cookie swap-standbys? Julia will show you how to add pizzazz to holiday cookie plates by demonstrating two or more of the *15 Bottom-to-Top Decorating Techniques* in her book. She'll also provide gingerbread, royal icing, and seasonal sugar cookie variations for added flavor twists. Cookie shapes can be tailored to the season or holiday at hand, be it Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, or Valentine's Day.

**Suggested techniques:** Top-coating, as a necessary baseline; followed by marbling, stenciling, rubber-stamping, and/or wafer-papering, as these techniques are the most showy while still being very easy.

**Suggested recipes (to supply, but not to demonstrate, unless requested):** Royal Icing, Cut Cookie Gingerbread, and/or Signature Sugar Cookie Dough (with Anise, Cinnamon, Orange-Clove, and/or Lemon-Cardamom variations, as desired).

### 2. Sensational Seasonal Cookies

Worried that your holiday party will fall flat? Looking for that something extra to give your cookies a lift? Julia will show you how to make one or two of the simpler (yet still sensational) 3-D seasonal cookie projects in the book. Projects can be tailored to the season or holiday at hand, be it Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Valentine's Day. Component recipes (i.e., rolled cookies and royal icing, as above) will also be supplied, though not demonstrated, unless requested.

**Suggested projects:** *Turkey in the Straw* for Thanksgiving; *Counting the Days* (advent calendar or ornament variation), *Snow Globes*, or *Boughs of Holly* (wreath or mistletoe kissing ball variation) for Christmas; *Love Letters* (and/or stenciled heart cookies with 3-D fondant appliques) for Valentine's Day.

### 3. Cookie Gifts for Kids

What better holiday or birthday gift than the license to play with your food?! Here, Julia shares the ins-and-outs of two of her favorite kids' cookie projects, one for girls and another for boys. She also provides make-ahead tips and other ideas for effortlessly involving kids in the making of these cookie treats. Component recipes (i.e., rolled cookies and royal icing, as above) will also be supplied, though not demonstrated, unless requested.

**Suggested projects:** *Pendant Perfect*, *At Your Fingertips* (cookie rings) or *Fab Bags* (cookie handbags) for girls; *Caterpillar Caper* or *Snake Charmer* for boys.

## Meet Julia M. Usher



Ever since sampling the dazzling pink daisy cookies at her first cookie swap, Julia has been a lover of all things sweet. As a young child, Julia cultivated her budding cooking skills by riding the apron strings of her mom – an accomplished home baker who ran a tight kitchen. “Make it from scratch or keep it out of your mouth” was her mother’s favorite mantra. By the age of 12 - while other kids were still tinkering with their Easy-Bake ovens - Julia was wowing friends and families with lavishly decorated yeast breads and multi-layer tortes. (Julia was also known on occasion to whip up a very lifelike soap and mud frosting cake for her sometimes pesky little sister.)

Julia worked as a mechanical engineer and management consultant after graduating from Yale in 1984, but even while climbing the corporate ladder, she never put aside her appetite for baking. In 1994, Julia decided to turn her passion into her profession by enrolling in the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts. She graduated valedictorian, receiving the coveted M.F.K. Fisher Prize for outstanding scholarship in 1996. One year later, Julia opened AzucArte, a boutique bakery widely lauded for its wedding cakes that tasted as wonderful as they looked. Julia now satisfies her sweet tooth with food writing and styling. She is Contributing Editor at *Dessert Professional*, a 2008 James Beard Foundation Journalism Awards finalist, and an entertaining consultant, party producer, and prop stylist for *St. Louis AT HOME* magazine. Her work, both written and edible, has appeared in *Vera Wang on Weddings*, *Bon Appétit*, *Fine Cooking*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Mary Engelbreit’s Home Companion*, *Gastronomica*, and nearly every national bridal magazine.

In 2009, Julia released her first book, *Cookie Swap: Creative Treats to Share Throughout the Year*, which subsequently won three prestigious Cordon d’ Or Awards, including one for Best in Competition. Never one to rest on her laurels, Julia is now feverishly promoting her second book, *Ultimate Cookies*, an inspirational collection of edible cookie art projects, scheduled for release in November 2011.

When not baking, Julia serves as President-Elect of the International Association of Culinary Professionals. She is also a founding member of the St. Louis chapter of Les Dames d’ Escoffier International and a three-time President of the St. Louis Culinary Society. In addition to her degree from Yale, Julia holds a master’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MBA from Stanford.

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