

# galllic connoisseur

Internationally-bestselling author Mireille Guiliano believes in bringing 'joie' to your 'vie.' **Sheridan Winn** learns about her art of living well.

PHOTOGRAPHY } *Tim Knox*

**I**t was while giving a lecture on wine and gastronomy in North America – something that Mireille Guiliano did regularly in her role as President and Chief Executive of champagne producers, Clicquot Inc – that a woman asked her: 'You're passionate about food and wine, and you entertain all the time: how come you're not fat?' With a Gallic shrug, Mireille replied: 'French women don't get fat.' 'I realised then that there was a book in my head,' she says.

So successful was her first book, *French Women Don't Get Fat: The Secret of Eating for Pleasure*, that it made the *New York Times* bestseller list in its first week and was translated into 37 languages within a year. Mireille appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show and she was profiled in the *New York Times* and *TIME*. Hilary Swank's production company now plans to turn the book into a romantic comedy.

With wisdom and wit, Mireille unlocks the secret of this "French paradox": French women don't get fat, but they eat bread, drink wine and regularly eat three meals a day. And people loved her 'non-diet' message, underpinned by the philosophy of managing one's relationship with food by eating what one enjoys, but in moderation. The very opposite of most diets, in other words, with their focus on

## MIREILLE'S TOP TIPS FOR LIVING PLEASURABLY

### BE THE MASTER OF YOUR OWN HAPPINESS.

Create your own moments of joy and pleasure, however small, and cultivate them to find balance in life and be *bien dans sa peau*, which means being comfortable, physically and mentally, in your own skin.

### EAT FOR PLEASURE.

Use all your senses, eat slowly and at the table, and savour the food, the company and conversation.

deprivation and fast results. But then 'if diet books worked, everybody would be thin,' she laughs.

A second bestseller followed – *French Women for All Seasons* – in which Guiliano describes the *art de vivre* and a healthier relationship with life. Her latest book, *Women, Work and The Art of Savoir Faire*, explores issues around balancing career and personal life. 'Even in business, life should be a pursuit of pleasure,' says Mireille. She draws on her experience of the top echelons of the business world to give practical advice on how to make the most of work, without skimping on the other good things in life.

'Many young women ask me how you get balance in your life,' says Mireille. 'But you can never get perfect balance. It's like happiness: you don't find it one day, put it in a box and have it forever. Your needs change all the time; for the French woman it's about fine-tuning and reinventing yourself.'

### A LIFE IN PLEASURE

Mireille Guiliano grew up in Lorraine in north-east France, in a traditional French family: her mother cooked three meals a day and her father came home for lunch. A stable home, with people and food at its heart. But when Mireille met her future husband, Edward, while travelling, her mother supported her move to New York to be with him. 'It was a big ►

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decision and meant taking a risk,' she says. 'I had to turn down a prestigious job in France, and had no work to go to. My mother was wise, though, in encouraging me to put my personal life before my business life. It was the right decision: we have been happily married for over thirty years.'



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**EXPLORE AND EXPERIMENT.**

Find your passion, what engages you, and pursue it. Be curious and open in all your pursuits.

**DON'T FORGET TO MOVE.**

From walking to biking, swimming, dancing or whatever you like, to keep vitality, energy and focus.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST, LOVE AND LAUGHTER ARE GOOD FOR YOU.**

Be kind and nurture your loved ones, and surround yourself with people who love to laugh. It's contagious!

For more than twenty of those years, Mireille was the ambassador for Veuve Clicquot champagne in America. When she co-founded Clicquot Inc in 1984, the brand had a 1% share of the North American champagne market. Under her leadership, it grew to a 25% share. In 2004, however, as her writing was taking up more and more time, she decided to leave the corporate world.

At the moment, Mireille is on a sabbatical from her writing, despite pressure to produce books on subjects such as marriage, ageing gracefully, Paris and Provence. She continues to work with groups that promote business opportunities and education for women, however. She also lectures, communicating her guiding principle that life is about enlightened self-interest (which is not the same as being selfish). Line up your opportunities, she says, then when the time is right, be ready to grasp them. Really though, it's about valuing the simple things. 'I'm the same me as I ever was,' she says. 'I still take the subway and I don't take myself very seriously. The difference is that I value every day, more and more.' ■

**Coming to America:**

Mireille Guiliano in her Manhattan apartment (far left), as an exchange student outside the White House (below left – she is on the far left), and, below, with Francis Ford Coppola. Plus (left) the cover of her latest book.

