



pz's perspective

by: Pz  
photo by: Solus Creations

# Inspiration from unlikely women on fire



Often I am asked where I derive my inspiration for my columns. There is no easy answer—no exact recipe. Ideas can spring from many sources: a song on the radio, a commercial, a conversation, a photograph, a feeling, a catastrophe or event. I draw from experiences that jump out at me or tap quietly on my shoulder. They can come to me in a dream, in silent moments or rowdy instances. Something as simple as what a person says or doesn't say triggers the creative juices. They can especially emerge when Lady Luck shines bright on some deserving someone. When I'm struck in that way the sparks begin to fly.

Ahhh—the sweet smell of success. Nothing is more inspiring or gratifying than to witness the success of another. You don't need a personal connection to appreciate what they have achieved. Up close or from afar, no matter, the feeling of an atta-boy is one to cherish. But when the success is an atta-girl it's 10-times more special. A moment exists when the light goes on, the bells go off, and you just know they have hit it, like pulling the slots and seeing 7's across the board. You can't mistake success for anything other than success and, in this case, it's not one, but two women who have just blasted off for a trip around the sun.

As different as they appear on the surface they are more in sync than one might imagine. One is a Yankee and cheers for the Red Sox. One begins her sentences with 'Hey y'all,' and has a brother named Bubba. One is indeed over 30. One is long past 50. One is adorable and giddy. One is delightful and sassy. One whips up fast and nutritious fare while the other presents rich and comfy creations. Rachael Ray and Paula Deen are women on fire. Stars of The Food Network, each, in their own irresistible style,

has exploded reaching meteoric proportions. They have become unlikely stars above and beyond the kitchen where they rule. These women are so hot, their careers cranked up so high, until they are literally smokin.' Someone may need to call 911 and have the firemen brought in and hose them off!

Anybody looking to be inspired by strong and powerful women can stop right here and take a gander. I've long been a fan of the Food channel. With the exception of a few staples like news, sports, music, Oprah, CSI, and an occasional magazine or cable program, when my set is on it eventually winds up on this station. Not that my mediocre cooking skills have improved from the repeated exposure, but the enjoyment and education factors are quite high. There is something for everyone—honest there is—it's not just a girly-thing! Both of these women have become key players on the network and have gone from hosting their own show, to hosting another and another, and then some, similarly making their mark in huge fashion. It is as though they are on golden paved parallel paths.

Rachael Ray is known for her bubbly personality and bouncy girl-next-door charm on the mega hit *30-Minute Meals*. The show opener, "In the time it takes you to watch this show I will have made a healthy and delicious meal and all in less than 30 minutes" has the viewer hooked. After that introduction, she is off and running. She goes on to chat away, walking you through the easy steps in the inventive dishes she prepares, and throwing in quaint and endearing tidbits from her childhood to the present. Living in the Adirondacks in upstate New York, Rachael brings her down-to-earth, no-fuss no-muss, you can do it attitude to each and every airing. Her dog Boo—who sadly, recently died—was her

most trusty companion. (She's cute, confident not arrogant, and had a dog named Boo to boot—my God who wrote this script?) There is never a lull or a dull moment when Rachael is on the screen. If by chance she happens to make a goof—which is rare, she makes a quick recovery and is even quicker to laugh or poke fun at herself. Rachael has gone on to host *\$40 a Day*, a show based on the concept that you can visit any city or town both at home and abroad and enjoy 3 great meals for under the designated \$40 budget. During her stay in the select city she gives the viewer tips about how to be a tourist by not acting like one. *Inside Dish* and *Tasty Travels* have also been added to Rachel's repertoire. All the while, she has managed to pen a series of cookbooks, work on a new magazine, and make appearances on major talk shows like *Today* and now *Oprah*. One thing about Oprah, she knows IT when she sees it and with Oprah's backing and blessing, Rachael is headed for the stratosphere when she hosts her very own talk show, *Can Do* slated for the fall of 2006. Can it get any bigger or any better than this? Oh yeah, I can't forget to mention Ms. Ray tied the knot in September with attorney fiancé, John—who also knows his way around the kitchen.

Then there's the queen of Savannah cuisine herself—Ms Paula Deen. Oh, how I love this woman. What a gal! What a story! What an inspiration to any woman (or man) who ever dreamed a big dream! Paula has been on the planet a few more years than Rachael, but much of her incredible success has lately been raised another notch. Known for her gregarious laugh and distinct southern drawl, there isn't a dish Paula produces that doesn't have butter somewhere to be found. (If you're in training you'd have to cut back a tad on Paula's portions as a main stay,

but it would be a heck of a treat on cheat day.) Her recipes aren't complicated just simply luscious and decadent. Paula's saga of overcoming adversity is one I can't do justice in this small space, but I am here to tell you this is one tough cookie. Following the loss of both parents at an early age, a 27-year failed marriage, and a full-blown lengthy bout with agoraphobia, Paula decided she wanted more out of her life. She began a lunch delivery service called *The Bag Lady* with, her then small sons, Jamie and Bobby acting as delivery boys. Fast forward, she went on to build, what is now known as *The Lady and Sons* restaurant—a main tourist attraction in her beloved city of Savannah, Georgia. Like Rachael, it seems Oprah had her spoon stirring around in Paula's pot back in 2002. Shortly after that appearance, *Paula's Home Cooking* was born. The original show is shot on location at her welcoming home and is such a hoot to watch—it's real like her butter. Paula is at the helm of other shows like *Paula's Cooking Class* and *All-Star Kitchen Makeover*. She pops up as a guest on *Emeril Live* and goes head-to-head with grill expert Bobby Flay in some good natured tail-gating competition. Her cookbooks are a must-have and visits to QVC bring her to still another massive audience. Not to be outdone, Paula, like Rachael, has her own magazine in the works, but more exciting and impressive than that, she finally found true love in new husband, Michael, whom she married just last year. (Food Network devoted an entire filming to the blissful event.) In Paula's authentic and honest way she was quick to share how surprised and thankful she felt to have fallen in love at this stage in her life. And the surprises aren't over for Paula. They keep on coming. In October, the movie *Elizabethtown* starring Orlando Bloom, directed by Cameron Crowe, and produced by Tom Cruise opens in theaters nationwide. Included in the cast is, none other than, Paula Deen—she has gone Hollywood. She was called upon to play the part of Aunt Dora, aside from no former acting experience, and was not asked to audition. The casting director had stumbled upon her cooking show and knew she was a natural. According to director Crowe, Paula hit it out of the park with the performance they needed. It is but another opportunity that has come to this deserving lady.

Rachael and Paula—ironically their lives are more alike than different—two very inspired women—two very inspirational ladies. What can we gain from their enormous success? I guarantee they are serving up more than helpful cooking hints or hoe cakes or new and exciting yummm-o recipes.

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## PZ POINTERS ON BEING INSPIRED BY RACHAEL AND PAULA:

**When opportunity knocks**—When they got the nod, both of these women rose to the occasion. They proved they have the right stuff. The longer they work at it the better they become. Offers are pouring

in because they deliver the goods. Part of succeeding is delivering when you are put in the game. Think of it as being a pitcher in the minor league farm system and suddenly you are brought up to the majors. You are expected to throw strikes and help your team win. A lot is riding on your performance. You can't cower in the dug out and you can't afford to choke. That's when the preparation pays off and you dig in and dig deep. Everyday life gives you the chance to prepare for what comes



next. Get yourself in contest shape. Sharpen your skills and talents so when the nod comes your way you'll be ready to throw strikes and take on any challenge.

**Doesn't happen overnight**—Neither of these ladies were overnight sensations. They didn't just fall off the turnip truck and into the arms of the Oprah or Crowe. They didn't just show up and say, "Hey y'all, look at me, I'm an insanely good cook, aren't I way cool, now give me a show or two or three!" Dues have been paid all along their road to stardom. They have a trail behind them of small successes and near successes (failure is nothing more than success lurking around the next corner). Paula attended the Academy of Hard Knocks where she earned a degree in determination, perseverance, independence and chutzpah. She already had a PhD in heart and soul. All the hard work has paid off for these women. If you are struggling with where you are just keep at it—wherever your passion leads you. Put one foot in front of the other. Each small step is one that brings you that much closer to your next stop. That stop may be just the one that

lightens the load and makes the rest of the ride a little smoother.

**Grow and evolve**—Life doesn't stand still. No grass is growing under Rachael's or Paula's feet. They aren't in one place long enough for that to happen. Nothing gets stale when it comes to these women. They continue to grow and evolve and become more magnificent as their lives become more magical. They keep things fresh and alive, like the food they prepare and the attitude they present towards their ever-changing journey.

You can't stand still either. At the end of the day the potato on the couch will be nothing more than that—an unfulfilled, unsatisfied, uninteresting bland potato. Get off your rump and get going. Spice up your life. Create something to celebrate.

**Not just for girls**—Don't think you guys can't learn a thing or two from these two chicks. Take a second and check them out. Whether alone or in a group these ladies make you feel like you are right there with them, that they are talking to you. Cooking might be their specialty, but they never lose sight of the role food plays in all our lives. Food might be the vehicle, but the message quickly transcends their kitchen. For them it's a give and take—food and people—the perfect relationship. Give the women in your life the chance to impact you in more ways than they do today. Join them in the kitchen, get your hands dirty, get creative, cut up some

veggies, try a new recipe and pour yourselves a glass of wine. Talk, laugh, and eat. Who knows what can come of this? You may find it's time well spent.




**If it can happen to them**—Think about these two women—Rachael and Paula. Look at them. Maybe at first blush they are nobody special. What's the big deal anyway? They aren't fancy, glamour girls, models, flashy, or famous in that regard.

They aren't even infamous for doing anything particularly shocking, bold or earth shattering. Now, look again. Look at the smile on their face and the twinkle in their eye. Look at the distance they have come. Look at where they are currently. Look at where they are headed. You might be saying to yourself, 'If it can happen to them there's a chance for me.' The fact is Rachael and Paula ARE unique, special, extraordinary women. They ARE gifted and talented beyond belief. They have nailed the bulls-eye when it comes to their passion and their purpose. They are both spot on when it comes to putting the complete package together. How about you? Do you

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see yourself as unique and special? Do you have gifts and talents the world has been missing out on experiencing? Yes, if it can happen to Rachael and Paula, then it can happen to you, too. I know each of these women would concur with that statement. They are but vibrant and hopeful examples that the brass ring is there for the taking.

**Importance of family, friends and associates**—No one makes it big by themselves. You can't do it alone. Rachael and Paula are forever singing the praises of their family, friends and every person who helps them be there very best. They even include their pets when they are passing out adoration. They have a clear appreciation for how important the support and influence of others is to their ultimate accomplishments. The same goes for you. Surround yourself with those who can be a part of the process. Reward them when you can and value them at every turn. Your triumphs are theirs, too.

**Check ego at the door**—Although there are so many qualities about these women I admire I am most impressed that as their star continues to rise their egos haven't swollen to the size of pumpkins. In their recipe for success a large head of ego is not on the list of basic ingredients. In fact, it's not anywhere in their pantry— so it's not even optional. It would be so easy for them to turn into Domestic Divas and lose their footing altogether. I feel certain neither woman will forget her roots and her feet will remain firmly planted on solid ground. When Lady Luck winks in your direction, take a page out of their book and check your ego at the door.

**Attitude of gratitude**—It is so refreshing to see the attitude these two have shown when it comes to their celebrity. I believe they are in awe of the fact it is actually their life and are grateful to be living it. They probably have days when they pinch themselves and say, 'We're not in Kansas anymore.' I also believe they have earned every ounce, every morsel, every crumb, every last piece of accolade pie bestowed upon them. Through it all they remain humble. Maintain your attitude of gratitude. You will never be bigger or greater or more significant than your purpose for being here.

**Making it at any age**—Society has been sending some negative signals for decades when it comes to the value and worth of human beings as they age. Women especially are thought of as 'all but over' when they reach a certain point. Forty, fifty, sixty—forget about it! Old, older and oldest— isn't that what we've been taught? I say dumb, dumber and dumbest to those screwed-up notions. Finally, there are signs that our mindset is making some slow adjustments—and in a favorable way. Examples like Demi with Ashton and Susan with Tim and Madonna with Guy illustrate women that remain successful AND beautiful and AREN'T all but over when they hit the invisible glass ceiling

on aging. Oprah herself is more powerful, radiant and fit than at any time in history, and she'll never see 50 again. Rachael Ray is 37, looks 27, and acts 21 so she has a few years before she can count in this discussion!!! Paula Deen, at 58, is like a full-bodied, rich and flavorful fine vine—keeps improving with age. She is relatable because she isn't afraid to enjoy her own scrumptious cooking. She is an inspiration because the older she gets the higher she climbs. To women of all shapes and all ages, who are ready to take the leap, expand their horizons and enrich their lives, there couldn't be a better time for you to stand up and be counted.

**Find joy in the success of others**—I believe we are all intertwined and connected in some form or other. When we relish the success of another we are feeding that part of ourselves that makes us more of a successful human being. When we open ourselves up to the possibilities that when one wins we all win the world becomes a better place. Be happy for your friends and loved ones for whatever success they continue to achieve. Be supportive and understanding of their efforts. Be thrilled and joyous and celebrate their victories. Be void of negatives and judgment for it is not your place to judge. Be happy for the success of strangers— for those you have yet to meet— for you never know what surprises life has in store from this day forward.



There's nothing in the cards to suggest Rachel or Paula will be cooling off any time soon. The temperature remains on high. It's all good. These two women are devoted to life and inviting us along to enjoy all the fixings and festivities with them. If we're smart we'll get inspired and take them up on the offer. With careers as hot, hot, hot as theirs, we can surely get close enough to the heat to kindle a little fire of our own.

*Pz is a writer and empowerment strategist. Her self-help expertise focuses on relationships, fulfillment and the human condition.*

*Have an issue or topic on your mind? You can reach Pz at her address: pz@pzpower.com Visit her @www.pzpower.com and add your suggestions.*

**Special note from Pz:**  
Congratulations to Natural Muscle on celebrating its 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.  
What a noteworthy achievement! Heartfelt kudos to my friend, the beautiful and incomparable Debbie Baigrie, whose vision, talent, and unwavering tenacity has provided the reader with a publication built on honesty, integrity, a love of the industry, and a genuine caring for her fellowman. Wishing you many more years of health, happiness, and tons of success.