

Inn owner, chef has prepped food for world leaders

By **LINDA CONLEY**

From Spartanburg Magazine

Chef Martin C.J. Mongiello went from cooking chow on Navy submarines to preparing fine cuisine at formal dinners in the White House.

The Philadelphia native spent 21 years in the Navy. He was a senior chief petty officer and served on ships and nuclear submarines before he was selected as a chef at the White House Military Office.

From 1993-96, he cooked for then-President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Part of his duties involved preparing lavish state dinners for international dignitaries, including former Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. He later cooked for King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan and prepared a meal for former Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto while living in Japan.

"When I went into the Navy, I never thought I would one day cook for a president," Mongiello said. "When I was about 4 years old, I started cooking for myself and would put a lot of silverware on the table. It was pretty evident that I would end up in one of the hospitality fields."

Mongiello and his wife, Stormy, started a new adventure several years ago when they opened The Inn of the Patriots in Grover, N.C. They began operating the historic bed and breakfast in 2008. The couple promotes the inn as the Home of the Presidential Culinary Museum and the Presidential Service Center.

Memorabilia and photos from Mongiello's time at the White House are



ALEX C. HICKS JR./STAFF

Martin C.J. Mongiello shows a photo of him with President Bill Clinton when Mongiello served as a chef at the White House Military Office.

displayed throughout the inn. He has items such as a 1930s antique Parker Bros. White House Egg Rolling game, election buttons and menus from former President George H.W. Bush. He also has recipe cards from former first lady Barbara Bush and even a cookie mix of the former first lady and now Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's famous Oatmeal Chocolate Chip cookies.

Mongiello has been featured on national news programs preparing dishes similar to those he made for presidents and leaders from around the world. During a recent visit to the inn, he was making a Chicago-style hot dog for an upcoming TV program on presidential inaugurations featuring Presidents Barack Obama and Franklin Roosevelt.

"You can get them right off the cart in Chicago," Mongiello said.

In 2010, he fulfilled his dream of going to college and received a bachelor's degree in culinary management from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. He also is author of a recipe book, "A Man for All SEAsOnings."