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# Ex-Clinton chef speaks

## Library hosts top chef Wednesday

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Having the opportunity to cook for some of the world’s most influential people became the story for Philadelphia native Martin “Marti” Mongiello.

He discovered his love of cooking before he started school, and he became a chef at the White House from 1993 to 1996 during Bill Clinton’s first term as president of the United States.

Mongiello and wife Stormy displayed their talents at the Jackson-Madison County Library on Wednesday — mixing ingredients for a cake named after the most famous first lady in history, Dolley Madison.

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Former executive chef to the president Martin Mongiello and wife Stormy Mongiello make Dolley Madison Ginger Pound Cake on Wednesday afternoon at the Jackson-Madison County Library. / MEGAN SMITH/The Jackson Sun

Written by **David Thomas**

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“I started cooking when I was four,” Mongiello said. “I took a piece of bread, ketchup and shredded cheese and spread it with a knife.”

His love of cooking continued after he retired from the Navy in 2004, and today he and his wife own The Inn of the Patriots, a top-ranked bed and breakfast in Grover, N.C.

“I went into the military at age 18, and I was going to do something with my life,” Mongiello said. “I was in a nuclear submarine and I brought a cookbook with me.”

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When Mongiello headed for 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to prepare meals at the White House, he was in for a rude awakening.



Dolley Madison Ginger Pound Cake on Wednesday afternoon at the Jackson-Madison County Library. / MEGAN SMITH/The Jackson Sun

**Recipe**

Dolley Madison Ginger Pound Cake with Cardamom Syrup

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President Clinton's cholesterol levels dictated a change in the menu.

"I was not going to be the one who killed the president," Mongiello said. "I had to learn to cook again for the first time all over again."

Mongiello said Crisco was off-limits and banana mash was used as a substitute.

"He was not allowed to have oil," Mongiello said. "I would prepare him a banana vinaigrette, but I wasn't stupid. If you have something for daddy, you had better have something for (Hillary)."

That, Mongiello said, was a mango vinaigrette.

A favorite dinner of the Clintons — including daughter Chelsea — was grilled shrimp red curried sweet potato soup.

Before any meal was prepared, the food had to be purchased, which according to Mongiello was an adventure within itself.

"Shopping was different," Mongiello said. "You had to go to a different (store) every time and different states. I was in an unmarked van ... but you had people following you."



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Marti, who was a chef at Jackson Country Club for three months in 2005, met Stormy while living in Jackson.

She has a son who graduates from North Side High School today, and the couple returned to Jackson to attend his graduation.

“A friend knew Marti and knew he was in the Navy,” Stormy said. “I told her I was in the Navy.”

Hearing that Marti was a White House chef, Stormy did a little background check.

“I had to Google him to make sure he wasn’t lying to me,” she said.

**David Thomas, 425-9637**

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