

White House Chef Talks About Being The President's Chef

| CELEBRITIES |

BY Maria Walker



White House Chef Interview

When we talk about the White House we think of JFK, President Obama, and President Trump. But what about the people who work in the White House?

The White House employs more than 3,400 people, but one of the most important people in the white House is the White House Chef.

Without the President's Chef, the likes of President Obama and President Biden would be forced to try and make important decisions on an empty stomach. And what about when visiting Royals and heads of state visit the White House? Without a White House chef there would be no one to cook for the thousands of people who visit each year.

So, Instead of speaking to President Obama, or the Secretary of State, we decided to speak to who we believe is the most important person in the White House and that is the former President's Chef.

You will be shocked by some of the secrets. This is what the White House Chef had to say.

First of all, please introduce yourself

Thank you so much, I'm Master Chef Marti Mongiello. I've been on the American military payroll for 41 years and have a 30-year retired certificate from the US Navy. I enlisted when I was 17-years old after going to jail, was a gang member and disgrace, and was thrown out of the US Air Force for being listed as a heavy drug user for smoking marijuana once – before I ever even left for boot camp, I was not allowed to go.

This blackened my federal record and punished me as a reprobate and criminal. I was told I was a heavy drug user and disallowed from entering my dream military service. As it turned out, my love for the ocean and sea paid off when the Navy accepted me with two waivers. I learned how to really curse well from being in the Navy as a nuclear submariner living underwater for over eight years at sea, over six years serving overseas, and eight deployments spanning jungles and deserts from Korea to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

I'm admittedly a bit "Howard Stern-ish" amongst adult friends and generally don't drink or smoke making for a semi-dull non-party animal. I predominantly wasted all my youth in the Navy drunk and at night clubs seven nights a week

dressed like Don Johnson from Miami Vice until an Admiral imprisoned me again – at which time I woke up and changed my life.

Since I was a boy, I have been involved with scouting for almost 50 years worldwide and our 57 million members at scout.org. I've worked in homeless shelters, orphanages, and food banks on three continents and love being a humanitarian. I have over 140 investments in small businesses in 40+ countries and hold two master's degrees.

I am a member of Rotary International and a former President of many organizations and federations and realize I am a sinner who did not graduate from Yale at 20, nor attended MIT. I am trying to live my best life to help others and change the world as I know that minorities and women are our best hidden assets the world has never seen. I consider myself a Jack of no trades and master of one – a public relations expert. I have used that to appear in 164 newspapers and magazines on six continents as well as reaching almost three billion viewers via NHK Tokyo, NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, PBS, FOX, Vitaya, and BrusselsTV. My goal is to use my reach to help the world.

Before we touch on you being a former Chef to the President of The United States, let's start with how did you get into cooking?

I was well known around the age of four in the kitchen with white bread, catsup smeared on top and grated cheese sprinkled. I thought I was making pizza! As an amazing kid I worked all summer long to save enough money to pay for my elementary school and high school. I mostly worked in kitchens and became an apprentice Chef to Lance Bachia and Luciano Bachia of Luciano's North Italian Cuisine and the Pampered Pancake House on Long Beach Island, NJ. I also studied sauce making, pizza's and sandwiches with Frank Panzone – each were experts in their craft and Lance graduated from the Culinary Institute of America where I would later attend.



You have had an exciting and variant career which includes being a 21-year-old veteran, what would you say has been your highlight moment during your career in or out of cooking?

I had a young black American chef who looked exactly like Isaac the Bartender from the Love Boat on my last ship, the USS Detroit. My Chef de Cuisine, Jack, came to me one day and said that Isaac had received an email from America that his son was very sick and hospitalized or died (I can't remember exactly) and he was going to now jump into the Arabian Gulf and kill himself. He was up topside by the ships railing. Jack wanted to desperately know what to do. I told him, "You tell Isaac that I love him and we will get him back home right away." That was very obscure for me as a warfighter and military man to say out loud as I was well know for yelling and being a person focused on Tsun Zu. Isaac was shocked to hear this and came down below where we consoled him and got him back to America right away. This was a highlight of my career.

I would like to talk about a topic that is close to my heart, and that is veteran suicide. On average, 22 veterans in the USA commit suicide each day. Why do you believe the figures are so high and what can be done to solve this problem?

Greater emphasis needs to be focused on civilian companies that are destroying veterans' lives with Compensation and Pension exams. You have nurses spending 14 minutes with veterans and denying what five doctors have said for 14 years. But since the nurse works for a company employed by the American Veteran's Affairs Department and is paid by them – they seek to deny near everything and have created a very adversarial system against vets.

The more denials they produce for "sniveling little runts" – the better. This has historically driven warfighters to live in the woods – and since I retired, over 160,000 former employees have committed

suicide. That's a staggering number of folks I worked with at "my company" so when people in Congress cannot figure out why the six services can no longer get anyone to join – its elementary. You kill people dead. They have had significant problems recruiting for several years now. Today's kids are very informed and see the killing power of humans that the VA has on veterans. For instance, if you knew of a worldwide corporation that has recently had 160,000 suicides occur by former employees – would you recommend to your friend or child to go work there? No one would. The power to kill them dead is overwhelmingly strong. After serving your country for decades you are left to a grisly and agonizing end freezing in the woods or in an alley of a city.

The VA has a very sly and slick raters' division of experts looking to deny and laugh into veterans faces any chance they can get. It's also common knowledge that VA nursing staff have medically killed, attacked, and injected veterans with illegal drugs. Additionally, Doctors and Administrators have ripped off and stolen bonuses in the hundreds of millions of dollars and repeated Judge Advocate General reports have slammed the civilian contractors and VA system. A senate investigation by Senator Elizabeth Warren is currently underway.

Another issue I would like to tackle you on is the number of veterans that are homeless. In 2020, 35,574 veterans experienced homelessness, what are your thoughts on that, and how would you like to see this important issue solved?

My own friend explained this to me best, his name is Aloicious and he is a good US Army veteran returned home that I was just able to get a good home to live in after over a year of trying. He told me, "Marti, the amount of money they are offering for a voucher is too low for Cleveland County, North Carolina and I am not going to live in a slum where they sent me to look at properties with a hot water heater hanging out of the building. Plus, the VA voucher lady is from another county and has to drive a far distance to get here. In her defense, she actually has four counties she is working for."

We also know that the VA Home Loan Code needs to be changed back to where it was before the Korean War that helped so many veterans returning home. We know that after WWII that almost 60% of veterans became entrepreneurs and started their own

businesses. And vets hire fellow vets! Today, it's been impossible for me to get hired and veteran entrepreneurs have dropped down to as low as 4%. When the code was changed it further restricted veterans from starting any kind of business in their home to 25% usage of the domicile – or less. President Obama launched a Presidential Inquiry into this when I spoke with him, he invited me to come to the White House again, and the VA replied that only Congress can change the law and code to what it once was for veterans wanting to become a success like Fred Smith or Robin Quivers.

In the UK Jamie Oliver was featured on a TV show helping homeless people and troublesome teens to have a positive future by teaching them cooking. Do you think it would be a good idea to set up a charity to teach veterans how to cook to give them a future outside of the military?

I absolutely do and have presently graduated 5406 students from my culinary academy. I love this idea so much!!! We also have been working to teach at risk youth and inmates via Micah's Kitchen, Our Daily Bread and Ms. Kim Alexander in Charlotte, NC.

You are one of the most famous former White House Chefs, so, let's put you on the spot, who was your favourite President to cook for?

I would have to say that my whole Italian American family was so excited the night I cooked for Sophia Loren, President Scalforo of Italy, Jon Bonjovi, Nicolas Cage, and Martin Scorsese. For a young four-year old chef making pizza on white bread with catsup and grated cheese to now be cooking for Italian glitterati was quite a momentous occasion!

President Obama shocked people when he revealed that eating in the White House was not free. He claimed that he had to pay for everything he had to eat or drink, first of all is that true, and how does that work?

This is quite true and even many children like Amy Carter were surprised when mommy and daddy had to restrict 20 to 30 kids coming over after school for pizza, fun, and soda! The bills skyrocketed for Jimmy

and Rosalynn in all honesty and the American public remembers well that Thomas Jefferson died in bankruptcy and withstood thousands of visitors and dinners for decades on his own. The responsibilities of hosting, gifts, food, and furniture are intense. First families also pay for staff working private parties. And vacation spots and hotels are paid for out of their pocket. These and many other things are paid for privately whereas everyone may believe these are free – it's most definitely a balancing act of going broke with gifts given to others a concern at the high-end level. You can make 20 times the amount of money as a President of a private company and have 20 times less stress.

What is the strangest thing you have ever cooked for a President, and what is the furthest place you had to have ingredients imported for a meal?

I believe concerns about serving store bought cookies and serving them at a White House Chefs Dinner where I was the keynote speaker in Illinois brought tremendous concerns for our hosts of the Republican Party. The Chairlady, Connie Beard told me, "I think serving Nancy Reagan's Macaroon Cookie recipe is great and Ronnie's love for Jelly Belly jelly beans on a dish with that is great! But having a machine stamped cookie on that plate, well...folks are paying hundreds of dollars for dinner are going to question the kitchen and chef doing that!!!!?? You'll have to explain that immediately when that comes out to the table!!!" And I got on that right away with the crowd to let them know that President Trump's best friend is not Rudy Giuliani, but actually the Keebler Elf as Don loves Vienna Fingers cookies made by Keebler Company (now owned by the Kellof Company). I always tell chefs how important it is to serve what folks love – like when FOX NEWS featured me making California Pizza Kitchen pizzas as Senator Ted Cruz's favorite. We just dined at California Pizza Kitchen in Hollywood last week and are hopeful to launch a huge America 250 menu with a national restaurant chain one of my agents Jean Marie Russo is speaking with! It will be the United Tastes of America Menu.

You do a lot of public speaking about your time as a White House Chef, what is the most common question you have been asked, and what is the strangest?



The most common question, as a historian and writer, is about how I got the job and why I also was a butler, housekeeper, bartender at night, and worked in the underground world of the nuclear bunker Orange One, as a Chief. I explain that I was in the military and it was great to put my white chefs coat on and prepare meals each day but it was not like being a civilian chef, where I went home at 8 pm after dinner. Many days were 18 hours long and we could never hire a local bartender to come in to the Camp David Resort and Conference Center to work until 2 am. In the Navy, we cleaned rooms and cabins, the first families private home named Aspen, and ran four restaurants and a small hotel. We do exceptionally excellent work and love the full hospitality focused job!

The strangest question ever asked is about one of our butlers being hit repeatedly with a rolling pin over the back, face, head, and neck by his wife when attacked around 3 am in the morning coming home drunk from the White House? Is the story true and why was a butler boozing until the wee hours of the morning and bowling with the President? Everyone has seen the painting of President Nixon bowling on the wall in the film, The Big Lebowski. Not everyone has watched his silent films hosting the winners of the bowling championships at the White House. Tricky Dick loved whipping balls down the wooden polished lanes at unsuspecting pins waiting to be cut down with his madness. And he was a skilled pianist and ferocious bowler. So much so that he asked servant Frankie Blair to hang one night (Frank might have hinted at a bottle of unproven Scotch, or not) and work the lanes for hours and hours with him. Terrified of an ass whipping at the end of the fun evening, Frankie told the President he was going to be slapped across the face repeatedly by his wife for the lies about his breath and pitch black darkness of his arrival at home at an hour he had never shown up before! "There could even be a shot into the car when just getting out." The prez ordered him to come to the oval office immediately and wrote out a note for Frankie to turn in to the Principal about his lateness (Frankie's wife) on a White House letterhead with a blue ball pen. As the yelling began, he begged her to please, PLEASE, just let me explain!!! "Let me show you something..."

What skills would you say you must have to be a successful chef?



The greatest skill any chef can have is tenacity and to keep trying. I have burnt and ruined food and just remade it again to perfect my craft. The definition of FAIL is Fortunate Attempt In Learning. I never knew that going to jail, getting a divorce, becoming a loser, turning into a bankrupt, being a homeless veteran and sleeping in a cargo van after the desert wars would turn into sleeping in a closet. We are all doing the very best we can and many of us are committed to helping the world all around us.

You are now the CEO at The US Presidential Service Center Foundation Trusts and US Presidential Culinary Museum, how did that happen, and how important is it to you for people to come and visit and experience what is on offer?

The greatest thing tens of thousands of people always say is that they “gain solace during our guided tours.” Coming to understand the first families are not seated God’s from Olympus and deal with weed smoking at the White House by their son, convicted murderers for nannies, staff being arrested and sprung from the slammer calling the White House using the ONE PHONE CALL you get, drunken behavior by family, Presidents fathering children with housekeepers in a closet like President Warren G. Harding, and that guests lit on fire during holiday parties can be put out with the champagne urn of water by a quick thinking butler. When guests and conventions hear about the truth – they realize that living on earth is not easy for anyone. We all have to help each other in the good times and the bad times. We all have problems and are sinners. We are all doing our best each day. As best we can.

The White House has welcomed many famous people from around the world, but who would say is the most famous person a chef has cooked for in the White House, and who is the most famous person who has visited the US Presidential Culinary Museum?

I still think the most famous person to ever have lunch at the White House was General Robert E. Lee invited by President Ulysses S. Grant. Most humans have never heard of General Lee in the White House and ask, “how is that even possible!?” It is possible to heal and gain solace. It is possible for Russia and Ukraine, or Israel and Palestine to come to peace.



In actuality, when Danny Aiello stayed upstairs in our Blue Room and had a gun battle with shotguns and pistols out of our windows against the Cleveland County Sherriff's Department brought tremendous fame to our facility. Our family rented the building to the Earl Owensby Film Studios of Shelby, NC to make the movie, Hooch. To this day, a lot of locals still express to me they did not appreciate closing the entire state road and hearing weapons fire. Recent visitors to our town and locale have been Ed Sheeran, President Carter, Diana Gabaldon, and the late Bill Paxton filming at Kings Mountain National Military Park for Who Do You Think You Are.

King George VI made history when he became the first reigning British monarch to visit the White House With Queen Elizabeth. What preparation would have taken place to decide what to cook for the King and Queen. What I am asking is, how does the White House Chef know what the King and Queen would like to eat and what foods they don't like?

We always speak with the Office of Protocol from any visiting country as well as the Social Secretary and Chief of Staff. Our secret has always been that the White House blends half of the menu American – with half of that visiting country. In this way, we honor both countries respectfully with food, recipe, and wine choices. In the rare instance that Nikita Khrushchev or Winston Churchill requests to bite a hot dog you quickly assemble where to get that experience for them. When the King and Queen came, we had a dinner for them in the White House which included the famous Calf's Head Soup. People ask me, "hey, Chef Marti, how do you make that?" No one knows we had a dinner for the Royal Family at the White House. All people have ever heard about is the hot dog incidents up at the Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park on the Hudson, in New York.

The King loved the hot dog and asked for seconds! He enjoyed beers and brought his own small movie camera to film the Press with it. The Queen was perplexed and wrote about it in her diary where she asked Franklin (the President at that time, Franklin Delano Roosevelt) "how do you eat the hot dog?" To which he responded in a crass manner, "you pick it up and push it into your mouth, and keep pushing, your highness." She was not about to touch bare food with her hands off of a plate and instead used her silverware to cut and eat the frank. Which she later

stated was not so easy with them photographing and filming us.



When you worked in the White House, how stressful was it when you had to plan a meal for a visiting royal such as Prince of Wales and Princess Diana?

Every bit of stress that any of us staff have ever had or experienced in 250 years of serving the presidents and first family has been erased when Diana asked Nancy to go ask John Travolta if he would dance with her. She said it was a dream to hit the floor with Mr. Saturday Night Fever and she rocked it!

Otherwise, I can tell you that we all know that nothing compares to a dinner at Buckingham Palace. Which makes all of our staff feel at ease. Why try to beat our friends in England? It's impossible. One really cool thing was when Prince Phillip was walking around the White House and strolled alone into the famous Red Room after a state dinner. A few of our men sitting in tuxedo servant jackets stood up immediately as all the guests were gone. Phillips one wish was to be allowed to make drinks for everyone. "And I get to pour the Martini's and do the shaker!"

When people visit the US Presidential Culinary Museum, what experience can they expect?

Our exhibits and tours are unlike any museum in the world. Several of the newest ones in 2024 are about the

1. Chinese American Executive Chef to the President, Lee Ping Quan. This includes many of his famous dishes like Chop Suey, Sailors in Hammocks, and Lychee Fruit Salad that the Coolidge First Family loved.
2. Emerald Isle White House Chef debuts featuring Kathy Buckley live in New York City on June 30, 2024 at Bloom's Tavern. Who ever knew that an immigrant lady Chef ran the White House kitchen for Presidents and also cooked for JP Morgan in his private New York estate

Guests howl with laughter during the many stories that wind through the exhibits on two floors and often experience angered voices in third person As well as up to four languages spoken and ten accents.



One last question before we go, what would you say to children who have a dream of becoming a chef but don't know where to start?

Start like I did as early as four years old and bring your tablet into the kitchen, as I do. There you can watch and rewind a video and please know this is how I perfect new recipes! I also love large format, full color cookbooks.

For more information about the White House Chef and **The United States Presidential Service Center** **The United States Presidential Culinary Museum**, please visit <https://theinnofthepatriots.com/the-uspsc>