



# **Cooking for Madam: Recipes and Reminiscences from the Home of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis**

*Marta Sgubin*

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Marta Sgubin came to the United States in 1969 as governess to Caroline Kennedy and John F. Kennedy, Jr. She regarded the move as temporary and was secretly planning to return to Europe very quickly. Twenty-five years later, when Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis died, Marta was still with her. When she first arrived, Marta was an unusual combination of extreme sophistication and unexpected naivete not surprising, since she spent the first half of her young life in San Valentino-- population 400-- in the north of Italy and the second half in the palazzos and chateaux of various world capitals as nanny and then as companion to the daughter of a wealthy French diplomat. She had always addressed the mother of her French charge as "Madame", in the formal European way. In the new household, she called the newly married Mrs. Onassis "Madam" in the mistaken belief that that was the English version of the term. Eventually Mrs. Onassis explained its meaning in English and the slightly risqué connotation, but begged Marta not to stop using it because it was "so cute". After the children left for boarding school, Marta stayed on with the family. Her role, naturally, changed and evolved from governess to housekeeper and, finally, to friend, until she became an indispensable part of the household. She ran everything, but she shone especially as a gifted cook. Whether it was birthday parties for Caroline and John over the Thanksgiving weekend in New Jersey, a barbecue on the porch of the beach house on Martha's Vineyard, or a fast but elegant dinner on Fifth Avenue before the ballet, Marta was always there, cooking for Madam. And now Marta has gathered nearly 100 of the family's favorite recipes and garnished them with her reminiscences in "Cooking for Madam". She offers the special green sauce she served with poached salmon and, in passing, tells the story of Chester, the pigeon she trained to come to the kitchen window in New York. Everyone can enjoy Marta's famous scrambled eggs and, as the eggs are being stirred in a double boiler, can read about how they were traditionally served at Christmas breakfast to Mrs. Onassis and her family. The food covers the culinary spectrum from the Christmas dinner entree, Loin of Veal Stuffed with a Morel Mousse (the recipe originally called for sweetbreads, but Madam didn't care for them, so Marta created an acceptable substitute) to the Chocolate Roll Caroline always requested on her birthday. Here is Uncle Teddy's favorite lobster salad (made with fresh corn, but no celery), the mashed potatoes Jack Schlossberg was so proud of that he had Marta come and make them for his nursery school class, and the Shepherd's Pie Diana Vreeland pronounced the best she had ever eaten. There have been millions of words written about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, but never before by a member of her household. Marta, as she herself says, "confines herself to the kitchen and the dining room." But within those cozy boundaries Marta offers a loving tribute to the woman she knew as well as anyone-- the committed mother, the doting Grand Jackie, and the wry commentator on family life.

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