

2 November 2006

It's a good thing!

By Wesley Trobaugh



Martha Stewart is America's domestic goddess. Most Americans, at least the ones who have a house to run and guests to entertain, want to be just like her. And yet she is the woman America loves to hate.

I was first introduced (not formally) to Martha Stewart when I was about 13 or 14 years old. Her show was on Friday mornings at 11:00. I, obviously, had to go to school so I recorded her show, *Martha Stewart Living*, to watch later. Soon after this discovery, I started subscribing to her magazine. Do not ask about a teenage boy who subscribes to *Martha Stewart Living*.

Martha cooks, Martha decorates, Martha sews, Martha gardens, Martha has chow chows, Martha renovates houses, Martha carves pumpkins with a jigsaw, Martha goes to tag sales (not to be confused with rummage sales or garage sales; these are not to be found in Fairfield County). But curiously enough, Martha never cleans. I think this is why America wants to be Martha Stewart. If you are Martha Stewart, you can dust your entire kitchen with flour while making your mother's stollen recipe, you can whip blobs of scalding caramel syrup on a pyramid of fried dough balls (probably called beignets because

anything French sounds better than fried dough balls), you can pot plants right there in the dining room. You can do all of this because when you are finished with your little chore, you have a team of sixteen to clean up after you. You suddenly appear *à la Preysler* before your unexpected guests in a perfectly shiny and anti-bacterial home.

Martha Stewart turned housekeeping into pure glamour. She doesn't give you tips on how to get stains out of your children's clothes; the servants do that. She doesn't tell you to use vinegar and newspaper to clean your windows; let the window cleaner get his hands dirty. All you have to do is the fun, creative, and laudable stuff. Nobody notices how clean your windows are but everyone will rave over your fabulous blood orange martinis and your ambrosial passion fruit vodka smoothies.

Real people, call them hoi polloi if you like, do not like this. Real people know that you have to clean up when you make puff pastry. Real people do not make puff pastry. Real people know that gardening is not just prancing around picking your red-ripe tomatoes. Real people know that chow chows need to be brushed.

And some of us aspire to be something beyond real people, people who would justify insider trading, people who would buy colonial farms in Connecticut just for the hell of it, people who would dare to make (serve and drink) cocktails at 11 a.m.

I no longer subscribe to *Martha Stewart Living* but every time I go to the U.S., I pick up a copy. I love Martha and someday I will be just like her!

© Copyright Lingua 2005