



# Cooking With Classics: Two Women And Their Journey With Historic Recipes



Angela McLaughlin ~ The Journal • Nov 26, 2019

When Jenne Bergstrom and Miko Osada started a cooking blog that included recipes from childhood books, they never imagined what it would lead to.

The blog is called "36 Eggs," and Bergstrom says it was named for a pound cake recipe mentioned in the book "Anne of Windy Poplars" that called for 36 eggs.

"We make all kinds of food from different books, but most often from kids' books, because there are a lot of things we remember wanting to eat when we read about them as kids," says Bergstrom.

"Whenever possible, we try to recreate the whole experience from the book, not just the food," she says. "For example, when we made the giant chocolate cake friends to a cake picnic and told them they weren't allowed to leave until the whole cake was gone!"

Bergstrom grew up in Julian, where her parents were the directors at Camp Stevens. She spent a lot of time in the camp kitchen learning how to cook and reading childhood classics, including "Little Women" and the "Little House on the Prairie" series.

"One of the things I loved about it was the detailed descriptions of people's daily lives in the past. Living in such a rural area and going to a one-room school, I definitely felt an affinity with that sort of life," she says, referring to her elementary years at Spencer Valley School, which only had a single building and 10 students when she attended.

She eventually graduated from Julian Union High School and earned her degree at Oberlin College in Ohio, which Osada would also later attend.

Bergstrom harbored a fondness for literature and the library, having volunteered at Julian Branch Library during high school and working there for a period of time after getting her undergraduate degree. She later went to UCLA to earn her library degree.

In 2003, she returned to the San Diego area and became a fulltime librarian with San Diego County. It was in San Diego that Bergstrom and Osada met, both working as librarians for the county and bonding over their penchant for cooking and childhood books.

They tackled their first themed cooking project in 2014, sparking the idea for the blog, which began the following year.

"We started this project of recreating literary dishes because we thought it was fun, and it was fantastic to really nerd out about reading and food," says Osada.

Bergstrom adds, "One day, we got a mysterious message on our Facebook page."

That message was from Ulysses Press, which was interested in producing a "Little Women" cookbook to accompany the movie that is scheduled to come out this Christmas.

"We didn't start the blog with the intention of writing a book — we just did it for our own amusement," Bergstrom says. "At first, we weren't sure we were qualified to write a cookbook, but we realized that what we do on our blog — researching historical recipes then cooking them and documenting the process — is pretty much exactly what writing a cookbook would require. Not to mention the fact that we are both longtime obsessive fans of 'Little Women.'"

After the two agreed to take on the project, things moved rather quickly. They only had three months to perform all the research and recipe testing before turning in their first draft.

It was a lot of work for such a short timeline. Osada made a spreadsheet of every food that is mentioned in the book and then found recipes from real cookbooks of the Civil War era.

"My role was to make all the recipes and translate them into something that a modern cook could make in a modern kitchen," says Bergstrom, adding that historical recipes are often vague, relying on the cook to have a lot of prior experience.

"Not to mention using a wood stove or even cooking outdoors!"

Bergstrom and Osada succeeded in their mission, and "The Little Women Cookbook" was released Oct. 29. Learn more at 36eggs.com.

"We're beyond thrilled that we have a book," says Osada. "We're both librarians, so we're obviously huge fans of books. But neither of us imagined we would actually write one. We set out to write the kind of in-depth cookbook we would want ourselves as die-hard fans of 'Little Women,' and I think we're both really happy with how it turned out."



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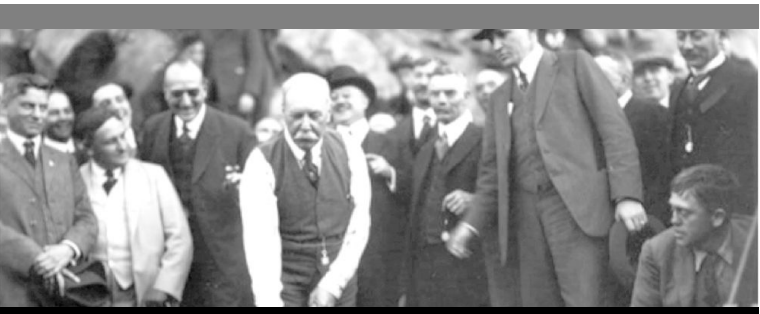
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