

A full-page photograph of Rachel Maddow standing in front of a large, white, two-story house with a porch. She is wearing a pink t-shirt with a red outline of the United States and the Chinese characters '美國製作' (Made in USA) with stars below it. She is also wearing blue-rimmed glasses and has short dark hair. The house behind her has a white picket fence and a red door. The background is filled with green trees and a clear sky.

"I've got a job in New York," says Maddow (outside her Massachusetts country escape), "but I live in this beautiful house."

**MSNBC'S  
RACHEL  
MADDOW**

# AT HOME & UNPLUGGED

When the liberal political pundit isn't pushing conservatives' buttons on her show, she's kicking back in the country with her longtime partner—and absolutely no television

**W**hen Rachel Maddow first moved into her Massachusetts home with girlfriend Susan Mikula, she wasn't a political journalist hungry for the latest news. She was just hungry. "When Susan and I got together . . .," Maddow begins.

"Neither of us cooked!" chimes in Mikula. "I could make macaroni and cheese from a box. Rachel could make toast and salsa."

"Or pour scotch!" Maddow adds.

But what Maddow lacks in the kitchen, she has made up for in front of the camera. On her eponymous MSNBC show, Maddow, 37, dishes out a daily serving of left-leaning commentary with a dash of her trademark sarcasm. Since her 2008 debut, Maddow—a former AIDS activist who worked odd jobs before getting her big break as a radio host 10 years ago—has logged 60-hour weeks to hold her own alongside



Mikula (right, in their Massachusetts kitchen) usually cooks since “this isn’t a take-out town,” says Maddow.



“I’m proud of what I’m doing,” says Maddow (on the set of her show).

“In the middle of nowhere, we fell in love and the rest is history” —RACHEL MADDOW

conservative counterparts like Bill O’Reilly and Sean Hannity. “It’s a very all-consuming job—but in a good way,” says Maddow, sipping red wine over dinner in New York City’s West Village, where she lives while taping her show during the week. “It’s definitely intense.”

Which explains why Maddow and Mikula abandon their 275-sq.-ft. Manhattan apartment (their English Lab “takes up nearly a third of it!” says Mikula) and drive three hours every weekend to their country retreat in Western Massachusetts, a quaint home built in 1865. “Having a place out of the city is a shortcut toward the mental reset I need,” says Maddow, whose rou-

tine Saturday activities include taking the garbage to the dump, mixing vintage cocktails (the Whiskey Skin is a particular favorite) and reading comic books. Yet indulging in channel surfing or even watching her own network is not on the agenda, since the house has no cable...or even a television set. “We realized that the two of us have the TV Disease,” explains Mikula, 52. “Rachel can’t have one because she’d watch it all the time!”

On paper it’s hard to believe the couple see eye to eye on anything. Maddow is a California native who stays up late and still can’t cook an egg. Mikula is a Jersey-bred artist who savors mornings and has lately become an avid home chef. And while Mikula loves indulging in girly accessories like purses, Maddow frankly points out: “I look like a dude.”

But none of the differences mat-

tered when the pair met in 1999; Maddow was hired to do yard work on Mikula’s property in the Berkshires. “It was very *Desperate Housewives*,” Maddow jokes.

Now Mikula is Maddow’s biggest fan and a fixture in the control room as Maddow speaks her mind about everything from Don’t Ask Don’t Tell to her supposed run for senate (note to Scott Brown: She does not want your job). “I’m proud to be doing what I’m doing,” says Maddow. Her “greatest triumph” on air thus far? When the National Spelling Bee champ challenged her to spell a tricky word on air. “I *nailed* it!” says Maddow, laughing. “In this business we’re all a little geeky. I just may be a little more proud about it than everybody else.”

By Michelle Tan. Mark Dagostino in New York City