



Above: Kevin's airstream trailer



Left: Kevin has won several awards for the interior design of his vintage Airstream mobile home.



Above: (clockwise from top left) The open concept kitchen at the Mamolitti residence, a semi at Yonge and Eglinton that Kevin transformed from a cramped unworkable space.

A romantic staircase at the Hildy residence.

Kevin is the founder and editor in chief of *your source* magazine, a glossy quarterly that features home designs from around the world's well as, lifestyle articles.

KEVIN FITZSIMONS

Mississauga's Designer to the Rich and Famous

by Maureen Scott

How does a designer from Mississauga end up designing a kitchen for Oprah's personal chef Art Smith and a house for TV Cooking Show Host Giada de Laurentiis? Kevin Fitzsimons was in the right place at the right time.

"One of my best friends owns a flatware company in Canada," says Kevin, President of Fitzsimons Design + Build, based in Toronto. "She had a party and one of the guests was Art Smith, Oprah's personal chef." Before long, the two were discussing kitchen designs.

"I went to see Art's kitchen. It was small, dated, had a red fridge and microwave and the worst flowered wallpaper. I told him he had the ugliest kitchen in America!" laughs Kevin. "But I quickly added that I could give him the best kitchen in America."

Kevin tore down walls to enlarge the space and designed an Italian-based Varenna Poliform kitchen for Art complete with warm Ovankol finished cabinets, set off by white Carrera counter tops. Fitzsimons divided the kitchen into three parts; a desk so Smith could draft recipes for his cookbook,

the main cooking area with a camera installed in the ceiling and a LCD monitor so that Art can create shows at home, and a "viewing area" where guests can sit on stools and watch the chef at work. He worked closely with Smith to design a pantry area with laundry facilities and special cabinets to house Smith's gadgets, including his ice cream maker, pasta machines, a cheese cave and wine collection.

The design earned Fitzsimons the prestigious Viking Design Award in 2006. The kitchen design was featured in O Magazine and in several other U.S. magazines, raising the profile of this previously unknown Canadian designer. I also designed his outdoor kitchen, which was featured in a later issue of O as well.

It was in that award-winning kitchen that Kevin met TV Chef/Celebrity Giada de Laurentiis, host of *Everyday Italian*. "When Giada's cookbook went number one on the New York best seller list, Art had a party for her. The next thing you know I was flying to Los Angeles and redesigning Giada's home in Pacific

Palisades," explains Kevin. "We ripped the entire house down and rebuilt it. The kitchen features stainless steel, glass and Wenge (the outside of the house is teak) and white Italian marble counter tops. It's a kitchen designed for a celebrity chef – very professional with lots of stuff hidden away. The home's design is very contemporary with lots of windows looking out over the ocean. The new kitchen is where Giada will film upcoming episodes of her show.

Side note: Giada starts shooting her new season and it will be called *Giada at Home*. They have duplicated the kitchen I designed in a Hollywood sound studio and will be shooting segments of her and her family at the house. "Giada's taste runs more traditional while her husband Todd Thompson has very modern taste. I worked with them, blending certain materials and design elements so that they both loved it. It's like getting a recipe right!" laughs Kevin. Giada's home will be featured in the December issue of *Architectural Digest*.

Kevin has designed "monster homes" in Mississauga and Oakville and is

currently working on a renovation in Forest Hill. "I say every time, well, I nailed this! I am not a designer who has a look they sell. I design for my clients, not for what I like. I can design a 160 year old castle or a house made of glass and steel."

Kevin's biggest project by far was the renovation of a 160-year-old, 40,000 square foot castle in New Jersey. Kevin spent the last two and a half years commuting to New York City four days a week to work on the project.

"The property is owned by fashion designer Marc Ecko. Marc bought the property for 12 million and will put another 20 million into renovations," says Kevin. "The Carnegie family used to live there, but the castle sat empty for years and was totally dilapidated. We ripped off the back of the house and built a new kitchen. There are four other kitchens in the house, plus re-designed a guest house, cabana, designed underwater grottos which run under the house, a night club and a men's lounge. Everything is custom done with logos and family crests. We renovated and

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