

BY DIANA TUORTO

## SPICING IT UP

Robin Silverman-Denker is the creative force of Kitchens By Design Gallerie, LLC, located in Westlake Village, California. She often travels to the Florida Keys, where she still loves to cook with her parents and enjoy the new kitchen that she designed for them. Robin's good taste in both food and design makes her special.

**NKBA:** When did you first learn to cook? **RD:** My father is a fabulous self-taught chef and I learned to cook with him when I was about ten years old. He was always traveling around the world and picking up recipes. The first few recipes that I tried were Italian dishes; I enjoyed interpreting them into English with my father.

**NKBA:** Did you ever want to be a chef? **RD:** I did! About 22 years ago, I was shopping at a Williams Sonoma store, buying various unusual pots and pans, when the manager came up to me. She asked, "How would you like to teach cooking classes for us?" I had no experience, other than an eager personality and knowing the right recipes. Soon, I started a company out of my home called Gourmaids, where I mainly taught Spanish-speaking housekeepers how to cook tailored recipes geared to the families they worked for.

**NKBA:** What is your all-time favorite recipe? **RD:** I call it Chinese dump soup. It's usually made with chicken stock, vegetables (scallions, pea pods, cabbage), pot stickers, shrimp, ginger, garlic, sesame oil, and a drop of chili oil. Sometimes, I'll put some egg and creamed corn in, which just brings out even more flavor. Although now in college, my kids still love it!

**NKBA:** Do you have certain ingredients that you tend to use often? **RD:** Yes! I cook with a lot of green onions, scallions, Japanese bread crumbs, garlic, ginger, shrimp, crumbled feta cheese, and fresh mozzarella. I also love to use a variety of olive and grapeseed oils. Most of these items are great for making tasty Asian or Italian dishes.

**NKBA:** Has your love of cooking affected your design work? **RD:** Completely. From being a home chef myself, I know just how important storage can be. I'm in favor of designing with plenty of pullouts and drawers for storing spices and materials. A large number of families now buy in bulk and need as much space as possible.

It's important to designate storage areas when designing for kosher kitchens, which I specialize in, or even for diabetics, who need to keep sugar-free items grouped together. When designing, I always try to take the time to see how my clients live, cook, and work in their kitchens to make the most effective decisions. It's that personal touch that brings me referrals.

If it wasn't for my love of cooking, I wouldn't be a kitchen designer, and I wouldn't have met my fiancé, whose kitchen and bathrooms I designed! Thankfully, he loves my cooking too.



### SAVOR THE FLAVOR:

Robin Silverman-Denker and her fiancé Jerry enjoy a romantic dinner together and get ideas for future recipes.

If you would like to be considered for Last Word, contact Diana Tuorto at (800) THE-NKBA, ext. 2297 or e-mail dtuorto@nkba.org



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