

Birmingham

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HOME & GARDEN

INSPIRED LIVING FOR BIRMINGHAM AND BEYOND

A Nurturing Place
in Indian Springs

Permanent Vacation
at The Crest
in Greystone

Lifestyle Adjustments
in Mountain Brook

At Home
with **4** Birmingham
Chefs

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houses rows of cookbooks for such "experiments," along with a large-screen TV mounted on one wall. "I was looking more for a space to have social moments with my family, to cook and visit with them, rather than for a big kitchen," he says. "The television helps make the kitchen more of a gathering place while I'm cooking. My sons love to watch football on it, so we're able to spend time together while I prepare the meals."

When the meal begins, however, the TV is turned off. "My parents always said that eating is something you must do with much respect. When it's time to sit down as a family and eat, there is no place for TV. Eating together is spending quality time as a family."

While the television is a modern, eye-catching feature, Castro's home kitchen is mostly a blend of the old-world Mexican look with a few modern details. Basic stainless-steel appliances complement white-washed kitchen cabinets and Asian slate floors. Dotted the walls are several small, distinctive paintings, copies of original works by Botero, a Colombian artist known for his portraits of full-figured people.

While he admits there are "a lot more gadgets" at work, Castro says he's always more comfortable cooking at home. "There's no rush, no heat, and I always know where everything is because I'm the only one working in this kitchen," he says.

Chris Hastings (Hot & Hot Fish Club)

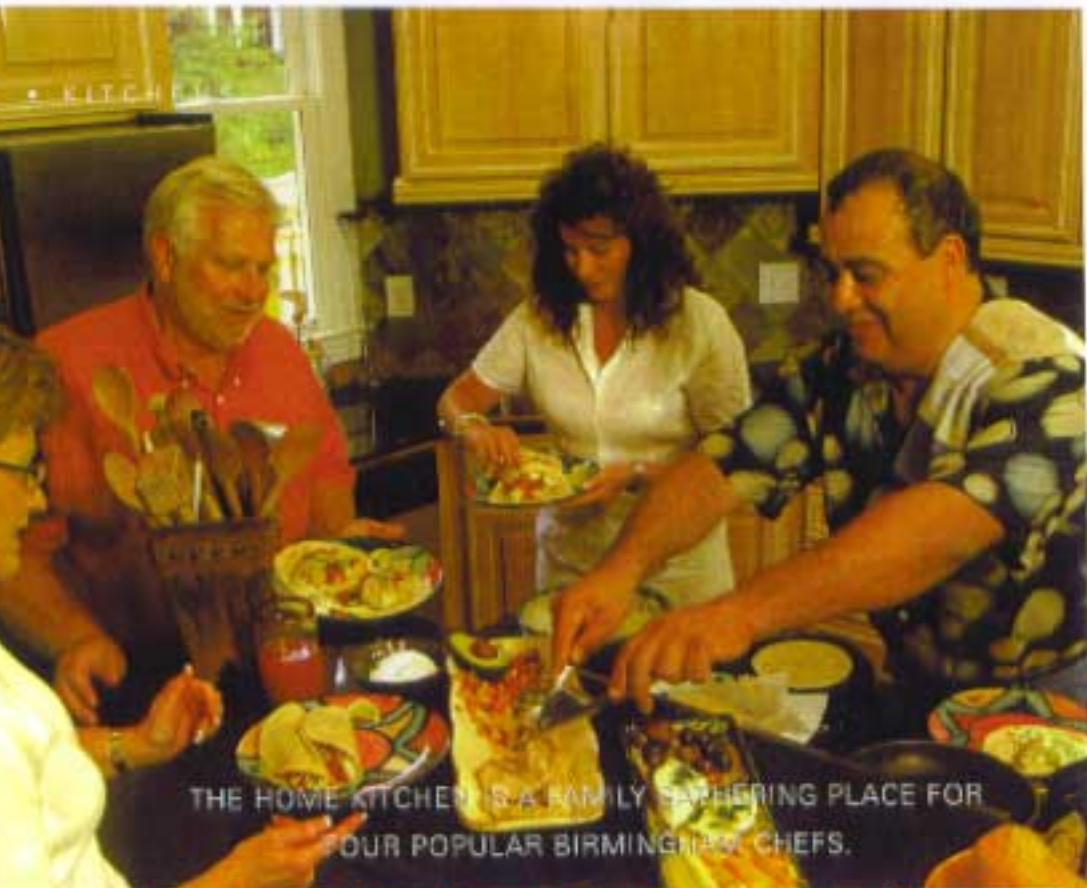
There's no microwave in the Hastings family kitchen. That appliance doesn't fit into Chef Chris Hastings's philosophy of cooking at home. "A microwave isn't necessary," he says. "Time in the kitchen should be quality time with your family; you should relax and enjoy it."

Designed by Hastings and his wife Idie, the Hastings home kitchen in Mountain Brook is perfect for such family time. A computer desk and kitchen table set the scene for homework sessions and family meetings, while a large open entranceway connects it to the formal dining area and the family room.

"When we moved here, we gutted



Chef Chris Hastings, his wife Idie, and one of their sons, Vincent, enjoy preparing and eating a meal together in their home kitchen. The room was designed especially for relaxed family time and for cooking with ease, as everything the chef needs is within reach from one central spot behind the range.



THE HOME KITCHEN IS A FAMILY GATHERING PLACE FOR FOUR POPULAR BIRMINGHAM CHEFS.

At left: Chef Guillermo Castro (far right) enjoys serving guests in his home kitchen, where he's blended the old-world look of whitewashed cabinets and stone with modern accents, such as stainless-steel appliances and a large-screen TV. Guests pictured are (left to right) Cindy and Greg Abramson and Leda Dimperio.

who's in the kitchen?

More than any other room in a home, the kitchen seems to be the most lived in. Even for professional chefs who spend much of their time in commercial kitchens, the home kitchen is part family room, part study and part entertain-

ing space, not to mention the place for cooking, eating and cleaning up with the family.

Four popular Birmingham chefs recently shared their home kitchens—and their ideas about these special rooms—with *BH&G*.



Chef Guillermo Castro's home kitchen includes a sitting area and a large-screen television, so he and his sons can watch sports while he cooks and his family can gather comfortably before and after meals.

Guillermo Castro **(Los Angeles and Sol Y Luna)**

In Mexico, every meal is a celebration. Chef Guillermo Castro, a native of Mexico, continues to operate by that tradition. "Cooking at a restaurant is nothing like cooking at home," he says. "Here I have more privacy; I can cook for people that are really special to me, like family and friends. I also have a chance to play a little mero—I can experiment with Italian or French cuisine and no one will know if I make a mistake."

Castro's modestly sized Vesuvia home kitchen