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36
page

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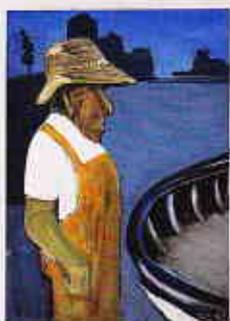


RENOVATING • DECORATING • ENTERTAINING • OUTDOOR LIVING

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Chef Gary Mehigan may be the boss of the kitchen in his family's Melbourne home but it's his wife, Mandy, who makes the decorating decisions

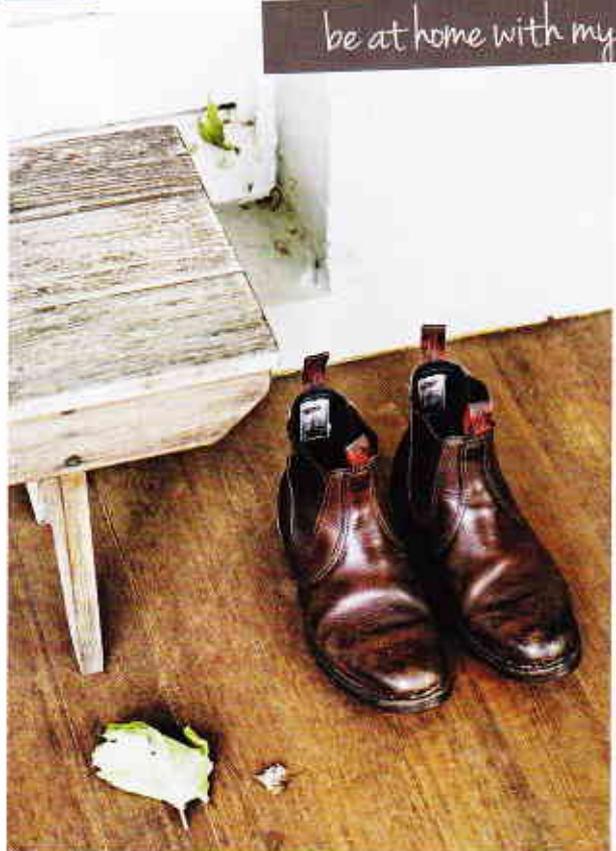
STORY KATRINA O'BRIEN & JULIA GREEN
STYLING JULIA GREEN PHOTOGRAPHY ARMELLE HABIB



FORMAL LOUNGE "It's so light and bright and so easy to relax in," says Gary of the formal living area in his family home. It is also home to one of Gary's most-treasured possessions - a work by artist friend Jeff Martin



"Because I do lots of travelling I just like to be at home with my family" - Gary



DISPLAY (top left) "This is one of my favourite pictures," says Gary of this shot with *Masterchef* mates George Calombaris and Matt Preston, taken by Peter Brew-Bevan. "The three of us have had an incredible journey. I think we will remain friends forever." **DETAIL** (above left) "These boots are my everyday - eight years old and still going strong," reveals Gary. "I've owned three pairs in 22 years - good old Red Wings!" **OUTDOORS** (above right) "There is one thing I am just as obsessed with as I am about food and that's my bikes," says Gary. "I've ridden them since I was 17, so it's by no means a mid-life crisis!" >



IT'S NOT OFTEN that kitchens come with a view, but this is no ordinary space. Light pours in from every angle in this expertly designed kitchen, where the home cook in charge of the burners is acclaimed chef, author and all-around *Masterchef* nice guy, Gary Mehigan. "Without a doubt, I rule the roost in the kitchen," says Gary. "Mandy says I'm quite bossy actually." It seems that Gary's territorial bent has been a long time in the making: "My dad filmed me many years ago in the kitchen and all the helpers just ended up leaving the room as I took over. The writing was on the wall even back then!"

Gary might be the creative force behind this sumptuous family kitchen – "Gotta love a central island bench, deep drawers for pots, long cutlery drawers and above all else, an industrial 90cm stove or double oven," he lists – but it's

Mandy who has taken charge of the decorating of this lovely Melbourne abode, home to the couple, their daughter Jenna, 12, and their much-loved rescue dogs, Jango and Molly.

When the family moved in a year ago, the house had mostly been renovated apart from a few damp and roofing issues, so all that was needed was a decorating overhaul. With thorough research, a moodboard and some advice from interior decorator friend Serafina Statham, Mandy devised an elegant and understated scheme with neutral tones and soft textures that suits the high-ceilinged spaces perfectly. "I had a firm sense of the look I was after," she says. If Gary had been at the helm, things might have been a little different. "If I had my way there would be more 'stuff' around, but Mandy doesn't like clutter," he reveals. "So we somehow have struck a balance!"

LIVING ROOM Expansive windows and double French doors make the lounge room an irresistible spot for both two and four-legged members of the family. "The flood of natural light that pours in makes it a pleasure to live here," says Gary.

A painting, *Damper Seed Dreaming* by artist Fabrianne Nampitjinpa Peterson, provides a beautiful focal point.

KITCHEN The kitchen features a generous island – a must for Gary – with a Stone Italiana benchtop. “There needs to be a connection between the sink, stove and bench for me,” he remarks. Another standout feature is the narrow wall cabinetry that doesn’t block out the light or view through the wide windows. “This is the heart of the home and the way the kitchen has been planned, it just works,” says Gary.

STYLE SECRETS

Who's the lead decorator between you?

Gary: “Mandy. My domain is the kitchen!”

Mandy: “I’ve been pretty lucky as Gary has backed my interior choices to date.”

Go-to weeknight meal at home?

Gary: “You can’t go past a roast chicken or a good Bolognese. When we asked our daughter Jenna what her favourite family meal was the other day, she said

Hainanese chicken and rice! But my new fave is egg and lemon soup with chicken meatballs. I plan on including the recipe in my new cookbook [to be published by Penguin in 2014].” 



“I’m keen to get an edible garden started. Olives, figs, herbs and kaffir limes are all on the list” - Gary