

Host Stories

WCBS News Reporter Tony Aiello and his wife, Liz, a Martha Stewart exec, create a kitchen perfect for entertaining guests, both young and old(er).

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WCBS News reporter Tony Aiello and his wife, Liz, a Martha Stewart exec, create a kitchen perfect for entertaining guests, both young and old(er).

decorating and gardening. And she's well versed in every aspect, both professionally and personally.

Perhaps not surprisingly given her occupation, she's also a fan of home décor magazines, clipping pages to deposit in her "dream box" for future projects. Her latest one, an expansion and renovation, doubled the size of her former kitchen, which now boasts sleek lines, top-tier stainless-steel appliances, plenty of windows, and a skylight.

“Welcome, come on in,”

says Liz Aiello, leading visitors into her 1924 center-hall Colonial in New Rochelle and straight into the kitchen. “I’ve just made some blueberry muffins with berries I got at the Farmers Market,” she adds, pointing toward a pretty basket on the island’s gleaming CaesarStone countertop.

If it seems like a perfect Martha Stewart moment, it may well be an occupational hazard: Liz is senior vice president of broadcasting at Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. She directs Stewart’s channel on Sirius Satellite Radio, which covers all aspects of the home maven’s domain, from cooking and crafts to

“We wanted to bring the outdoors inside,” explains her husband, Tony Aiello, a news reporter who covers Westchester, Southern Connecticut, and the lower Hudson Valley for CBS television’s local affiliate. Perched on a Shinto-style counter stool, Tony is digging into a piping-hot muffin, awaiting the arrival of his brother, Rob, and family for Sunday brunch.

In addition to his Emmy-nominated reporting, Aiello is active in Westchester’s arts scene, serving as a board member of the Westchester Arts Council (and chairman of its annual Arts Awards Committee luncheon) and as board secretary for the Westchester Philharmonic. Six months after the dust settled on the kitchen, Liz and Tony hosted 22 Philharmonic board members for dinner. “And guess how many people wanted to stand in the kitchen?” Liz jokes. “I had the buffet set up in the dining room. But everyone who sees the new space goes crazy.”



The artistic tiles over the range reflect the look—and



The kitchen renovation made room for a breakfast nook and a large built-in desk housing an iMac the twins share with Mom and Dad.

indoor meat grill, which was nice, but we rarely used it,” says Liz. And the grill and its hood hogged valuable space along the northeast wall.

Converted to counter and cabinets, the area is now Liz’s baking center. Handpainted Italian canisters hold staples on the countertop, alongside the double wall-mounted GE Profile ovens and the GE Monogram bottom-freezer refrigerator. Cabinets below have pull-out drawers for mixing bowls and other gear, a turntable for small appliances and ingredients, and vertical dividers for baking sheets and pans—all with twig hardware to bring in a bit of the outdoors. The KitchenAid mixer stands ready on the counter. “I used to have to keep it in the basement and get it every time

The gleaming new kitchen was designed to adapt with ease to the varied needs of the young couple’s many roles, whether it’s the staging area for a formal repast or just a typical evening meal for Liz, Tony, and their six-year-old twins, Robert and Anthony.

The old kitchen had its charm. The previous owners had upgraded the appliances, but without enough cabinets and counter space, it was cramped. Every bit of available space was filled with shelves and kitchen supplies. “There was an

I wanted to use it,” says Liz. “Now I can whip up cookies for the kids or a batch of biscotti just because Tony has a craving.” Or today’s blueberry muffins for Sunday brunch.

Despite her executive-level job, Liz, an avid chef, cooks often. A vegetable garden in the yard yields lettuce, tomatoes, and basil in summer, eggplant and green figs as the season comes to a close. As though stepping out of the pages of Martha’s Everyday Food magazine, she says, “I cook a lot on the weekends and make sure there are leftovers for the weekdays. I’ll make something after bedtime for the next day so there’s always something fresh.”

Liz glories in the new six-burner Thermador Professional range and hood, but more so in the slim sliding- base cabinets that flank it, holding a wide array of herbs and spices, oils and vinegars for preparing family favorites such as lamb chops or penne with homemade pesto. “Sometimes I think we did this entire kitchen so she could have those spice racks,” Tony quips.

But none of her guys complain as they devour the fresh muffins. And the new space feels just right, whether it’s filled with a few PTA moms stopping by for coffee and a playdate, friends sipping cocktails before a dinner party, a gathering of extended family tucking into a classic paella, or a formal festivity for the Philharmonic.



The kitchen positively gleams: the deep farmhouse sink Tony found online, the range hood, and the wine cooler all are stainless steel.

As a whole, the addition is done in a style Liz refers to as “contemporary with a traditional flair.” The four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath house is a classic Colonial, but the Aiello’s didn’t want to be limited to a traditional aesthetic in their new, airy space. So they kept the design clean and elegant with a natural palette so it wouldn’t feel disconnected from the rest of the house. The fabulous results, the Aiello’s say, is due to the talented team at the Mount Kisco showroom of home-improvement pros MyHome.

“I had a very distinct vision of what I wanted,” says Liz, relying on the long-held ideas collecting in her dream box. Meeting the MyHome architect, Jordan Rosenberg, at a home show in Purchase, the Aiello’s described that vision. During a follow-up meeting, Rosenberg sketched a plan on a napkin that added 470 feet to their 2,500-square-foot home. “That’s it!” Liz told him.

For extra reassurance, Liz took the architect’s plans to the office and asked Kevin Sharkey, Martha Stewart’s editorial director of decorating, to give it a look. “He loved it,” Liz says. “And I’m so happy with the end result.”

That’s because, in the end, the addition performs exactly as the Aiello’s had hoped. Liz can oversee artwork projects and homework at the family communication center—a large built-in desk with an iMac the boys share with Mom and Dad—while grabbing a recipe from her cookbook cabinet (cookbooks previously were relegated to the living room bookcase). She can indulge her passion for cooking with copious counters and easy-to-reach appliances, equipment, and ingredients. Counter stools make it easy for guests to congregate around the island, while Liz opens a bottle of vino from the built-in wine fridge just under the counter. In comparison to the old, cramped, and cluttered kitchen, it’s a dream come true—straight out of Liz’s dream box.



Liz Aiello is an avid cook, and a large island topped with CaesarStone offers plenty of room for food preparation. The wall-mounted GE Profile double ovens also see plenty of action.

Tony Aiello's Internet finds

The deep farmhouse kitchen sink from HandcraftedMetal.com
 The wood stand for the mudroom sink from HomeClick.com
 The chandelier over the table from Alluminaire.com
 The table, chairs, and stools from RoomandBoard.com

Blueberry Muffins

From Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook Clarkson Potter, 2005

(Makes 1 dozen)

- 1 stick (½ cup) unsalted butter room temperature (plus more for pan)
- 2 cups all-purpose flour plus more for pan
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups fresh blueberries
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Generously butter standard 12-cup muffin pan and dust with flour, tapping out excess; set aside. In medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt.

Liz Aiello's Entertaining Staples

Playdates with the kindergarten set:

Kitchen sink cookies from Martha Stewart Living Classic & alternative rock from iTunes (the boys particularly love Green Day and The Killers)
 Plastic dishware from Target

Sunday brunch with the extended family:

Tomato frittata (with just-picked tomatoes from the backyard garden) and homemade blueberry muffins
 Music from the Gipsy Kings
 Custom ceramic plates from Cose Belle of Ravello, Italy

Dinner with the Westchester Philharmonic Board of Directors:

Chicken Marbella from The Silver Palate Cookbook and farro salad
 Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 26
 Martha Stewart Collection whiteware plates from Macy's



A favorite kitchen staple: slim sliding-base cabinets that flank the new six-burner Thermador Professional range and keep a slew of herbs and spices, oils and vinegars within arm's reach.

Working over bowl, toss blueberries in fine sieve with about 1 1/2 teaspoons of flour mixture to lightly coat; set aside flour mixture and blueberries.

In bowl of electric mixer fitted with paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined. Mix in vanilla.

With mixer on low speed, add reserved flour mixture, beating until just combined. Add milk, beating until just combined; do not overmix. Using rubber spatula, fold in blueberries. Divide batter evenly among prepared muffin cups.

Bake, rotating pan halfway through, until muffins are golden brown and cake tester inserted in center of one muffin comes out clean (about 30 minutes). Transfer pan to wire rack to cool 10 minutes. Turn muffins on sides in their cups, and let cool. Serve warm or at room temperature. Sprinkle granulated sugar over tops of unbaked muffins (one tablespoon should cover all 12) to give them some crunch.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL POLITO

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