

SAN ANTONIO

TASTE

A culinary & design magazine



APR/MAY 2012

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A culinary & design magazine

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NOTE

from the editor

In gearing up for our city's most festive time of year, we cast aside allegiance to our "Tex" culinary prefix to pay homage to authentic "Mex" fare. Writer Gayle Brennan Spencer hit the streets of San Antonio in search of the flavors of Merida, Oaxaca and San Miguel de Allende, only to find them in the most unsuspecting places — a parking lot fringing the UTSA campus for starters. At Chela's we encountered fall-off-the-bone Michoacán-style carnitas; at Erick's on the northeast side, chorizo y papas-stuffed pambazos, and lengua asada, guisada and lampreada (400 pounds served each month, they tell us) at Taco Haven in Southtown. Salsa recipes are guarded family secrets, so don't ask, just *saborea*. (page 54).

Apart from FIESTA, there are many things about spring to celebrate. Goats are kidding and grazing, bringing us flavorful chevres. We talked with gourmet cheese experts about pairing the varieties of the season with other foods and wines (page 62). Strawberries are in full bloom in Poteet; this April the annual festival marks 65 years of raising scholarships for local high school students (page 70).

This time a year ago, many of us were enthralled by the royal nuptials of Prince William and Kate Middleton, including several ladies who gathered at Sarah Lucero's Dominion home for a royal tea to benefit HeartGift San Antonio. Get ideas for hosting your own proper English tea, if for no other reason than to sport a great hat. Local milliner Rita Crosby says there's a chapeau style for every woman; just no matchy-matchy unless you're the Queen (page 32).

Also in bloom in San Antonio is the presence of nationally acclaimed chefs, including Stephan Pyles, who recently unveiled Sustenio at Éilan Hotel Resort & Spa. For those of you who have only admired the Tuscan village-like Éilan from IH-10, take a closer look. At a recent press luncheon at Sustenio's signature community table, we tasted Pyles' and Executive Chef David Gilbert's eight ceviches, a heavenly Poblano and Asiago soup along with 18-hour braised bison short ribs, a mere sampling of the eclectic menu they've named "modern southwestern cuisine." This issue's "Kitchen Culture" story offers a behind-the-scenes look at how these dishes are executed with precision and finesse in one of today's most sophisticated commercial kitchens (page 40).

As San Antonio's culinary and dining scene flourish, so does the importance of consumer reviews. In a time when Internet rating sites abound, we look at Zagat, a pioneer in restaurant surveys, and why the recognized burgundy decal on restaurant windows remains a trusted source. Bruce Auden's Biga on the Banks rates consistently among top restaurants for food, service and décor; he shares what the rating system means for his success (page 76). And because some say behind every successful man is a woman, we spotlight Debra Auden — wife, mother of four, gardener, acclaimed baker and home school teacher (page 98). Happy Mother's Day, Mrs. Auden.



Michele McMurry
Editor-in-Chief



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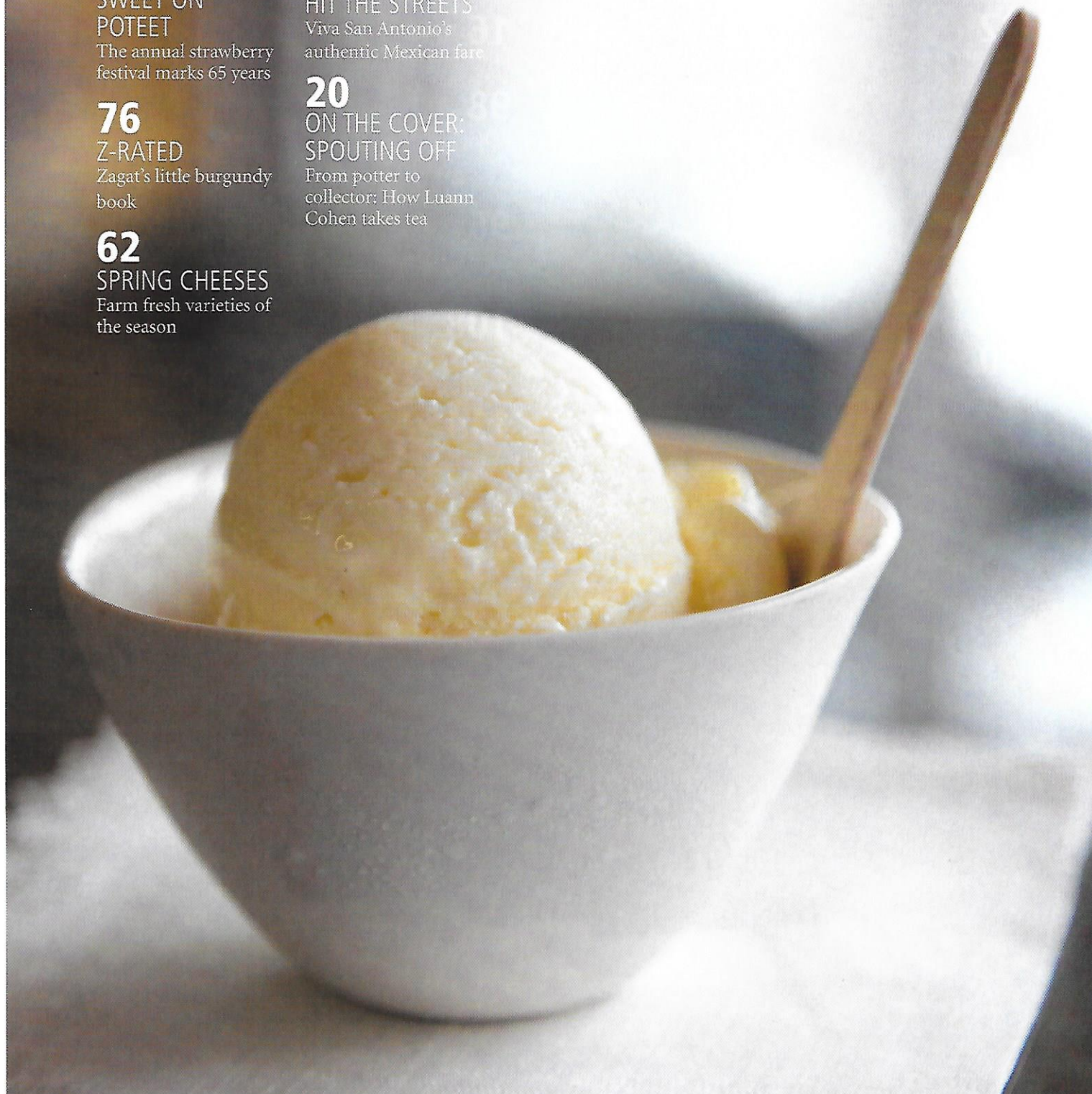
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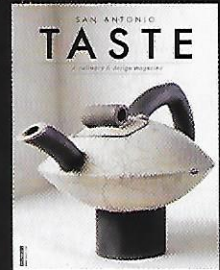
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ABOUT THE COVER
Raku-style tea pot from the collection of Luann Cohen
PHOTO BY PAULINE STEVENS

Spouting Off

By Michele McMurry
 Photography by Pauline Stevens
 Styling by Stevie Weissman

The phrase “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” resonated with Luann Cohen 37 years ago when she first tried her hand at pottery. However, several attempts at crafting tea pots resulted in cracking, breakage and ultimate despair, Cohen says. But persistence paid off. Now she appreciates the craft in an entirely new way.

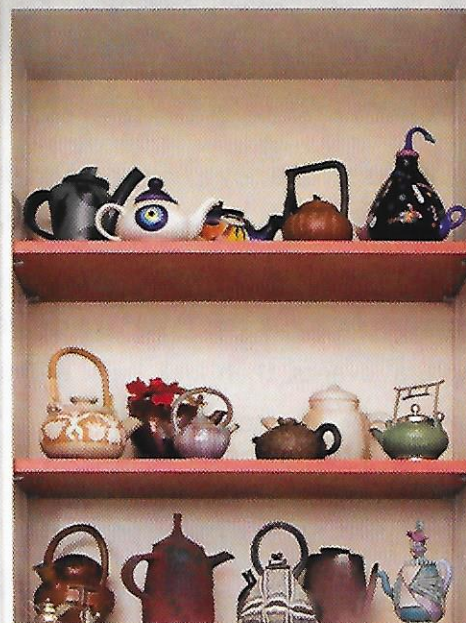
“I gave up after my failures and decided to collect instead,” she says.

Cohen’s vast tea pot collection totals about 150 pieces that occupy every nook and cranny in her kitchen and laundry room. Cohen’s overseeing of the galleries at Southwest School of Art and operating her own Creative Arts Gallery in North Star Mall several years ago introduced her to various types of American crafted pottery. Her collection came from wholesale markets, organized by the American Craft Council, as well as various craft shows. “They’ve come from all our travels,” she says.

Unusual finds outside her American collection include a white alabaster tea pot she found at a market stall in Egypt and a rustic piece from Peru that dons two spouts and no lid. “They must pour the water in one spout and out the other,” she surmises. Among her more treasured pieces is a Japanese Raku-style vessel, hand-molded and smoked in a ground pit as opposed to the more modern kiln firing method. “That’s what gives it its crackly look,” she says. “I picked this one up in Baltimore, Maryland; I bought three, and carried them on my lap on the airplane so they wouldn’t break.”

Cohen’s love for all things tea extends to the whimsical and includes dolls clad in tea cup accessories and even a tea cup chandelier. If only she had a larger kitchen.

“I’ve had to stop collecting,” she says. “I’m out of space.”



If at first
 you don't
 succeed, try,
 try again.

BEFORE

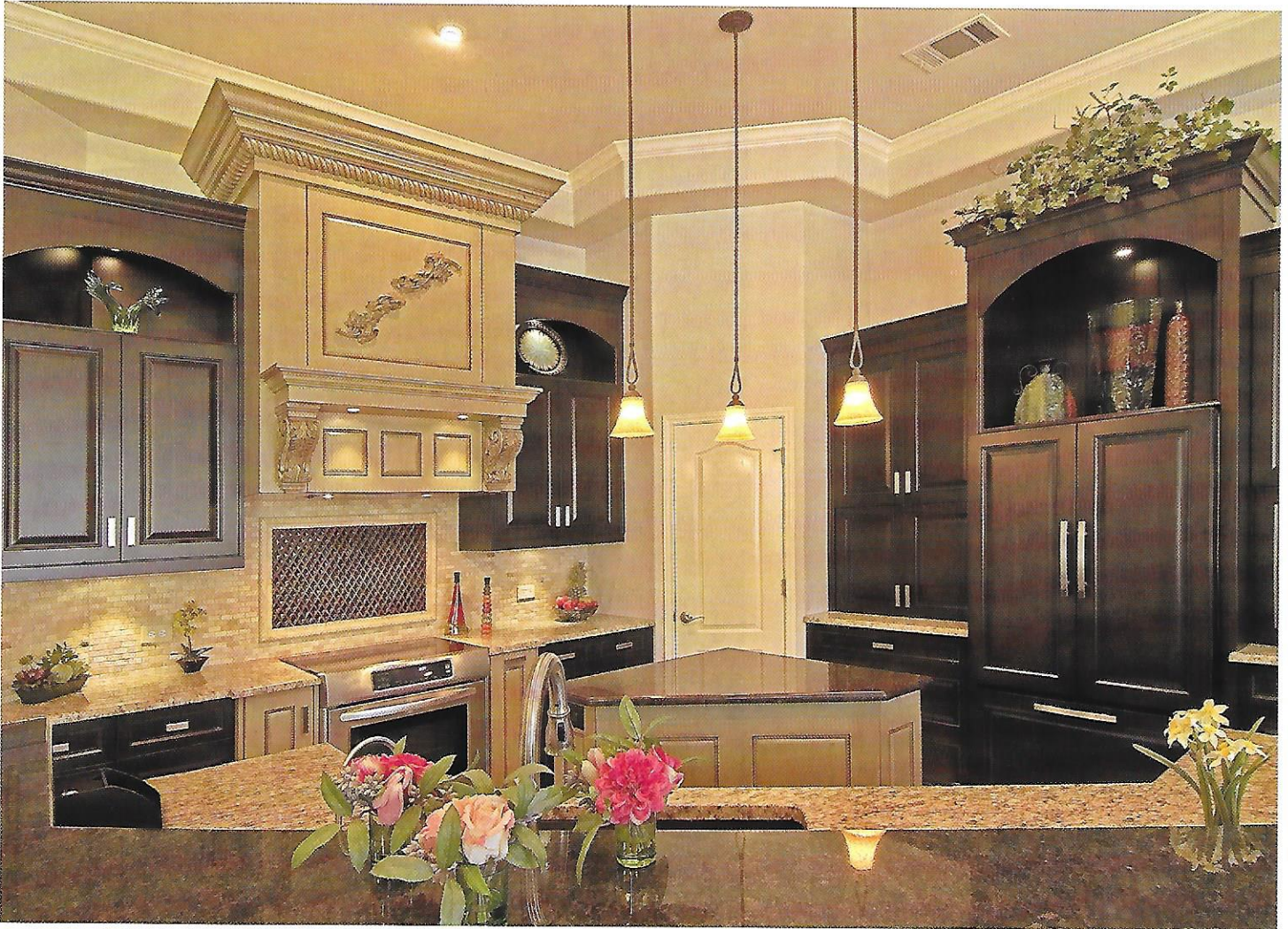


Keeping inefficiency at bay

By Michele McMurry

FOR HORESHOE BAY residents Ib and Debbie Buentello, enhancing efficiency and storage were at the forefront of priorities in remodeling their home kitchen. They turned to designer Sue Graham at King Wood Fine Cabinetry in Fredericksburg to help re-design the space and select materials.

AFTER



THE PROJECT ...

The original ash cabinets, installed when the couple built the home 12 years ago, were beginning to yellow, Debbie Buentello says. "We looked at refinishing and decided it was easier to start over."

The major goal was to get things off the counter, Debbie says. They removed old cabinets and an entertainment center, and re-configured the environment. To optimize space, the Buentellos converted to a combined cook top and oven, and installed custom wood appliance garages to house the microwave oven, coffee pot and blender — off the countertops and out of view.

THE CHALLENGE ...

"To be without a kitchen for a month and a half," Debbie laughs. "We adjusted and barbecued a lot."

DESIGN FEATURES ...

The Buentellos selected a chocolate cherry finish for most of the cabinetry, complemented by alder green on the center island and above the cook top. The process incorporated eight steps to achieve a custom look, Debbie says. "It blends together; they're not just one color." Many King Wood finishes require up to 20 steps and are coated with a catalyzed material to ensure durability and prevent yellowing.

WHY IT WORKS ...

"Everything is more convenient now; clean-up is easier; it really makes the house stand out," Debbie says. "Everybody ends up in the kitchen anyway."

And the toaster is off the counter.

Celebrate and Decorate

Viva Fiesta

Celebrate and decorate

By Michele McMurry
Photography by Pauline Stevens
Styling by Stevie Weissman

When former high school classmates Kim Shepperd and Galeana Younger formed Decorart (the merging of “decorations” and “art”), they adopted a thoughtful, beyond-your-average-door wreath approach. Recognizing that many people have accumulated their own meaningful keepsakes, Shepperd and Younger decided they would supplement these personal collections with customized elements.

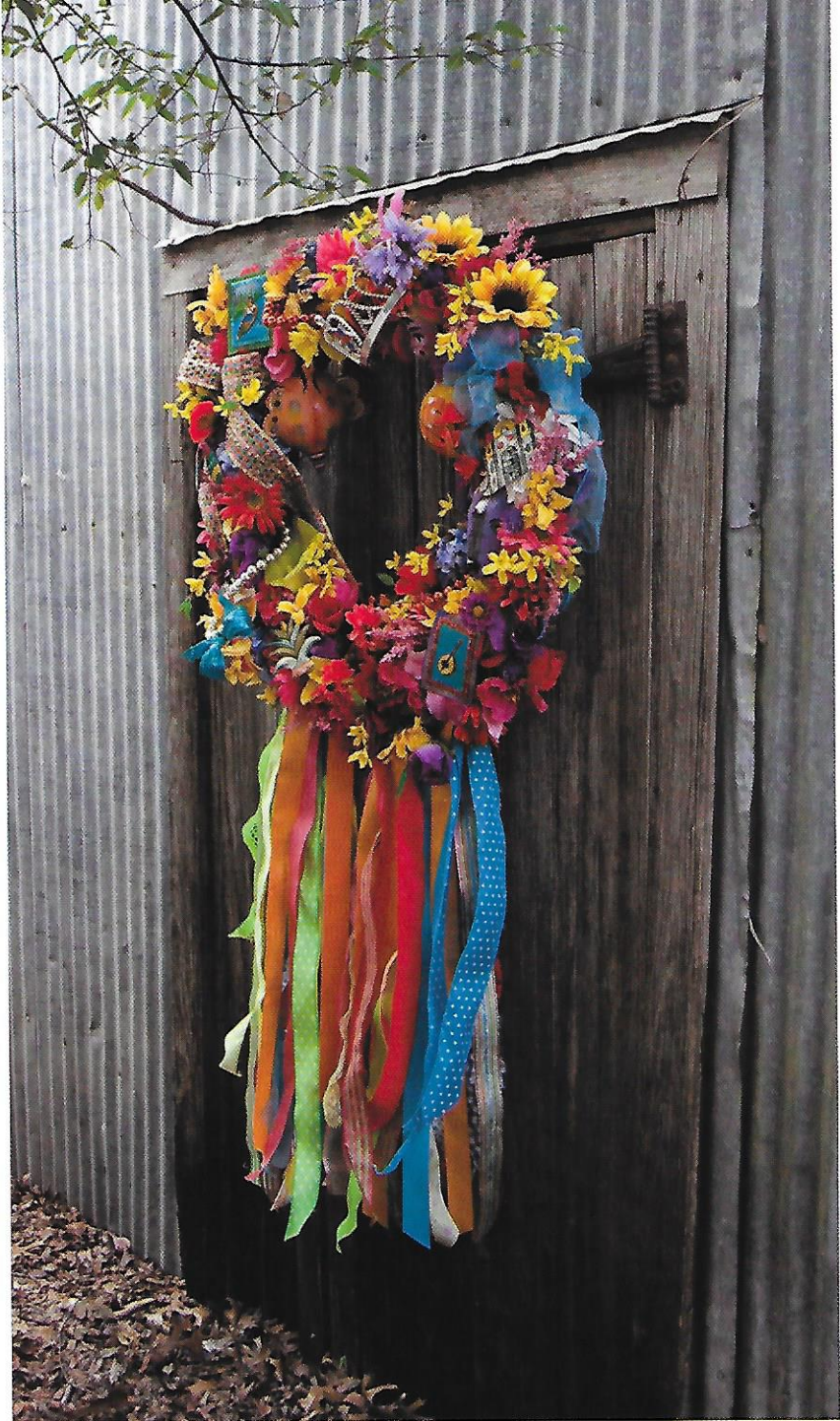
“This not only helped provide a fresh perspective, but also maintained that important historical connection that people are so fond of,” Younger says.

Through the process, the two have embellished vintage ornaments and antique serving pieces to create personalized, intimate decorations. “The best part is seeing our clients’ reactions when they open their often dusty boxes of decorations,” Younger says. “An immediate smile appears as memories began to flood in.”

The duo’s inspiration for Fiesta comes from their everyday environment, Younger says. “So much of our city is wrapped up in Mexican culture, so we don’t have to go very far to find things we can use. We tap the senses — sight, sound, taste, touch and smell — and mix them with items we’ve borrowed from Mexican culture such as folk art, candy skulls, tin ornaments, piñatas and toys.”

Commissioned pieces range from Christmas decorations, birthday wreaths including one shaped like a horseshoe for luck, Fiesta crowns and a six-foot, hot pink “found objects” wreath of flamingos, roses, rings and party items.

“We’ve used anything and everything, including fake jewels, paper flowers, ribbons, even candy,” Younger says. “The stranger and more personalized the request, the better; it keeps our creative juices flowing.”



Galeana Younger and Kim Shepperd