



SHOWCASE APPEAL

ABOVE: "We wanted a warm, cosy feel," Frank says of his home's style. **FAR RIGHT:** Picture perfect. Left to right - Patricia, Daniel (8), Michael (4) and Frank.

Frank Ricci, co-owner of **Unique Custom Cabinets + Renovations**, gestures toward his business partner, **Tim Dagg**. "He calls me nuts," says Frank, "but I relax by building things. I like doing that kind of thing." Tim nods in agreement. "He's always looking for a project."



STORY **MELISSA CAMPEAU**
 PHOTOGRAPHY **KELLY HORKOFF**
 FLOWERS **FASCINATION FLOWERS**

So it was very much in character when, after completing renovations on a century home in downtown Hamilton, Frank decided to build a new home for his family of four - wife Patricia and sons, Michael and Daniel - right from the ground up.

In the early days of his career, Frank worked as a house framer. And over the past 14 years, he and Tim have seen their renovation and custom cabinetry business steadily grow through new and repeat clients. While the scope of this new project was big, Frank was more than ready for the work.

"We did pretty well everything you see except for the drywall," says Frank. "I helped frame the house and we did all the flooring, the millwork, the painting, the doors and the electrical."

Building an entire home from the ground up means endless decisions. For Frank and Patricia, the process wasn't nearly as tough as it might have been if it wasn't familiar turf. "The first reno there was a lot of head-to-head with my wife," says Frank. "I learned my lesson." He brought home magazines to work from, and they usually found themselves on the same page. "I'd say we agreed 85 to 90 per cent of the time," says Frank. "We did it once before so we did all the arguing then," he adds, with a laugh.

"We didn't have a designer. Between the both of us we designed the rooms, the layout of the house, all the details. It's a big advantage when you're in the industry, and you can walk through other homes and you really see things and learn what you want."

The customizing and attention to detail started early in the building process. "We found a house design and then I started playing with the lines and redoing the roof because I like the mansard look," says Frank. They built the trusses for the roof at the shop, and installed them after building a scaffold that covered the whole front face of the house.

Continued on page 22



Even for people who design kitchens for a living, the number of details to consider can be staggering. “I laid it out and walked it out and laid it out again,” says Frank. “The kitchen was originally going to be on this wall,” he adds, gesturing to the area where the dining table and chairs now sit. “But we flipped the plan. Since we make kitchens, I wanted the kitchen to be the first thing someone sees when they walk in, and I want them to say ‘wow!’”

Tim and Frank were an ideal team when it came to designing the kitchen. “Tim’s the details guy,” says Frank. “I’m more big picture, so I see the flow of the house. I can tell him I want this kind of kitchen and want this detail and I want that.” Frank adds, “And then Tim can tell me things like: ‘Okay the door’s not

going to open because the dishwasher handle is sticking out too far,’ which is good to know before you cut it and build it!”

The oversize granite-topped island created by **Granite Plus** makes it easy for a crowd to gather. “When we built this, I wanted to be able to see everybody, so we can talk and eat together at the same time,” says Frank.

The range hood is a focal point of the space, done in the same cream tones as the cabinetry, and featuring intricate carving and staining detail. Tim, who invested plenty of hours crafting the hood, says it’s his favourite feature in Frank’s home. “I had to redo that hood piece three times because it just didn’t look right,” he says. “There’s a paint and then an antiquing and glaze on there as well.” *Continued on page 24*



As well, they raised the main floor of the house by eight inches after they laid the foundation, so the lower level now features eight-foot-high ceilings, even at its lowest points. There’s a getaway space downstairs where Frank can spend time with his sons and friends. At the moment the rest of the area is unfinished, housing a laundry room, a well-equipped gym and the kids’ play area.

The main open-concept living space includes a family room with a gas fireplace and a feature wall with quartz stone. Hand-scraped walnut flooring runs throughout the area, right through to the kitchen – the real heart of this home.

TOP LEFT: Powder room glamour – it’s all about the chandelier. **ABOVE:** Olive green glass backsplash tiles pick up the darker tones of the granite counters from Granite Plus. **LEFT:** Baseboards, as seen in the dining room, are higher than typical.



Tim Dagg, pictured with the Riccis. “We work this kitchen!” says Frank. **ABOVE:** Indiana limestone stairs and wrought iron railings complement a man-made stone exterior.



LEFT: Small inset shelves on either side of the bed in the master can house clocks, books, glasses... **BELOW RIGHT:** The lower level kitchen presents a modern face. **BELOW:** All in one – cherry cabinetry holds a corner closet, built in TV, and lots of storage space.



That attention to detail and intricate woodwork is evident throughout the house, including upstairs in the master bedroom. "I said to Patricia, 'Why don't we do a built-in bed unit instead of going out to buy the hutch, the armoire, all that?'" says Frank, who created floor-to-ceiling built-ins for both the master and the main-floor guest bedroom, made with cherry veneer and a cherry moulding.

The end result is a home that shows the Riccis' personal taste, and also acts as

a showcase for Unique Custom Cabinets + Renovations' business. The details and personal touches make it clear this was a labour of love, and a love of the labour, as well. Ask Frank what his favourite thing about the house is, and he'll reply, "Building it!" He adds, "That was the best part. It's rewarding – you have to have an idea in your head and you see it flourish and see the end result. I would do it all over again, in a heartbeat." **OH**



LOCAL SOURCE GUIDE

- A.P.I. Painting • Ashland Heating & Air Conditioning Inc. • DeFillipis Design • Grand River Natural Stone Ltd. • Granite Plus Inc. • Hardwood Plus Ltd. • Miran Carpets & Flooring • Parsons Plumbing Ltd. • Pollard Windows & Doors • Rruper Construction • Sarana Tile • TMI Roofing • The Turkstra Lumber Company Ltd.

EXPERTS IN THE ART OF EXPRESSION

Fascination Florist
 1104 Fennell Ave. E, Unit #13, Hamilton
 905.527.2881 www.fascinationflowers.com

urban cottage
 life style store

urban-cottage.com
 five one nine 720 6777

Located between Brantford & Ancaster on Hwy 2/53

de Boer Cabinets Inc.
 Quality Workmanship & Design

Kitchens & Bathrooms

Season's Greetings!
 From Peter, Robin & Staff
 905.772.3110 • 15 Indian St., Cayuga
 www.deboercabinets.ca

Serving Haldimand, Norfolk and surrounding areas including Hamilton, Niagara, Toronto & the Muskokas

decorating spaces to enjoy

Proud to be a designer on the Junior League's Holiday House Tour

alto interiors
 905.577.2151 www.altointeriors.ca
 marycath@altointeriors.ca

Mary Cath Altobelli