

Woodworking

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Custom kitchens are Distinctive By Design

By Stephan Kleiser

Jimmy Zoras wasn't supposed to be in the business.

His father was, but about a year after Jimmy started working for him he kicked him out. Not literally, but figuratively.

"He just wanted something better for me," Zoras remembers.

"My father worked very hard all of his life, he had a small shop building kitchens, cabinets and general millwork, he also worked for other large companies, but it was tough and he wanted something better for me. He told me I'd be better off doing something else."

Of course now his father – along with his kids – is one of his biggest supporters and very proud of what he has accomplished. But getting there involved a lot of twists and turns.

After he had worked with his father for about a year, and after he was told to get 'a real job,' Zoras started in the restaurant business with a couple of partners.

They owned and operated a large family-style restaurant focusing on good food and service. It was a big success, but Zoras always knew he eventually wanted to get back to working with wood.

"You know the story," Zoras says with a smile, "I took shop

▶ Continued on page 16



Jimmy Zoras of Distinctive By Design.

PHOTO: WOODWORKING

IWF 2012 A 'VERY GOOD, PRODUCTIVE SHOW'

By Stephan Kleiser

IWF Atlanta 2012 started out strong and that trend continued for the duration of the show, organizers say.

From the first day when people lined up at the doors early and continuing Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the International Woodworking Fair (Aug. 22-25) did not disappoint.

"IWF 2012 will be recorded in the history books as one of our most productive shows," says Patrick LaFramboise, IWF president and CEO.

With advance registrations topping the 15,000 mark and more than 850 exhibitors – 150 exhibiting for the very first time – organizers say there was great traffic and strong interest in new products and services.

"There is a lot of pent up demand," says Jim Wulfekuhle, IWF's Director of Marketing & Communications. IWF is the largest North American show venue for material processing, design and technology. In addition to show attendance and exhibitor

▶ Continued on page 20

CNC-controlled dowel drilling

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▶ See page 37

Hafele drawer box system

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▶ See page 34

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CUSTOM KITCHENS ARE DISTINCTIVE BY DESIGN

► continued from page 1

classes in school, I loved working with wood and I learned from my father visiting him at work and later working with him directly. I always knew I wanted to do what he did.”

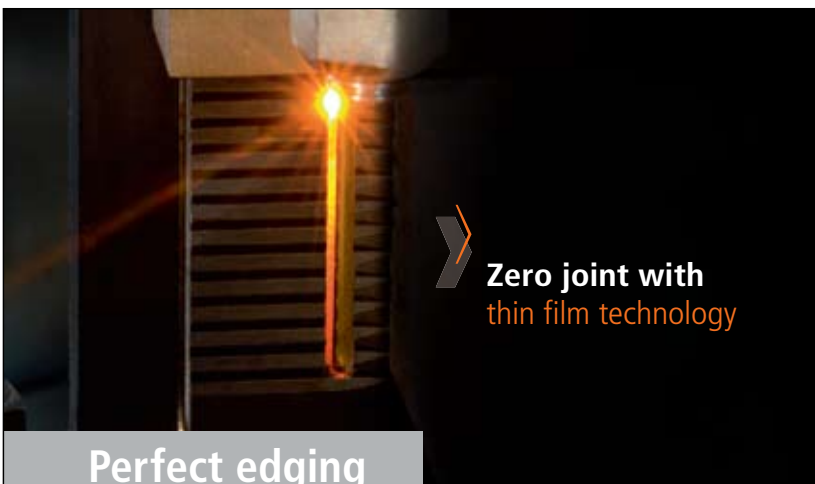
But following his father’s wishes, he dabbled in other things first.

Dabbling may not be the right word since Zoras doesn’t really dabble at anything, he worked hard at everything he did. As a young man he started and ran a successful garden centre, he worked in and owned a construction company and later of course the restaurant. But in 2003, he made the decision to get back to his first love.

“I just decided I had to do this, it’s what I wanted to do all along, so I got out of the restaurant business and bought an existing local millwork shop,” says Zoras.

After he bought the company, Zoras wasted no time and just started to get down to work like his father had taught him and as he always did.

You have to put in the time and the effort, he says. There were many late nights, but fortunately for him, by this time he had made a lot of contacts from his other businesses and he got started with a couple of referrals.



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A friend of a friend needed a cabinet or a kitchen and then they would tell their friends and so on and so on, he says.

“I never advertised, it is and always has been just word or mouth and referrals,” Zoras says.

Like the job they did recently for a customer who was referred to them by someone else. She liked it so much she later also sent her daughter to Distinctive By Design.

“I really believe that honesty is the most important thing,” says Zoras.

“We are not the cheapest and we are not the most expensive, but we give you great value, good workmanship and materials and we finish the job right. And to do that a perfect installation is key.

“It’s not that difficult to build a kitchen,” Zoras says. “There really aren’t any secrets, but it’s all that other stuff that has to be right as well in order for you to be successful.”

He is of course talking about the follow-through. It starts with marketing and the sale. And it has to be well built, but in the end it all



PHOTOS: DISTINCTIVE BY DESIGN



to delivering what we promise, that's the most important thing," says Zoras, "It just has to be right in every way, otherwise you don't have a satisfied customer."

Over the years, Zoras has steadily grown and expanded the business.

Distinctive by Design now operates a 25,000 sq. ft., automated production facility – which also includes

a 2,500 sq. ft. showroom - and employs 25 people plus installers.

Zoras says they specialize in custom work, mostly kitchens, for

► Continued on page 18

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hinges on proper installation and delivering on the promise.

"You have to remember that people know what kind of kitchen they like. They may have seen one of ours, or at another store or a friend's place. They know what they like and the materials they want. But in the end the most important thing is how it looks and feels when it is completed and installed in their homes.

"People don't care about what happens in your shop. That's our responsibility. But when it comes

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Jimmy Zoras and production manager Attila Balint.



► continued from page 17

homeowners, the commercial trade, homebuilders and contractors.

They start each job by listening to their customers and then add their ideas and experience.

“We want to make sure we understand exactly what they are looking for. Every home has a special character that is as distinctive and unique as its owners and that is our starting point. From there we help them design it and then add our expertise and craftsmanship to design and build the right kitchen for them, their dream kitchen.”

“If you do that, you will succeed, it’s that simple.”

Zoras is married to his wife Anastasia, they have three children ages 2, 4 and 6. His future plans include more time with the family, but he also wants to continue and grow the company to make it even better. And who knows – given that he started his own garden centre at age 18, became a restaurateur at 21 and now has nearly 10 successful years in this business under his belt – he

IN THE SHOP

- 2 HOLZ-HER Cosmec CNC routers
- Cefla finishing line
- HOLZMA beam saw
- SCM sliding table saw
- Flat sander
- HOLZ-HER edgebander
- Numerous shapers, jointers, drill presses and hand tools.

may start yet another business in the future. Time will tell, but for now Zoras continues to do what he does best, enjoys most and always wanted to do. **WW**