

BY DIANA TUORTO

A GREEN THUMB

Ali Amani, CKD, is the creative force behind Amani Design, Inc., based in Long Beach, Calif. Ali was selected for HGTV's Designers' Challenge and has been interviewed by Kitchen + Bath Business. He has also appeared on radio shows to discuss the importance of having a functional kitchen to promote healthy eating habits. Ali infuses his passion for cooking and gardening into every design.

NKBA: When did you begin taking an interest in gardening? **AA:** I became a vegetarian 12 years ago. After a while, I didn't enjoy the taste of supermarket produce. I started buying vegetables and fruits from farmers' markets and immediately saw and tasted the difference. I decided to start growing organic vegetables on my property to capture that same quality.

NKBA: What plants or flowers do you enjoy growing the most? **AA:** I became a vegetarian 12 years ago. After a while, I didn't enjoy the taste of supermarket produce. I started buying vegetables and fruits from farmers' markets and immediately saw and tasted the difference. I decided to start growing organic vegetables on my property to capture that same quality.

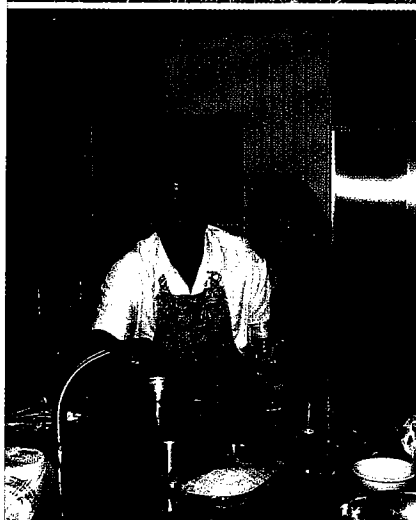
NKBA: What plants or flowers do you enjoy growing the most? **AA:** My favorite things to grow are garlic, zucchini and tarragon, because I use them most often. I also enjoy planting and growing onions, tomatoes, cabbage, beans, and herbs like mint and oregano. I mix in flowers like lilies, tulips, and snapdragons in my vegetable beds since that helps them grow stronger and make the garden beautiful. All of these plants do very well in this climate.

NKBA: How large is your garden? **AA:** It's 10' by 20', but I manage to fit quite a lot in it!

NKBA: How much time do you typically spend working on your garden? **AA:** At least half a day's worth every week. It's a great form of exercise; it's very gratifying maintaining the garden and working outside in the sunshine.

NKBA: Do you have any gardening techniques or methods that you find work best? **AA:** I'm a member of the Long Beach Organic Farmers Association and I've learned a lot from them. We all share our techniques and improve each other's gardens. They taught me to start certain vegetables, like tomatoes, in the greenhouse; if the plants get started in a controlled environment, they will generally thrive better when transplanted outdoors. I also learned that garlic is great to plant among other vegetables or flowers to keep insects and other pests away.

NKBA: You also have a great love of cooking. Besides cooking at home, are you able to show off your culinary skills? **AA:** Every time I design a kitchen, it's become a tradition that I cook for my clients once it's completed. It's a great way to debut the space. I believe that a well-designed kitchen promotes living and eating healthier. It's great when a space is so inviting and functional that clients want to spend time staying in and enjoying their home.



DELICIOUS DESIGN:

Ali Amani, CKD (L) heats things up as he entertains clients with a fresh meal in their new kitchen.

If you would like to be considered for Last Word, contact Diana Tuorto at (800) THE-NKBA, ext. 2297 or e-mail dtuorto@nkba.org

LOOKING AHEAD: PROFILES SPRING 2008



HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SALES SKILLS: INTERPERSONAL SUCCESS

We'll show you how to enhance your business by sharpening your sales skills. Make a pitch that no customer can resist.

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING: BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Sustainable/Green Design is becoming increasingly popular. Learn more about this eco-friendly design trend and how to present it to clients.

THE BEST OF THE NKBA: 2008 DESIGN COMPETITION WINNERS AND HALL OF FAME

The winners are revealed! Find out which designs took top honors and see if the judges agreed with your picks.