

Tom Douglas Jumps Into Real Estate

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Photo By Joann Arruda Photography



In a brand new Bellevue subdivision this morning, Tom Douglas could be found lingering in the kitchen of a \$900,000 home for sale. The tousled-haired restaurant czar, surrounded by a handful of real estate and PR executives, was getting his first look at the kitchen he designed. Yes, after opening five eateries, branding a line of spice rubs, and writing a series of cookbooks, Douglas is moving into real estate.

Signs for the “Tom Douglas Signature Kitchen” now adorn the entrance to this upscale nine-home development called Devon Lane,

which is located just off Bellevue Way and is still under construction. Douglas is also working with CamWest, the Eastside developer who is building Devon Lane, on two other Bellevue projects under construction, for a total of 44 houses bearing his name. If the public goes for it, more may come, says Douglas and CamWest vice-president of marketing Carolyn Gladwell.

Looking for something “unique,” CamWest approached Douglas, Gladwell says. Douglas says he had already designed a half-dozen kitchens in private homes, both for individuals and for Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects, with whom he consults. “We’re talking about the big homes,” he says, ones that sometimes have a separate catering kitchen or a dining room that seats 100. He says he was eager to design a kitchen in a more typical living space.

“I like to see things,” Douglas says, looking over the open racks that surround the stove in the Devon Lane kitchen, on top of which sit a half-dozen Douglas spice rubs, along with other condiments and utensils. Other features include 30-inch-deep countertops — 6 inches more than usual — and a three-shelf utility cart for extra storage and work space. Douglas’ touches don’t appear to be radical, but he contends that they make a “huge” difference in functionality.

Douglas’ latest venture calls to mind Martha Stewart, who a few years back plunged into a partnership with KB Home to build large-scale subdivisions throughout the East Coast. Douglas, who is acting as a consultant to CamWest rather than as a developer himself, says he doesn’t intend to get much deeper into real estate. “I’m a restaurant guy,” he says. He adds, however, that he hates to have people think he only cooks for a living. Little chance of that. Come September, look for another extension to the Tom Douglas brand: a line of kitchen items, such as china and glassware, that he says will be offered by Amazon.com.