

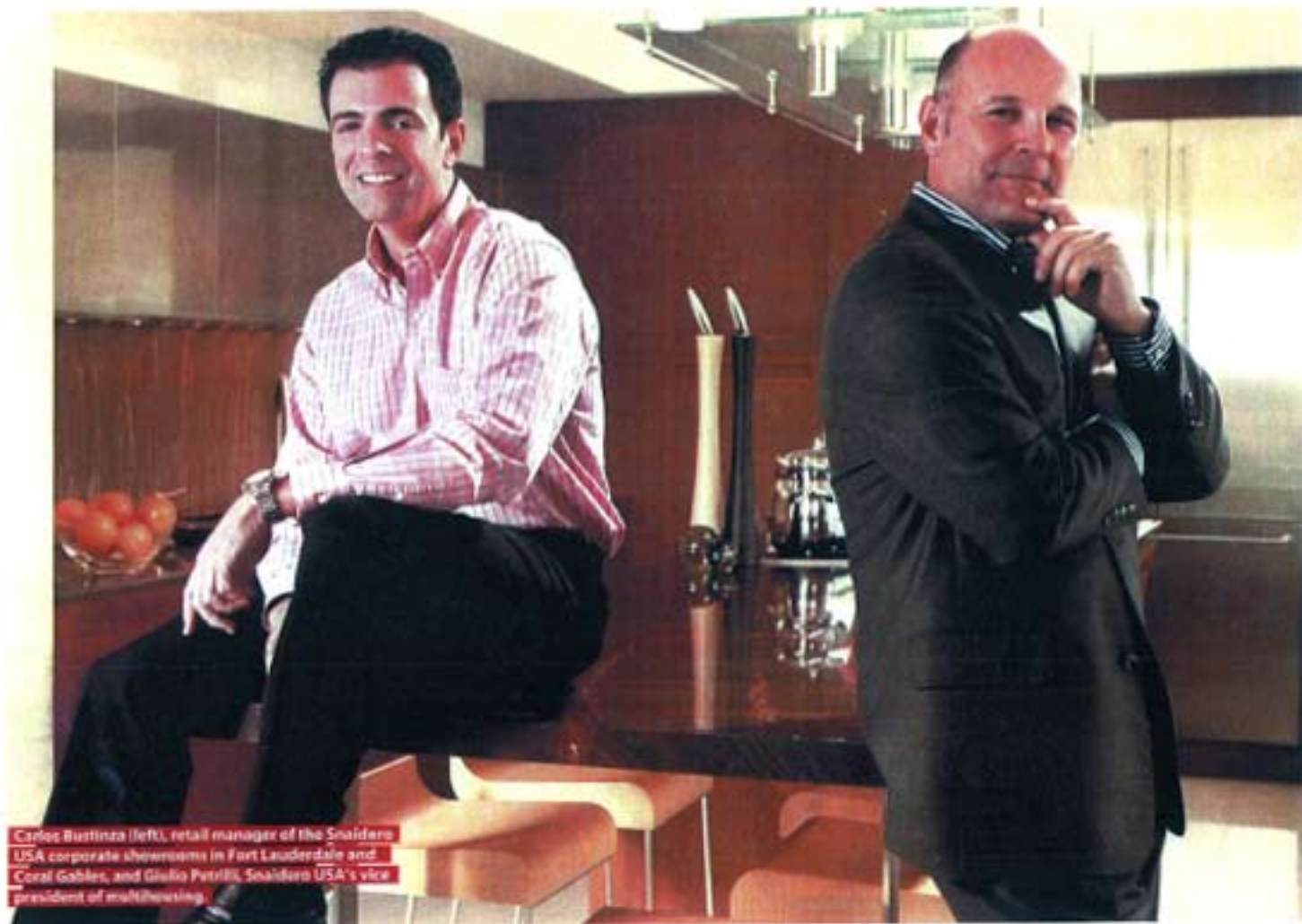
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BEACH PATROL

BY MARGIT BISZTRAY



Carlos Bustinza (left), retail manager of the Snaidero USA corporate showrooms in Fort Lauderdale and Coral Gables, and Giulio Petrelli, Snaidero USA's vice president of multihousing.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY JAMES

SNAIDERO *Setting the Gold Standard for Modern Kitchens*

Unless you're shopping for a luxury kitchen, the name Snaidero may not ring a bell. But if you step into the home of someone who has discovered this state-of-the-art luxe designer—such as producer Danny Tenaglia or sports celebrities Dan Marino and Rony Seikaly—you will soon learn to recognize its quality.

Snaidero creates more than mere kitchens—after all, is a Maserati just a car or a Versace a mere dress? Its kitchens are lean, mean, sculptural environments that as an added bonus can be used for cooking and serving food. Like a sexy sports car they dare you to climb in and drive them, baby.

Prime properties such as Miami's Jade, 1060 Brickell and Epic and Miami Beach's Bentley Bay, 1500 Ocean and The Ritz-Carlton Club and Residences, as well as counterparts in New York, Nevada, British Columbia and Chicago, offer these "trophy kitchens."

Dario Snaidero, president and CEO of Snaidero

USA—the company's exclusive North American importer, which reached \$37 million in sales in 2007—says it all began in 1945, when his mother asked his father to build her a kitchen. His father, Rino, had turned from his own father's profession, farming, to become a carpenter, making a living building bar furniture and opening a workshop under the Snaidero name after World War II. "But when a lady is asking, a

Snaidero's kitchens are lean, mean sculptural environments.

man will do a lot of things for her," the younger Snaidero explains. "The problem was, when he built the kitchen it was so good he ended up selling it. And the next, and the next, and so on."

His mother never got the kitchen, but the Snaidero family business took off. Snaidero remem-

bers a childhood of "drinking and eating kitchen cabinets." After completing college, he went to Belgium (where a close friend of his father's lived) and Toronto (home to a large Italian-immigrant population), developing an international market for Snaidero (including notable success in Japan), all the while setting his sights on his ultimate goal—the USA. "The modern American kitchen was always a big inspiration to my father," he remembers. "He even called one of his earliest models the 'All-American.' It's where I always dreamed of going."

After a well-received appearance at the 1985 K/BIS trade show at the Miami Convention Center, Snaidero opened his USA headquarters in Los Angeles. As the business grew, he modified the company's distribution network, and starting in 1992, began offering Snaidero only through exclusive dealerships: 27 in the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia, six of which are corporate-owned

SNAIDERO



Clockwise from top left: Time kitchen by Lucci Orlandini Design; Skyline kitchen by Lucci Orlandini Design; Terra kitchen by Snaidero Design; Dario Snaidero, president and CEO of Snaidero USA.



showrooms (including in Fort Lauderdale and Coral Gables).

Carlos Bustinza, retail manager for both Florida corporate showrooms, has worked in luxury-kitchen retail for 18 years, eight with Snaidero USA. "The competition used to be German," he recalls. "Italian kitchens were design-strong but nothing worked. German kitchens functioned but lacked design. The advantage came when Italian products improved. Today, Snaidero works with some of the top architects and designers, like Lucci Orlandini, Iosa Ghini, Gae Aulenti (who transformed the Musée d'Orsay in Paris) and Pininfarina [a designer for Ferrari]. This is what defines us."

In 1992, Snaidero signed its first "multihousing" project at Bristol Tower in Miami. Snaidero and developer (and fellow Italian) Ugo Columbo sealed the \$2 million deal on a napkin over coffee at Caffè Milano on Ocean Drive and have been collaborating since. They enlisted the help of a young, talented architect named Giorgio Borruoso (known for creating boutiques for clients such as Fila), who designed their Los Angeles and Miami showrooms. The inspiration for the interior is a ficus tree, expressed in a winding system of white and orange tubes, or roots, which stream from the Snaidero name on the door into the store, twisting and intersecting with each other overhead and ending in each kitchen display. The roots symbolize the Snaidero family and its connection to Italy, as well as the intertwined "branches" of every store, designer and employee.

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The Coral Gables space took a year and seven months to complete, but it soon won Best Showroom in *Interior Design* magazine and was the company's top retail seller for 2005 and 2006. "It's a celebration of what we are today," Bustinza says proudly. "Massive roots make massive branches possible."

Giulio Petrelli, vice president of multihousing and the other half of the Florida "dynamic duo" (as they refer to themselves), who has worked with Snaidero for 25 years, agrees. "There's definitely a cultural aspect to this business," he says. "It's family-owned. You're not buying a box; you're buying a process, a tradition. On the multihousing level, Snaidero appeals to the educated builder. There are vendors claiming to offer cheaper products as good as Snaidero, but those vendors haven't been fitting European kitchens in the United States for 30 years. They don't know how to fit American appliances into European modules. Their products aren't 100-percent Italian-built. We can make every kitchen in our showrooms one time or 500 times, all at the same level of quality."

Each order is sent via computer to the one-million-square-foot factory in Majano, near Venice, where kitchens are first industrially produced, then finished

completely by hand. In addition to wood, glass and metal, the company offers newer materials such as synthetic leather on cabinet doors and "bioglass" for countertops—recycled glass inlaid in resin—using only nontoxic resins, sealants and adhesives.

Despite trying economic times, Snaidero USA's sales have held strong, increasing in 2007 by 26 percent. "I am very, very proud of my people," Snaidero says. "The key ones have been working for me for years—some 20, 25, 30 years. I employ 85 people, not because I like to have a lot of people working for me, but because I don't want a client not to have service for even one minute. Day and night, day and night you have to be there. In Milan, at the annual kitchen fair, you can't find a bad product. The difference with ours is the service we provide, being on the job site, performing. This is not a country for spotty performance. This country will kick you in the ass if you don't perform well."

The dynamic duo agrees, though Bustinza offers another explanation for why the luxury-kitchen business appears to be holding its own. "When the wife wants a kitchen, the wife wants a kitchen."

Some things never change. ■