

Risk-taking never entered their minds

■ BY BARBARA WEIL

Ask most successful businesspeople how they achieved their dreams and many will answer that they took risks.

However, risk-taking never entered the minds of husband and wife team Jamie Miller and Giselle Trevezant, owners of the 2006 Lewisham Award winning Mint Kitchen in Newmarket.

"I've always been conservative," managing director Jamie says. "I believe in making haste slowly and have never borrowed money for any of our ventures."

Jamie has been in the food business for more than 20 years. He began by working in restaurants and established his first one in Karangahape Rd.

This was followed by a wine bar below the restaurant. Mint Kitchen has been running for six years.

The couple who have three children aged 20, 16 and 15 have also been involved with Fashion Week for four years.

The marquee aptly named "Fashion Plate" was open to the public for the first time this year and Jamie says the whole show was "the best ever from the designers' cocktail parties to the marquee".

Jamie created a menu of small plates for fashion lovers. "Coming up with a fresh menu each year is a project I am truly passionate about. It gives me great pleasure to offer an array of aesthetically pleasing dishes. This year was a real buzz."

Mint Kitchen can cater for just about any

event from the Red Bull Trolley Derby to David Tua's wedding and they travel almost anywhere, even designing a banquet for 250 in Queenstown.

Mint Kitchen specialises in dinner parties in people's homes, corporate functions, product launches, award ceremonies, birthdays – any occasion where good food and excellent presentation is demanded.

"It's more expensive to have a dinner party in your own home than at a restaurant," Jamie says.

"But the hosts and guests have the advantage of not being bothered by other diners and it's simply much more intimate.

"We prepare the food at our premises and finish it at the house," Jamie said.

"It takes quite a lot of planning, because we have to have long discussions with the hosts and need to carefully check out the kitchen facilities."

Mint Kitchen now works with Advantage Business.

"Working with them has given us the confidence to make the hard decisions," Jamie explains.

"The knowledge and expertise they bring allowed us to grow the company and develop in a controlled and manageable manner. Our advisor is like a board member to us – a much valued part of running the business effectively."

Jamie describes Mint Kitchen as a "small luxury boutique catering business".

"We really have only two fulltime staff and employ people as needed. Our children are also very supportive and help out when required, although none as yet has expressed interest in the hospitality business."

Jamie, who says he will eat "just about anything" says: "You're only as good as your last show."

"There's a very fickle public out there. Look how many restaurants are the flavour of the month and then dropped like a stone for somewhere else – that's why so many fail. People have to realise that you have to work extremely hard to maintain a reputation."

Some of Mint Kitchen's work is very "fiddly" Jamie explains. Canapes for cocktail parties are like that.

"They take time and effort and have to look and taste great. People need to be able to eat them in one bite – it's difficult to hang on to a glass and try to eat large portions," he says.

"In this business you have to be careful about preparation, time management and watch the budget all the time. If you waste too much time on one job you are losing money."

"Giselle and I are very open minded about food – we listen to our clients and do our best to meet their requirements. That's probably why we are still around when others have gone under."



■ Jamie Miller: "Coming up with a fresh menu each year is a project I am truly passionate about."