



Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald

Mario and Kelly Falconi started small and reinvested.

FROM C7 CONCRETE

The company's interior pieces are coloured all the way through. There's no staining or painting involved, said Kelly.

In addition to colour and texture, clients can have product like tile inlaid into concrete countertops, or opt for built-in drainboards and custom cutting boards in kitchen counter or island applications.

Then there's the finish. As concrete is porous, the Falconis did their research, spending months testing sealants.

"We did tests with things like olive oil, and vinegar and lemonade, wine, and red wine," Mario said.

"We found a sealer that is unbelievable."

So unbelievable that they had no qualms about making a showstopper bright white concrete island the focal point of a splashy kitchen in a high-end infill home.

All interior work is done in-house, using special tables and equipment the couple designed.

Most of their interior work has been on the residential side, but the couple is looking to do more commercial work.

Some recent commercial gigs include **WestJet Airline Ltd.**'s new campus, where Concrete Innova-

tions created the concrete food line counters at the Sunterra Market there.

Outdoors, exposed aggregate is the preferred look for the majority of customers, but Concrete Innovations does the traditional broom finish as well.

Other outdoor work includes fountains, and concrete bases for headstones as well as large family crypt-like monuments.

Mario grew up in the concrete business working for his father, Orazio Falconi.

At 20, Mario set up his own concrete shop with Kelly.

They landed their first job, a backyard patio in Airdrie, easily enough but did plenty of door knocking to drum up business.

Sales doubled each year in the early years, with the Falconis pouring all the money back into the company to build the business.

This same philosophy is behind their new interior concrete design arm.

Their first job was a fireplace for a home builder client.

Growth has continued at a clip of about 25 per cent a year, during the last five years.

Sales are approaching \$800,000 per year.