



**ONE-ON-ONE WITH...**

# DEBBIE TRAVIS

In the Italian countryside, the home-décor guru puts her heart and soul into the project of her dreams  
By Shinan Govani



## TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

One guy to look for in Debbie's new series is Hans Rosenstein (top), her producer-husband and father of their two sons, Max (above, left) and Josh. Save for the last episode of her old series, *Painted House*, on which he appeared, "I never really put my family in my shows," she says. But they couldn't resist this time, what with life and work fusing so fluidly in *La Dolce Debbie*. Hans, by the way, is the reason Canada got Debbie in the first place (whew!). They met in Cannes decades ago and married three weeks later; she moved to Montreal to be with him. The secret to marriage? Simple, says Debbie: "I think you really have to admire each other. You have to admire the way that person speaks, the way they laugh, and admire what they're interested in."

**Reboot. Remodel.** Reimagine. Over the years, interior design star Debbie Travis has proven a master of reinvention, helping countless fans add sparkle to their homes. Now, the British-born TV personality gets to work on a project of her own – and she documents the journey in *La Dolce Debbie* (Tuesdays, OWN). The show sees the design darling transform her Tuscan farmhouse into a fabulous 14-room women's retreat. Debbie, 55, made plans recently to talk to me about this and that. It was an offer I couldn't... well... refuse.

inspiration. I went on her show several times. The first time, my knees were shaking so much that she actually clutched them and told me not to be nervous. The show launched me in the States. OWN is the perfect home for the new show. A full circle.



### VIVA ITALIA

It's not a renovation show, this one. It's a show about building dreams.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

They became like brothers [the construction



team who helped make her Tuscan villa a reality]. I don't speak a word of Italian! There was a lot of pointing. We had this amazing guy named Riccardo who cried through the whole renovation. Then there's Raoul, the plumber, who drives a Mercedes. Of course! Painters who were twins. You couldn't draw these characters.

### READ IT AND WEEP

Like for a lot of people, Frances Mayes [who wrote the memoir *Under the Tuscan Sun*] was an inspiration. I read the book – sobbing, marking the bits. Frances has become a good friend since.



## QUEEN OF OLIVE OIL

With a plot of land in Italy dotted with 800 olive trees – some of which are 700 years old – Debbie has become somewhat of an expert in olive oil. "They say that 85 per cent of what is on shelves is not olive oil, and I believe them!" she says, explaining the complexities of the industry. (Apparently, corruption has led to the supply of adulterated oils.) "We have the European seal," she says of her own line of organic oil, citing a telltale indicator of authenticity. Debbie, who sells her wares online, has a few other notes on the subject, too: "Never buy an olive oil with a clear container. The oil should be kept in a cupboard, always. And [when buying] you need to look, ideally, at the harvest date, not the expiry date. They're different things."



### THE JOY OF WORK

My mother's generation – at 45, they were old. Things are different now. We also don't have the stigma of having one job all one's life. I hate the word retirement. I can't stand it. I'll be working till I'm 100.

### LIVING IN JAPAN

I went to Tokyo when I was 19 [to work as a model]. I made so much money and it gave me a lot



of confidence. It was a time when being so far was really being far. No cellphones. No Internet. You wrote your mommy a letter ... I went back to London afterward and bought my first flat, in cash.



### OFF HER FEET

I broke my leg recently. I slipped in the kitchen. Not too exciting! I ended up bingeing *Ray Donovan* [while recuperating]. **H**

### THE OPRAH EFFECT

Oprah has obviously been a huge

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: MAX ROSENSTEIN; COURTESY OF DEBBIE TRAVIS; INSTAGRAM (2); OWN NETWORK