



## **Nate Berkus talks life and love**

By [Windy City Media Group](#)

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Chicago, IL - Nate Berkus has gone to a lot of sports-memorabilia conventions over the years. But he's not a collector or a dealer, and doesn't even like sports:

He's just a loving, supportive son.

You see, his dad, Mike, is a lifelong sports-memorabilia collector, dealer and card-show promoter. He is a co-founder and current co-executive director of the annual National Sports Collectors Convention, set for its 30th annual gala next summer in Cleveland.

"Growing up, I spent a lot of time behind tables at [ trading ] card and memorabilia conventions," Nate Berkus said. "I was always interested in the collectibility aspect of [ memorabilia ] ; I was fascinated that somebody on a limited income would come and spend \$1,000 on a baseball card because they had to have it.

"But I felt the same way about furniture, paintings and things for the home."

Mike Berkus talks knowingly about the T206 Honus Wagner baseball card from 1909 that has sold for more than \$1 million. He knows about Mickey Mantle's rookie baseball card, prized Michael Jordan cards and also some of the valuable 2008 cards.

Nate Berkus knows none of that. He, instead, is attracted to interior decorating. While his dad can talk freely and knowledgeably about Hall of Famers from every sport, Nate can talk about furniture, textiles and bedding sheets.

"I never had any interest [ in sports ] ," he said, laughing. "I can honestly say never."

And Nate still is not a trading card collector or autograph hound.

But Nate has been every bit as successful in his field as his Hall of Fame-caliber dad.

" [ Sports memorabilia ] is a fascinating industry. My dad used to sell sports memorabilia on HSN [ the Home Shopping Network ] . In some ways, [ we've ] sort of gone full-circle," Berkus said.

On Monday, Oct. 13, HSN will launch an exclusive new line of home décor and furniture from Berkus. Of course, that's famed designer Nate Berkus, known for the work he's done for both high-profile private clients and well-known public spaces. And, yes, that's the same Berkus of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" fame. ( He first appeared on Winfrey's show in 2001 and, in 2008, he hosted a home-makeover show for ABC-TV called "Oprah's Big Give." )

Berkus will debut his new collection during the premiere of HSN Home Design Event Presented by ELLE DECOR, a five-week series of one-hour trend-driven shows running through Nov. 15. The show will combine ELLE DECOR's editorial authority with HSN's newest home designers and brands.

"I'm really looking forward to [ the launch ] . I have been flying all around the world over the past year or so with my creative team at HSN to develop what I think is a really exciting, new and fresh collection, things that have never [ previously ] been sold at this price, with this much quality, especially not on TV," Berkus said. "What's interesting about this opportunity for me is, with HSN, I'm able to actually be the voice of my own products and really be able to explain and talk on live television with the people who are facing different design issues and have questions for me. And, I can explain the inspiration for the first time behind this line, as opposed to designing something and sending it out onto store shelves somewhere and just hoping people like it."

Berkus said he is not nervous for the launch ... at least not publicly.

"With any creative person, you put your heart and soul into a process and you want it to be as successful as possible," he said. "I think it will be a success if people respond to the designs, the color combinations, the textures, the ideas, plus the quality and pricing of the line.

"I think the [ the new product line ] is really geared for everybody. The nice thing about it is, the whole focus behind the line is very solution-oriented. The launch is going to start with two bedding collections, some furniture, mirrors [ and ] furniture as well as different accessories and things like that.

"HSN has never walked into this territory, so it's a first for both of us. We're offering custom upholstery at extremely affordable prices, so people can buy something on TV and then customize it to fit their home. And it ships within two to six weeks."

A sofa, for instance, will cost less than \$600.

The line also will include everything from rich textiles, classic

linens, decorative pillows and porcelain vases to classic furniture pieces like coffee tables, headboards and more. In time, Berkus will introduce decorative accessories, lamps, wovens and rugs to round out the expansive collection of more than 100 home products.

"There's so much detail with every element to every bed, particularly with the sheets," Berkus said. "I was tired of going to 20 different places to try and find sheets that I love to sleep on. So I took the best qualities of everything that I tested and decided to do two sheets—one for people who prefer a warm bed and a second for people who prefer a cooler, crisper bed.

"I've been researching [ the bedding ] for a year, testing and sampling.

And I now think I have the perfect warm sheet and the perfect cool sheet."

Berkus' new line will be available exclusively on HSN, which reaches 90 million homes, and HSN.com, one of the top 10 most-trafficked retail Web sites.

"I think part of me always knew [ interior design was my calling ] , but as a kid growing up, I didn't know these opportunities even existed," Berkus said. "I grew up in suburban Minneapolis and my mom [ Nancy Golden ] was an interior designer, so I was always exposed to the arts, design, furniture and textiles. I always knew I would do something creative because when I'm not doing something creative ... I have the attention span of a third-grader. So, for me, there has to be constant visual stimulation, and that has to be constantly changing, just for my own personal happiness.

"When I did my very first collection for Linens & Things, I was much more nervous about that because it was something I had never done before. I really sort of grew into my own as a product designer in the three years that I worked with them. So, for me this [ new line ] represents everything that I learned up until now.

"Here I am, this son of a decorator and a sports fanatic, and I took lessons from both of my parents in that way. My mother was more of the aesthetic person; my dad was at the center of an industry that's all about collecting and condition of something, plus rarity. That really sunk in for me, in my own interpretation of it."

And aspects of Chicago also have had key roles in molding Berkus—including Lake Forest College in the northern suburbs, which he attended.

"Lake Forest [ College ] is a fantastic school and it really gave me a lot of opportunities that a larger college wouldn't have offered, such as the two semesters I spent in Paris as an intern," Berkus said. "My last year of college, I lived in Chicago and concentrated all of my classes into three days. There were small classes and some amazing professors, plus flexibility with curriculum, thus it was a perfect fit for me."

Chicago also is Oprah. Or, Oprah is Chicago. The daytime talk-show diva is as much Chicago as Michael Jordan, maybe more. And Berkus has been aboard the Oprah Express since 2001.

"It is an incredible experience [ working with Oprah, ] " Berkus said. "I don't think anybody just wakes up one day and thinks, 'Wow, today I'm going to be on Oprah.' It wasn't any different for me.

"One thing about the Oprah experience that I still really admire is how organic it is. A producer asked me to come on [ the show ] after she had seen my work. We did a small space makeup about six years ago, and Oprah really appreciated the design and my

work-ethic, staying up all night with the producers to make sure everything was perfect. And the audience loved it, too. I just thought right then and there that I was doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing at that exact time.

"My relationship with the show is something that is as exciting to me now as it was when I started."

Berkus, 37, now runs the Chicago-based Nate Berkus Associates. He is the eldest of six siblings.

"One thing that's a personal philosophy of mine is, 'You have to figure out what you're really passionate about, what you really like to do,' That to me is how I feel about design. In my spare time, I do the same thing that I do in my work time," he said.

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