

# People

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## How Celebrity Chef Art Smith Became a Dad – to Four Kids at Once

By K.C. Baker and Kari Lydersen

Celebrity chef Art Smith likes to say that a piece of artwork brought him and his husband their four children.

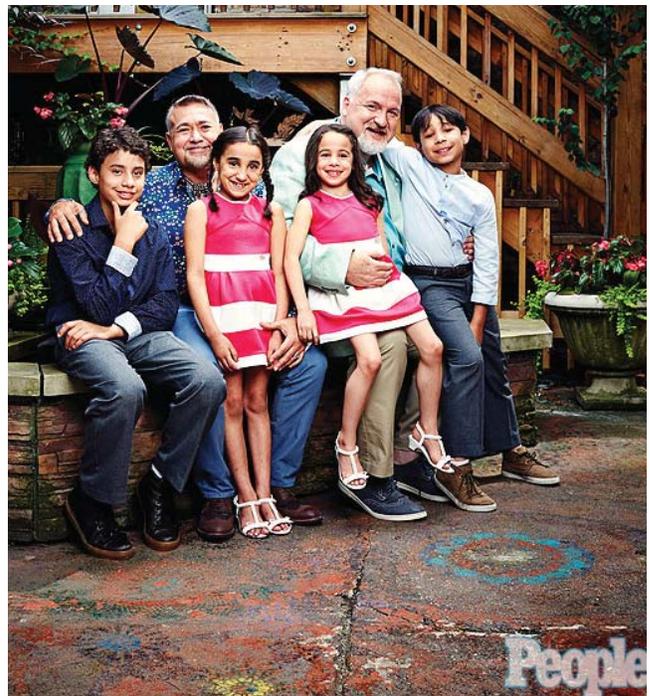
In February 2014, Smith's husband, artist Jesus Salgueiro, went to dinner with his friend, Dr. Dora Maya, president and CEO of Arden Shore Child and Family Services in Waukegan, Illinois, whom he had gotten to know after he donated artwork to the agency and became one of its biggest supporters.

During dinner, Maya told him about three children who were in need of a foster home. "They had been placed in three different homes," Salgueiro tells PEOPLE. "When I heard this, I was like, 'We have to take these children.' "

He and Smith, who live in Chicago, were heartbroken when they learned that they wouldn't be able to take them in. "We were sad because we fell in love with these children," says Salgueiro, 54.

But fate had something else in store for them. Soon after Salgueiro's dinner with Maya, "She called me and said, 'We have these two girls. They're 5 and 6,' " he says.

He asked her to tell him more. "She said, 'Well, they also have two brothers. They are being separated because no one wants to adopt four children.' "



*Art Smith and his husband Jesus Salgueiro and their adopted children: Angel Jesus Smith-Salgueiro, Brando Arthur Smith-Salgueiro, Zummy Iris Smith-Salgueiro and Zuky Francis Smith-Salgueiro*

Salgueiro did. But first, he had to talk it over with Smith, 55, who was traveling at the time. When Salgueiro called him, "He said, 'Baby, I got a surprise ...' " says Smith. "I said, 'What's the surprise?' And he said, 'You have to be here for me to tell you.' "

The minute Smith returned home, he found Salgueiro waiting for him with a huge smile on his face. "He said, 'How would you like to be a papi?' " says Smith.

A papi to not one, not two – but four kids.

Smith wondered where he and Salgueiro would find the time to parent four children. Smith, who is Oprah Winfrey's former personal chef, owns and runs 20 top restaurants, including Chicago's five-star eatery Table Fifty Two. He's written three award-winning cookbooks, starred on Top Chef Masters, cooked for heads of state, including President Barack Obama, and even appeared on Lady Gaga's 2011 special, A Very Gaga Thanksgiving, helping the pop star prepare a meal of turkey – and waffles.

On top of that, he founded the nonprofit charity Common Threads, which teaches children about different cultures through food and art and serving healthy meals to children.

"I said, 'Okay, this sounds interesting, but I'm thinking, 'How are we going to do this?'" says Smith. "We have five cats and dogs and stuff. But then I thought, 'We'll figure it out.'"

After becoming certified as foster parents, the couple took in all four siblings: Angel, 12, Brando, 9, Zummy, 7, and Zuky, 6. "When we sat out to do this, we didn't want one child to be by themselves," says Smith.

Maya says she was beyond thrilled that the longtime couple wanted to take all four children. "We were very close to dividing them up, which would be terrible for the kids," she says. "When Jesus said they would take the whole family? I was just floored by that."

"We couldn't possibly imagine taking on these children and falling in love with them and giving them back," says Smith.

On June 23, they got their wish when they adopted the children as their own, cre-

ating an instant family of six. "I love that their hearts are in it," says Rochelle Trotter, famed chef Charlie Trotter's widow and godmother to all four kids. "This is the perfect completion of their union. I'm so happy this culminated in the perfect family. The love they have, the openness, there's no limit to their love."

The children are thriving. "These kids have stepped into a magic situation," says Trotter. "They feel safe and they feel loved."

The couple, who have been married since 2011, have also learned that they work well together as parents. "We both complement each other," says Smith. "Jesus is the father. He knows about raising children because he himself was orphaned very young, so he understand. He helped raise his eight brothers and sisters.

"As for me, since I'm flitting around so much, I always say when I'm here, I'm 100 percent here, I'm not doing other stuff, I'm here with them. Me arriving is like Santa Claus. I'm the fun one. I'm spontaneous," he says.

Smith has also found that there is a lot to learn as a new parent. "Until you raise children, you have no idea what it's like," says Smith. "I spent part of my life working for Martha Stewart and Oprah, so you're so used to this life of how everything should be.

"When you have kids, it ain't so," he says. "First of all, they're not going to eat what you make them, even if you're a chef. You better forget about ego. They're not going to do that. Life is not what it once was, but I don't miss it."