

KITCHEN COMES FIRST

The Kitchen Is The Center Of The House

BY CANDACE ORD MANROE



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID DUNCAN LIVINGSTON

IN THE '80s, THE KITCHEN BECAME the hub of the home. Great rooms—and islands—were the novelty of the '90s and a staple of the 2000s. Especially in California, homes became ever more back-centric, with the kitchen pushing out to the great room and dining room, all of which pushed out to the pool or back garden. Now, mid-way through the second decade of the 2000s, there's yet another shift: Instead of being the after-thought, as in—we'll get to that later, in a redo—the kitchen has risen to a place of primacy among the home's priorities. It's informing the rest of the architecture of the home.

"A home's windows, millwork, flooring, and ceiling are all looking to the kitchen for

architectural cues," says international kitchen designer Mick de Giulio, "because, as the most important space, it is the one now being designed first."

After importance, the biggest trend is personalization. "Hoods are becoming personal statements instead of the generic, functional-only elements they've been in the past," says CoCo Harper, marketing director of Jackson Design Remodeling. Wood floors, still the most popular flooring in high-end kitchens, aren't the same old ebony. They take a more inclusive, anything goes attitude, with no single finish dominating. Subway tiles remain the subtle go-to for backsplashes, but they're giving way to whimsical vintage tiles, sleek stone panels that slide

open as appliance garages, and other more personal choices. Finally, color is making a comeback, but as bright blasts in neutral spaces, not as a more pervasive palette.

Commercial grade appliances are coveted. Refrigeration and heating drawers are both on the rise, along with steam, convection, and pizza ovens. **CH**

ABOVE The Italian stainless steel cabinets are Arclinea. The kitchen includes a 48-inch Wolf range and two ovens.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID DUNCAN LIVINGSTON

The Marin County Kitchen Of A Former Chef And His Wife Teams Industrialism With Softness

IT WAS A GIVEN THAT THE KITCHEN remodeling for the former chef of a hot L.A. restaurant include A-list appliances like a Wolf range, SubZero fridge, and a Miele dishwasher, to start—and all stainless steel cabinets, countertops, hood, and other commercial features, to finish. "But his wife's taste is more traditional," says Ballon Studio's principal and interior architect Sabra Ballon. "She showed me clippings she liked of rustic houses in France and country designs in Napa. My goal was to satisfy both husband and wife."

As part of a larger remodeling, Ballon expanded the back of the house and knocked out the header between the kitchen and dining room. This opened up the two areas into one seamless space while capturing a few extra feet overhead. That new openness broadened

the canvas on which she could introduce warming touches to shake off the commercial chill of so much steel and satisfy both partners. "The wife got features like the dining room curtains and furniture and the interesting wrought-iron bar stools, while the husband got the more industrial working features of the kitchen itself."

The sink, in deference to his needs, is welded to the surrounding stainless steel countertop so "the entire area can receive an industrial-level cleaning with no seams or grout getting in the way," Ballon explains. Also, all cabinets and drawers are free of any protruding hardware—both pulls and knobs—in another concession to the chef. "All the surfaces feel flat so that, when he is flying around the kitchen, his jacket won't get caught on the hardware."

Details like custom drawer inserts accommodate all the gadgets he acquired during his years as an executive for Williams-Sonoma. Others, like 30-inch-deep cabinets (versus the standard 24 inches) allow a double row of pots

ABOVE Sub-Zero refrigeration was a must-have on the chef's list of essentials. Depth of the sink is 14 inches; cabinets are an extra-deep 30 inches.

and pans to be stored inside. And because the greater cabinet depth means the countertops also gain 6 inches, "a row of appliances can be kept against the wall while still leaving plenty of work area."

The grade of the cabinetry was a compromise between husband and wife. "He wanted to go with stainless steel from a kitchen supply store," laughs Ballon, who wooed the chef over to finer Arclinea cabinets designed by Antonio Citterio. "Because the kitchen is part of the great room, we came up with something less rough and industrial that works for them both." Likewise, the thick Carrera marble countertop on the island is as easy on the eye as it is functional for rolling out pastries. Repeated as the backsplash, the richly veined marble envelopes the room in elegance.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KIM SARGENT

A Kitchen Overlooking The Napa Valley Was Renovated To Improve Storage And Enhance The Home's Casual Elegance With Beautiful Hand-finishes

« **UNLIKE THE MAJORITY** of wine country homes, the thirty-acre property known as “Dancing Hares” in the Napa Valley is the full-time residence of its owners, who moved there after working in the computer industry. They designed their home as a contemporary version of a Tuscan farmhouse, but after living in it for a while, realized they needed to rethink the kitchen.

“Originally, there was no island,” says designer Edward Lobrano, who worked with architect Howard Backen on the space. “They needed more cabinet space for storage.” The new island, chock-full of drawers and cabinets, was painted a rich green to become a centerpiece of the kitchen. An iron pot rack hangs above it, dripping copper pots and pans, to underscore the island as a focal point. The island’s cool green hue becomes more noticeable in context with its complementary color, red, which was hand-stenciled onto the walnut plank floor in a checkerboard pattern alternating with cream-colored squares. “Our faux-finish artist hand-painted each cream square so that it looks like you see the wood grain peeking through. That’s all done with paint. She faux-boised each square,” says Lobrano.

The same attention to craftsmanship was brought overhead to the grid of antique ceiling beams, which were all beautifully glazed for a rich but mellow look. Lightweight Sonoma cast stone on the fireplace and pizza oven are almost the identical color. Cabinets also pick up the buttery hue, while the stove’s custom hood and backsplash are a deeper burnished copper.

LEFT Kitchen designed by Edward Lobrano and Howard Backen. Appliances include a Viking Range, a Sub-Zero refrigerator, and a Miele dishwasher. Both the rotisserie oven and pizza oven are favorite features of the homeowners.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PREVIEWFIRST

Ocean Views From A Big Kitchen Bay Window Make This 1950s’ La Jolla Remodel Both The First And Forever Home For Its Young Owners

« **DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH** can be easily overlooked, but not so this La Jolla ranch house untouched since the 1950s. Especially from the kitchen, its sparkle was unmistakable: The blue Pacific glinted in the sunlight, signaling a forever pact with its prospective young owners who’d never purchased a home of their own. “She’s from France and he’s from Britain, and they immediately fell in love with the views,” says Jennifer Pinto, one of the interior designers with Jackson Design and Remodeling, which gutted the kitchen and remodeled the entire property for the couple.

One of the first improvements made by the Jackson team was to maximize the view with an enormous bay window. “Before, the kitchen was tiny and closed off,” recalls Pinto. While the remodeled airy style resonates as California casual, its undertones are French. “The homeowner has a great sense of style and influenced the materials we selected. The black and white palette is a nod to her Frenchness,” says the designer. The wide plank wood flooring also has a rustic character suggestive of the Cote d’Azur, and the

farmhouse sink might as easily outfit a kitchen in Provence.

As a gemologist, however, the homeowner had no interest in camouflaging her kitchen beneath a veil of rusticity. “She wanted splashes of bright turquoise throughout the house.” Chairs pull up to the breakfast table in a blast of blue. A turquoise door opens to a food pantry near the stove. “She chose metal hardware for the cabinets that has a slight bevel, like jewelry, and the funky, geometric feel of the barstools also is an expression of her personality.” Stainless steel Italian appliances are “less bulky than most, while also being very simple and professional.” Years ago in Copenhagen, the couple had fallen in love with light fixtures while shopping in a showroom. “It took some research, but we were able to find them for the area above the island,” Pinto says. Though they had never owned a home, the couple had been thinking of what they wanted for years. “They had a whole file of magazine clippings,” laughs the designer. Now with their roots planted in La Jolla, “it’s family time all the time. They never want to leave this home.”

LEFT The Kohler sink, an updated version of a traditional farmhouse sink, scrubs any residue of sickness from the streamlined Italian appliances for a more authentically casual style. Clear glass inserts in the upper cabinets break up the white. The Italian stainless steel hood is unusually narrow and feminine. Hardware on the white cabinets is polished stainless pulls.



Kitchens



PHOTOGRAPH BY PATRICK TURNER

The Small Kitchen In A Casa Pequeña In Santa Barbara Lives Large And True To Its Vibrant Spanish Roots

➤ **WHEN A SANTA BARBARA ESTATE** from the glory days of California's Spanish Revival architecture, c.-1920, was parceled off and sold its separate ways, its intact garage was soon transformed into a private 2,000-square-foot residence. A Hollywood costume designer and her artistic male other bought the casita about seven years ago and began stamping it with their own colorful personalities. She, especially, cloaked it in the authentic dress of an early-19th-century Spanish-style home, much as she would costume a character playing a señorita in a film.

"The kitchen was really the last piece of the home that they remodeled, and because of its dysfunctional floor plan, it was where they needed the most help," says architect / interior designer Cass Ensberg, of Ensberg Jacobs Design, whose firm works to bring out the best of the architecture rather than impose a signature style.

The new design involved removal of a small enclosed porch to rebuild and extend it 42 inches into the garden resulting in this larger

kitchen without a dividing wall, all at one floor level, and with one higher consistent ceiling height. Making appropriate and beautiful spaces that work is a hallmark of Ensberg Jacobs Design – as is working with talented artist clients for the necessary teamwork that is satisfying and fun! The client found the many decorative elements including the two kinds of Mexican tiles for the backsplash design."

The client also found the traditional wrought-iron chandelier made by a Mexican artist to hang above the new butcher-block table / island made from salvaged components. "He didn't make it custom for this kitchen, but the long, rectangular fixture was perfect," says Ensberg.

Unlike many clients in the area, these did not want a sweeping change. "Instead, they really wanted to return the kitchen to something more authentic to when the structure was built." They wanted to retain the original cabinets, but they were funky and didn't work with the new layout or for a dishwasher – which the kitchen did not have – so new cabinets were made in the original style. The sink was replaced with a new

farmhouse sink below the original, retained Kitchen window. Other classic architectural details were incorporated like the niche and shelves to display the owner's beautiful Mexican pottery. The niche was created where the refrigerator had been recessed and took valuable space from the Laundry Room on the other side of the wall. The new design enhances the kitchen while greatly improving the Laundry Room function.

"I think people get in trouble all the time in this town by going too big. The beauty of this kitchen is that it keeps its original charming scale – and it is super efficient and functional." Says Ensberg. Small is good – like the little inglenook that the owner brilliantly outfitted with a colorful serape and pillows to make it a delightful and inviting place to hang out or nap in the warmth of the sun streaming in from the garden patio just outside. "And one of the details I love the most is that the countertop field tile doesn't exactly match the porcelain color of the farm sink! So cool and authentic!" observes Ensberg.

OPPOSITE GE Monogram: Stove and Dishwasher refrigerator by Electrolux. The kitchen chandelier is a new piece made by Raul Flores in the traditional style. The new Kitchen design celebrates and provides for display of the owner's collection of Bauerware and early California and Mexican pottery. **BELOW** The small chandelier in the Inglenook is an old piece that the owner found from the Attic Consignment Shop and then refurbished with paint.

