

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.