

KITCHEN

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Emotion and ergonomics

This contemporary kitchen remodel features several design elements that extend functionality and make it a pleasure to use

How to design a modern kitchen for an owner who is most at home with traditional aesthetics? One way is to add a comfortable classic material or feature into the mix.

Such was the case with this project, part of a broader remodel by designer Fu-Tung Cheng. To give the kitchen a touch of the past favored by one of the owners, the storage element on top of the island is in classic brass and the coffered ceiling, that reconciles structural layers, also has a more traditional feel, says Cheng.

"I was given free rein on this project and generally, the kitchen has a modern, but not

minimalist look. As it can be seen from the dining room and family area, we gave pieces a warm, furniture-like appeal or downplayed their presence. On the island, for example, the site-cast concrete waterfall countertop has a tapered front edge that acts as a visual picture frame for the koa wood inlay on the front panel. This design feature helps integrate the unit with the living spaces."

Several custom features in the kitchen are designed to be a joy to use as well as to look at. The long brass storage unit opens up much like a gullwing door on a car, and the rear corner

Above left: This kitchen designed by Fu-Tung Cheng features a concrete waterfall countertop inlaid with Australian jade. The white rear countertops are also in concrete. Venetian plaster on the hood surround adds textural interest and a sense of visual depth.

Above: Set into the wall, the marble backsplash has an unusual grain and a translucent quality that helps the kitchen feel light and airy.



Kitchen designer: Cheng Design (Berkeley, CA); principal designer Fu-Tung Cheng; architect Ann Kim; project designer Frank Lee
General contractor and cabinet manufacturer: Fai Ng, 38 Degrees North Latitude Builders
Cabinetry: Fumed larch; bar top in California figured walnut from Arborica
Hardware: Recessed pulls by Häfele, surface pulls by Doug Mockett; sliding door hardware by Knap & Vogt
Storage systems: Recycling centre by Rev-A-Shelf
Countertops: Cooktop in precast Neomix concrete; kitchen island in site-cast Cheng Geocrete concrete, by Park View Construction
Backsplash: Subway tiles, honed, by Ann Sacks; polished Pietra Fina marble
Sink: Stainless steel, custom, designed by Fu-Tung Cheng
Wall-mounted faucet: Hansgrohe
Range: Wolf
Oven: Thermador
Hood: Custom
Wine refrigerator and undercounter refrigerator drawers: Perlick
Refrigerator freezer: Liebherr
Dishwasher: Miele
Waste disposer: InSinkErator
Flooring: Engineered white oak flooring, with Silverado finish
Lighting: Recessed, Halo; cabinet lights, Häfele; DanaLite cove lighting
Kitchen furniture: Moser bar stools, chosen by owners

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Above: The rear of the island has a framework of stainless steel with a movable butcher's block set on top.

Right: Like gullwing doors on a car, the wood block opens up and out. The waterfall island counter is concrete inlaid with Australian jade, as is the fireplace behind.

Far right: Designed by Fu-Tung Cheng, the sink is equipped with rails to allow a cutting board or drainer to slide across.



cabinets also have an ingenious design – they open up a bit like a puzzle box, says Cheng.

"This makes the cabinets a pleasure to use – a feature I refer to as emotional ergonomics – and gives more access to what's inside."

Unusually deep rear counters with a ledge behind draw attention to the central cooktop. Overhead, the Venetian plaster hood canopy adds visual depth, as does the semi-translucent marble backsplash recessed into the wall plane.

Other surprises that are most apparent when actually working in the kitchen include a long sink welded into the countertop in the clean-up

area under the window. Designed by Cheng, this is equipped with rails so that a drainer or cutting board can slide across.

Off to one side, a bar has been created from a slab of recycled California figured walnut. The natural bark finish is another concession to an old-world, traditional feel.

"This kitchen has several eclectic elements, so keeping everything in natural tones draws it together. After all, in a forest, no-one says 'There are too many leaves or stones here', whereas a candy wrapper would stand out completely," says the designer.

Top left: These upper corner cabinets open a bit like a puzzle box, thanks to unusual hinge placements. This design approach also conceals the door ends for a sculptural finish.

Above left: The bartop is used for entertaining and as a landing space. Cabinets on the wall behind conceal beverage centers and an appliance for curing meat.