

# Mirror Image

A kitchen finds balance in its symmetrical design

By Sallie Moffat

Though his clients' remodel wish list already included the addition of an island, a separate eating table, access to a barbecue area on the deck and a modern style, Chris Chapek, principal designer at Alliance Custom Builders, Inc., wanted more. Specifically, he wanted to take advantage of the kitchen's unobstructed views of the San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.

In order to deliver these must-haves and more, Chapek defined the new 20-ft. x 15-ft. space, removing walls and modifying and expanding windows to open up the kitchen, include an adjoining sitting area and banquette and capitalize on the spectacular views from every angle.

Because "Symmetry and balanced proportions were paramount to the clients' sense of style," said Chapek, the large furniture-style island is centered in front of a wall of symmetrically situated cabinets, where brushed aluminum tambour doors—to conceal countertop appliances—flank the custom glass backsplash and custom sink, which was created from the same material as the countertops for a seamless look. Additionally, the island's curved hood and gas cooktop align with the sink area, under which dark-toned base cabinetry anchors the wall and, above, etched glass doors on the wall cabinets can be backlit for dramatic effect.

Modern with clean, neutral finishes, this kitchen has what it takes to strike a perfect balance. ■



## sources

**Design team:** Chris Chapek and Steve Andre—Alliance Custom Builders, Inc., Novato, CA; [www.alliancecustombuilders.com](http://www.alliancecustombuilders.com) **Manufacturers:** Cabinetry: Alno; Oven, warming drawer, microwave, dishwasher, cooktop and hood: Miele; Garbage disposal: InSinkErator; Refrigerator and wine refrigerator: Sub-Zero; Sink: Custom; Faucet and soap dispenser: Blanco; Floor: Custom; Countertops: CaesarStone **Photography:** © Stewart Lirette

## Something Old, Something New

A contemporary kitchen rejuvenates an historic Victorian

By Matthew Marin  
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Built in 1895 by A.W. Caulking, this Victorian home, nestled in a suburb near downtown Palo Alto, CA, has withstood the test of time. Classified as an historical building, the home went through a number of homeowners and remodels, all the while maintaining its original façade. In traditional Victorian style, the home's exterior is decorated with sage-green siding and white window trim. But entering the home is like stepping into a different world. Within the confines of this 3,680-sq.-ft. bungalow is a living space that is both modern and cozy and includes a spacious, contemporary kitchen.

The kitchen remodel results from a collaboration between interior designer Deganit Albalak and architect Daren Shu, who purchased the home with plans to sell it after the renovation. Their challenge was to transform a kitchen with insufficient space, outdated cabinetry, vinyl tile flooring and inadequate lighting into a room that speaks to today's lifestyle. According to Albalak, Shu "wanted the kitchen to offer everyday, modern functions, top quality and a contemporary look."

Beginning with the home's layout, Albalak and Shu, who is also a licensed contractor, removed interior walls and reconfigured the main living areas to create an open floor plan that incorporates living and dining rooms off the entryway and the kitchen, which adjoins the family room and is visible from the front door. Although, as Albalak noted, "The change was really dramatic," it, along with an overhaul of the rest of the home, took just eight months to complete, after which the design team then turned their attention to the kitchen makeover proper.



For this, Albalak was charged with integrating into the kitchen technology, function and a complementary aesthetic to the rest of the home. Shu also requested that professional-style stainless-steel appliances be incorporated throughout the space, not only for their functionality, but also for their appearance. A center island with a floating glass hood over the cooktop offers industrial appeal and the ability to whip up restaurant-grade dishes, while a side-by-side refrigerator/freezer directly faces the landing area of the island for easy reach. Next to the island are the sink and dishwasher, which blends into the surrounding cabinetry with custom front paneling, and anchoring a bank of perimeter cabinets is a built-in, double wall oven that combines the functions of a microwave and a professional oven.

The modern look of the stainless-steel appliances is enhanced with cabinetry specified in a palette of soft, contemporary hues. Creamy yellow, vanilla and charcoal gray combine with sleek, streamlined slab cabinet doors to convey a bright yet intimate feeling. "This combination of colors works well together and gives the kitchen a clean and contemporary look," said Albalak. "It also blends easily with the rest of the house, especially the areas that connect to the kitchen." Additionally, a backsplash of ocean-blue glass mosaic tile subtly offsets the acid-washed limestone countertops, creating visual balance.

Finishes and design elements were also selected to support the kitchen's modern vibe. The gray and black cabinets sport glossy finishes, as do the yellow lacquered wall units, which, for a decorative touch, are equipped with frosted, tempered-glass doors to bring a sense of transparency to the space. The kitchen also has an eat-in area with sleek black granite countertops, as well as maple flooring, which lends the room warmth. Serving as a focal point, glass panels on one side of the island divide the kitchen from the family room and surround a piece of artwork.

To give the kitchen a truly open feel, the design team varied the ceiling heights in different areas and incorporated a unique array of lighting fixtures. "The architect had a vision of dropped ceilings and reflections of light," said Albalak. Daylight fills the kitchen from an added skylight, and strategically located compact fluorescent track-mounted luminaires, wall sconces, recessed cans and back-lit cabinet lighting highlight individual elements in the kitchen. Underneath the wall cabinets, square fluorescent light fixtures provide sufficient task lighting and add a subtle glow to the tempered glass.



Although the cabinetry contributes much to the kitchen's charm and offers a wide array of storage solutions, it also proved to be one of the biggest challenges of the remodel. Because the bank of yellow upper cabinets along a perimeter wall spans a window located above the sink, Albalak had to include a smaller cabinet that would not interfere with the home's historical appearance when viewed from outside. To this end, she chose a finish for the backside of the unit that blends in with the home's exterior "so it doesn't look strange to anyone walking by," she said. "Because of the home's historical nature, we could not make any changes to the outside of the home."

Their efforts were not in vain. Upon project completion, Shu sold the house for double its original value. According to Albalak, the juxtaposition of the traditional façade and the contemporary interiors made a lasting impression on the buyer. Although the design process had its share of uncertainty, "when we saw the finished results, I would say that it was very impressive," she said. "It brought this part of the house to a completely different level. When you step inside, you don't expect to see something like this after you've seen the outside of the house. It brings you to a different world."

#### SOURCES

**Designer:** Deganit Albalak#x2014;ALNO San Francisco by European Kitchen Design, San Francisco; [www.AlnoSF.com](http://www.AlnoSF.com)

**Architect:** Daren Shu, DCLM Homes Inc., Cupertino, CA

**Manufacturers:** Cabinets: Alno USA; Hood: Miele; Dishwasher: Miele; Refrigerator: KitchenAid; Oven: KitchenAid; Sink: Blanco; Faucet: Franke; Undercabinet lighting: ALNO

**Photographer:** © Barak Yedidia