

CALIFORNIA HOMIES

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TIMELESS DESIGN

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BEYOND COOKING

The Ascendance Of The Kitchen Continues

BY **ROGER GRODY**
PHOTOGRAPH BY **AUGUST DERING**

NO SPACE IN THE HOME DESERVES MORE thoughtful planning than the kitchen, where an elevated approach to design can be the difference between frustration and inspiration. Although the pandemic is thankfully behind us, its impact on the evolution of the kitchen persists. “I think 2020 really reminded us of the importance of slowing down to appreciate small traditions, cooking with loved ones and taking technology breaks,” says designer Birgit Klein. What originated as a strictly utilitarian space, cordoned off from adjoining rooms, has morphed into a fully-integrated, multifaceted household headquarters where meal preparation coexists with studying, casual dining and group therapy sessions. This central operations center has also emerged as a showplace in which homeowners’ personal sense of style is expressed. Advances in technology continue to make the kitchen more productive, but many professionals draw from the past to conceptualize designs for 21st century families. “There’s a return to tradition, even in a modern context,” says Erinn Valencich, founder of Erinn V. Design Group, citing elements like traditional farmhouse sinks and crown molding. Whatever the occupants’ skill level—whether Michelin star-worthy cooks or frazzled parents struggling with mealtime—the best designs enhance functionality while possessing aesthetics that impress guests when the party invariably migrates into the kitchen. Designer Casey Howard states, “We really look at how the clients use the space and pay close attention to details that you don’t even see.” Presented here are kitchens from some of California’s most talented designers, confirming that the heart of the home is beating strong. **CH**



◀ ERINN V. DESIGN GROUP

For a kitchen remodel in Playa Vista, Erinn V. Design Group created a dynamic space for a busy family that utilizes the kitchen for everything from homework to entertaining. “I like to bring warmth to modern spaces through natural materials, which provide seamless transitions,” says founder Erinn Valencich. She selected white oak for the floor and ceiling, as well as darker custom wire-brushed oak cabinetry—featuring blackened hardware from Schoolhouse—with integrated Dacor appliances from Ferguson. Further showcasing the designer’s affinity for rich natural finishes is an expansive backsplash of book-matched quartzite slabs from Walker Zanger, also appearing on countertops with dramatic waterfall edges. Custom blackened steel shelves are paired with black metal sconces from Lawson-Fenning, while a modern farmhouse sink and hardware by Rohl, both from Ferguson, provide traditional notes. The kitchen morphs into a dining area where a constellation of brass David Pompa pendants have been crafted into a unique chandelier, suspended above table and chairs from Erinn V.’s own furniture collection. Floor-to-ceiling Fleetwood sliding glass doors enhance an indoor-outdoor lifestyle, just minutes from the beach. erinnvdesigngroup.com

► IKE BAKER VELTEN

The Oakland-based architectural firm of Ike Baker Velten—its designers specialize in modern interpretations of traditional styles—successfully married rusticity and elegance in a soaring kitchen in the scenic Carmel Valley. “More than any other room, kitchen design is driven by functionality,” suggests partner John Ike, who adds, “For this particular project, both clients are avid cooks who share the space and had very specific requirements.” A custom stainless-steel hood rises over a Wolf range integrated into an island topped in white Macaubas quartzite from Brazil, ascending to a vaulted ceiling clad in Port Orford cedar. The flooring of this woody kitchen is oak, and cabinetry was handcrafted from hemlock by Monterey’s Knapp Mill & Cabinets, dressed up with white bronze hardware by Sun Valley Bronze. The space, which offers abundant natural light, is further enhanced by handblown glass globes from Louis Poulsen mounted on a custom racetrack-like fixture by Phoenix Day, as well as monopoints from Hawaii’s Beachside Lighting. A Waterstone faucet is paired with an apron sink by Franke at a window presenting a quintessential California view. ikebakervelten.com



◄ GRACE BLU INTERIOR DESIGN

For an ambitious renovation of a home on Newport Beach’s idyllic Lido Isle, Grace Blu Interior Design created a kitchen that reflects two current trends: the juxtaposition of contemporary and traditional elements; and an unapologetic use of bold color. “People are loving color, integrating it into a space for a punch of personality,” states founder and principal designer Rona Graf, who notes this client sought interiors that would complement her richly-toned art collection. A jolt of saturated sea blue is injected into an otherwise whitewashed room through cabinetry and seating, with warm planks of walnut underfoot. Caramel-colored leather barstools line an island topped in contrasting black granite, illuminated by an ornamental glass globe from Urban Electric Co. A brushed-brass plumbing fixture from California Faucets is another example of mixing traditional and contemporary qualities in this space. A custom quartzite-topped dining table with blue leather banquette is paired with chairs from Nuevo Living, and a rich quartzite slab also appears on the backsplash. Graf selected an Orange County-manufactured Hestan range, and camouflaged Miele refrigeration units behind the vibrant blue cabinetry. graceblu.com

▲ CASEY HOWARD INTERIOR DESIGN

Danville-based Casey Howard Interior Design completely renovated an 8,000-square-foot Mediterranean-style residence in Pleasanton, pairing back some architectural detailing to suit the active family’s more contemporary sensibilities. “We try to be true to the architecture of the home, but our interpretative approach sometimes incorporates funky, edgy notes,” explains founding principal Casey Howard. This transitional-style kitchen, infused with sumptuous natural surfaces and a sense of whimsy, features prominent cage lantern pendants with sputnik-like nuclei from Hudson Valley Lighting, hanging above a massive island clad in richly-veined Calacatta Vagli marble. Kravet barstools, with black-cerused legs and faux leather upholstery maximize the utility of the island, while European white oak flooring introduces warmth to the high-ceilinged space and decorative but unfussy molding adds another traditional element. Custom white cabinets from Diablo Valley Cabinetry are accented with both blackened and brass hardware from Signature or Schaub. Fronting a modified herringbone backsplash of New Ravenna marble is a 60-inch Wolf range, while a 72-inch Sub-Zero refrigerator/freezer accommodates clients who enjoy entertaining. A pair of Brizo faucets reflect an engaging mix of blackened and burnished finishes. caseyhowardid.com



► BIRGIT KLEIN INTERIORS

Birgit “Bee” Klein, founder of Montecito-based Birgit Klein Interiors, reports “This kitchen was designed for a family, so we wanted to create a space in which they could all gather.” Klein selected rich earth tones to connect the space to the Montecito home’s site, which offers spectacular mountain views, and the use of reclaimed barn wood for the beams in the kitchen extends throughout the residence. Underfoot is tumbled French limestone, while honed, generously-veined Calacatta Vagli marble from Marmi Stone creates an elegant backsplash as well as topping counter surfaces. Illuminating a large island is a trio of distinctive black pendants from Allied Maker, hanging from the vaulted ceiling. Custom-upholstered barstools from Thomas Hayes Studio are aligned along the working island, outfitted with unlacquered brass fixtures from Waterworks and designed for a family that cooks together. A monolithic hood, created through an innovative liquid metal process, rises above a French Lacanche range that is as much a work of art as an appliance. Other products, from Sub-Zero and Wolf, are deftly hidden behind walnut cabinetry. birgitklein.com



▼ KENDALL WILKINSON DESIGN

This kitchen, part of an extensive reimagining of a classic 1920s townhome on the edge of San Francisco’s Sea Cliff neighborhood, was a profoundly personal project for designer Kendall Wilkinson. The renovations represent a fresh start for the designer, her fiancé and their soon-to-be blended family. Maximizing a relatively small space, Wilkinson reports, “Taking down a wall allowed us to open up the kitchen to the adjacent family room, making it feel more expansive.” A custom cobalt blue-finished BlueStar range, known for its commercial-grade capabilities, complements the rich blue cabinetry from JoelMark, which conceals additional Sub-Zero and Viking appliances. A backsplash of white ceramic subway tiles from Da Vinci Marble introduces a traditional element, and Rejuvenation pendants hang over a peninsula clad in honed Calacatta Crema marble from Da Vinci, with brass plumbing by Waterworks. The cabinets, adorned with aged brass hardware from Rejuvenation, include a pull-out pantry, and the blue-and-white motif echoes the home’s architectural heritage. The color scheme continues into the adjoining family room, featuring textiles from a collaboration between Kendall Wilkinson and Fabricut. kendallwilkinson.com



◀ THE KITCHEN DESIGN GROUP

In her book *Caren Rideau: Kitchen Designer, Vintner, Entertaining at Home*, the founding principal of Pacific Palisades-based Kitchen Design Group writes of introducing bold colors into kitchens, but notes a more muted palette is currently trending, along with traditional elements. For a kitchen in the Palisades, Rideau creates energy through an alluring black-and-white motif. By using dark grout, the designer draws extra attention to the subway-style glazed brick backsplash, while adding drama to the flooring through reclaimed gray-and-white marble tiles from Italy, sourced through Tabarka Studio. A brass footrest and blue brick tiles from Fireclay Tile—the color plays against blue fabric in the adjoining family room—enhance a peninsula topped with white quartzite, which Rideau pairs with stools from McGee & Co. Above a matching island hangs an Urban Electric Co. Rex Six chandelier, illuminating the scene, and for serious home chefs Rideau selected a 60-inch chef-worthy BlueStar range in a custom dark gray finish, along with versatile Sub-Zero refrigeration units. Ample sinks equipped with Waterstone plumbing fixtures accommodate a large blended family that enjoys cooking together. kitchendesigngroup.com

