



MILL VALLEY | CALIFORNIA



A NEW ROUNDED-EDGE undermount sink, left, sits where the old sink had been; it's housed in an L-shaped counter offering extra work space. A 7-foot-wide opening, opposite, now links the kitchen to the dining and living rooms, and lets in lots of daylight.

having it all

IT BEGAN AS A SIMPLE UPDATE BUT GREW INTO A FULL-ON REDO THAT YIELDED NEW OPENNESS, EFFICIENCY, AND STYLE

IN 1989, WHEN SHEILA PITTO moved into her view-rich '60s Mill Valley, California, split-level, the kitchen had just been gussied up to encourage the house's sale. There were new appliances, some white, some black, and nearly everything else was white, including the bleached floor. She used that kitchen for more than 15 years; then those appliances started to wear out, a leak damaged her floor, and she knew the time had come for a remodel. "I needed more burners to cook on," she says. "I also needed two ovens and particularly wanted a second sink."

Working with Susan Lund, AKBD, of Spacial Design in nearby San Anselmo, Pitto soon increased the project's scope to include the addition of valuable work and storage spaces—without expanding her kitchen's 12x14½-foot area. "There is a drawer-style microwave opposite one end of the island and two dishwasher drawers to the right of the main sink," Lund says. "We also added a pullout cabinet with bins for waste and recycled materials and put an



THE FAMILY PET, Shorty, a border terrier, thrives in homeowner Sheila Pitto's efficient new kitchen. In the old space, left, Pitto (at right) and designer Susan Lund review plans for the redo at the skimpy island.



undercounter wine refrigerator into the island. The new 42-inch built-in fridge-freezer stands where the old one had been.”

To create a separate cooking zone, Lund appropriated an old walk-in pantry, using that space to build in wall ovens plus a cooktop set directly over pot-and-pan-storage drawers. To compensate for the loss of precious pantry space, the designer placed a tall cabinet with pullout shelving in a floor-to-ceiling space to the right of the cooktop. “We created bonus storage in part of the old pantry that backs up to the cooking zone,” she says.

“The major change was opening up the wall facing the dining area and the windows at the far end of the living room,” Pitto says. “The flow is great now; my kitchen, dining room, and living room feel like one big space.” The island’s work surface is black granite with an antique finish; elsewhere, counters are polished granite in a peachy mauve tone. The shiny backsplash is 2x4-inch glass tile. The kitchen’s original red oak floor was refinished; much of it was patched to repair accumulated water damage. The semicustom cherry cabinets have a rich, dark espresso finish. The hardware, like the main sink faucets, is stainless steel. The prep sink faucet has a flat nickel finish.

Along with a more livable layout and up-to-date appliances, Pitto says she now has well-defined, high-functioning zones for prep/cooking, serving, and entertaining. “There is also more daylight,” she says, “and I have a lot more access to my outdoor views. My house isn’t fancy, but the land it’s on is pretty spectacular.” ■



why it's best

■ Great flow. “I hadn’t planned on having a huge opening from the kitchen to the dining area. I wanted a pass-through window. But with electrical gear buried in one wall and plumbing pipes in the other, I decided to just open it up and leave it open. This was really the best thing I did.”

—Homeowner Sheila Pitto

■ Efficient layout. “Without adding space, we’ve made this kitchen really work for Sheila, who lives here with her teenage son. Now she can be working at the ovens or the cooktop, and he can come in and grab something from the fridge or pop something in the microwave, and not even bother her.”

—Designer Susan Lund

RELOCATING the cooktop—it had been on the old wall between the kitchen and dining room—completed a compact cooking area, top. A new model gave Pitto the two extra burners she wanted. The kitchen is now open to the dining area and the living room beyond it, above. Floor-to-ceiling windows look out on a stamped-concrete patio and awesome views of San Francisco Bay and the city’s skyline.