

Food

Kitchens with

Contents, style make personal statement

By JOY IMBODEN
Correspondent

I love to snoop in other people's kitchens. Give me a few minutes to take in the ambiance, a minute to look at the appliances and gadgets, plus a quick poke through the refrigerator and the cupboards — then I have an intimate sense of the kitchen's owner.

The style and contents of your kitchen make a personal statement that has little to do with money (although money certainly makes a difference in the lengths to which you can go to express yourself!). What is important to you? speed and efficiency, order and calmness, warmth, design, cozy naturalness, haute cuisine, organic living? Your kitchen will tell.

Kitchens are almost always in need of alteration. Mine, which I redesigned down to the last inch five years ago, already wants more open shelves to display jars of beans and grains, more hooks for new utensils, deeper counters for machinery, shorter stools for taller children, new paint.

Sometimes the simple addition of a chopping block table or an overhead pot rack can transform a previously unworkable space. Be forewarned, however — sometimes a small change can lead to revolution, as it did in my first kitchen.

Light that led to change

With the exception of a hideous brass lamp which hung over the table, that kitchen wasn't too bad. I adapted to the lamp by painting the walls cheery yellow and putting up gingham curtains — all the while wishing for a big modern globe light.

One year my husband surprised me by installing a globe fixture for my birthday. Suddenly the quaint country kitchen looked like Tobacco Road. Down came the curtains. The extra light revealed the dismal state of the tile counters and the linoleum floors. They had to go. Before we knew it we were ankle deep in plaster dust as we tore out cabinets and walls. Of course, once the kitchen was complete the shabby living room floor had to be redone, which led to a bathroom overhaul, etc. etc. It was the world's most expensive globe light.

If you are considering remodeling your kitchen you need to take into consideration the following three certainties: it will cost more than you expect; it will take longer than you expect (both in terms of contractor time and your own involvement); and it will make much more of a disruptive mess than you expect.

How much will it cost?



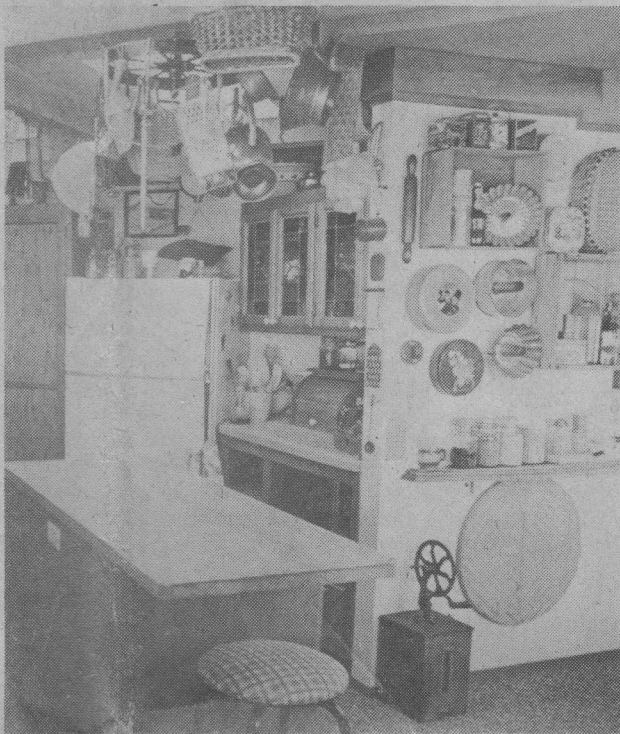
Janet Feagley

The kitchen of Jan and Jerry Feagley was part of the 1977 remodeling of their entire home at Point Richmond. The 60-year old house, which sits a few feet above the waters of the Bay, was completely gutted and redesigned in an open manner with high redwood beams dividing the angled spaces. The cozy kitchen has spectacular bay views on two sides. As Jan says, "Coming home here is like going away without going away." Although the kitchen is small, it is very workable with a butcherblock table in the center of the room. Utensils, current and antique, as well as nautical antiques, hang from the ceiling and decorate the walls. Custom made oak cabinets with leaded glass doors tie the style of the kitchen with the rest of the

With character

Joyce Goldstein

There's no mistaking the kitchen of a professional cook. Joyce Goldstein, left, head chef at Berkeley's Chez Panisse's Cafe, designed her home kitchen for action. The enormous professional range is surrounded by all the utensils she uses most frequently, as well as a profusion of oil, vinegar and wine bottles. "I cook fast, often over high heat, so I want everything within an arm's reach." The stove is two inches lower than normal, so the cook can peer into her pots to see what's happening. Opposite the stove, on the other side of the island, is a 30-inch deep counter, providing ample room for both small appliances and "prep" (the pro's term for peeling, chopping, rolling, kneading). Goldstein and her three teenagers, accomplished cooks themselves, can work simultaneously without collision. Anyone not working can kibbitz from the dining room, which adjoins the kitchen.



How much will it cost?

Just to modernize your cabinets with new facing and replace your vinyl floor may cost \$2,000. Gutting the whole room, knocking down walls and restarting from scratch could easily cost \$50,000. You can expect interest rates of more than 19 percent on a home improvement loan — translate: \$510 a month for a fifteen-year, \$30,000 loan.

The resale value of your home will go up, but the increase depends on what you do and how much you spend. According to Berkeley realtor Helen Guay, you may be able to profit on a face-lift but only get back half of your costs on a full-scale remodel. Says Guay, "The slick modern kitchen is passe, and country sprawl is in. Everybody wants a big all-purpose room now. Knock down the walls and make an informal space where the guests can mingle with the cook, the kids can do their homework, the dog can lie by the hearth. Save yourself a bundle by doing it simply, with open shelving and utensils that show."

Getting really pragmatic about it, let's say you plan to sell your home in two years and you spend two hours a day in the kitchen (365 days x 2 years x 2 hours = 1,460 hours). If you spend \$30,000 to remodel but get half back when you sell, the kitchen costs you \$15,000, or just over \$10 per hour of use.

But who thinks in such terms when faced with the prospect of warm oak flooring, a commercial range, a countertop "garage" for the Cuisinart, and cupboard doors that repel children's fingerprints like magnets with their north poles juxtaposed.

Getting on with the job

So you decide to go ahead with the job. Keep a notebook in the kitchen to jot down your design ideas as you're preparing meals. What specifically works about your current kitchen set-up, and what about it drives you nuts? Get input from other family members too. Be truthful about your personal cooking style and don't worry about the Joneses' built-in wok, convection oven and trash compactor.

Clip ideas from magazines, talk to friends about their kitchens and the contractors they used. Day-dream and take notes on your fantasy kitchen. Recall details of favorite kitchens in your childhood.

Go on a kitchen tour such as the one sponsored each year by L'Ecole Bilingue, the French bilingual school. This tour of nine fabulous kitchens in Berkeley and North Oakland will be held this year Sunday, May 2. The fund-raising event costs \$20 for the self-guided tour, lunch and cooking demonstrations. For ticket information call 654-0493 or 841-2163.

Two Berkeley kitchens on the tour include one designed by architect Hiro Morimoto for the owners, both full-time professors at the university, and another in the home of Sy and Bonnie Grossman (see photos following page).

The Grossman kitchen is as much a museum as it is a work area. The couple collects kitchen antiques and American folk art. Every available inch of wall seems to be covered with these venerable tools - citrus juicers, nutmeg graters, choppers, whisks, pudding molds, rolling pins, mostly hand-made and well-used.

The clean-lines Berkeley remodel by Morimoto is in dramatic contrast to the warmth of the Grossman and other kitchens pictured on this page. The walls between three small rooms were removed to bring in more light and allow for greater efficiency. The look is now white, uncluttered, almost virginal.

The owners enjoy cooking but need to budget their time well. They use double ovens to prepare main dishes in quantity for freezing, then use the microwave for thawing and reheating the meals quickly.

When you're ready to prepare plans for redesigning your kitchen, consider talking with a kitchen consultant before you hitch up with an architect or contractor. The kitchen specialist's expertise can often save you money.

house.



Camille Zulpo

This kitchen at right, in the Point Richmond Victorian home of artist Camille Zulpo, has not been changed much since it was built. The kitchen actually spreads through three tiny rooms — the eating/cooking room, the pantry/sink room, and the refrigerator/laundry area on the back porch. The old Wedgewood stove still works perfectly.

Zulpo tore up the linoleum to reveal the pine floor beneath, and made a long butcher block table for food preparation. The high ceilings give her ample wall space on which to display a delightful assemblage of ceramics and memorabilia. The cantaloupe bowls are among the most popular ceramics she manufactures for the North Berkeley gift shop, Zebra, which she co-owns with her sisters and mother.

—Staff photos by Michael Russell



Cherie&John Ysunza

Owners Cherie and John Ysunza of Richmond liked the basic layout and style of the original kitchen, right, in their older Richmond home. They wanted to replace their aging appliances, some of the cabinets and tilework, and the cracked ceiling without destroying the traditional flavor of the room. Working closely with designer Carlene Anderson at Custom Kitchens in Oakland, they angled the new Chambers cooktop in the corner to echo the diagonal lines of the bay window. Now there are convenient counters on either side of the cooking surface, where before the stove stood alone against the wall. Infra-red lamps under the range hood keep foods warm or speed the raising of yeast doughs. The Ysunzas are particularly pleased with their new ceiling, made of stamped tin. John Ysunza, who is a ceiling contractor, had installed a similar Victorian ceiling in Richmond's Hotel Mac. The old light fixtures were found at Sunrise Salvage.





—Staff photos by Michael Russell

Two kitchens on the L'Ecole Bilingue tour Sunday, May 2, are the Sy and Bonnie Grossman kitchen at left, and the one above designed by Hiro Morimoto

(see story preceding page). Kitchen antiques decorate the walls of the Grossmans' kitchen. The Morimoto remodel is white, uncluttered, almost virginal.

Consulting with the experts in kitchen design

By JOY IMBODEN
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Credentials and focus of kitchen designers vary. The two with whom I spoke this week share a love and understanding of the kitchen and a commitment to the satisfaction of their clients.

The versatile Joyce Goldstein is a full-time chef, who also teaches cooking and kitchen design, and in her "spare" time writes about kitchen design for *Bon Appetit Magazine*. She became actively interested in kitchen design three years ago when an architect friend asked her to teach a course on the subject for architects and designers. "It's really a very technical area," he told her, "and most of us have little awareness of the cooking process, work patterns or equipment."

The problem intrigued Goldstein, so she set about researching kitchen design in the library of the university's architecture school. To her dismay, almost nothing useful had been written; there weren't even slides of workable kitchens. She embarked upon her own study program, visiting and photographing 80 kitchens — of friends, chefs, cooking teachers, architects, designers. She grilled their

owners about what worked and what didn't work in their kitchens. One design book she found valuable is the *Conran Kitchen Book*. For the past three years Goldstein has been sharing her knowledge with design professionals, contractors and laymen in a popular course through U.C. Extension.

When Goldstein helps a client transform his or her nebulous dreams into workable plans, she asks about 40 questions to make sure the results will be appropriate to the cook. "One of the first questions I ask is why you're remodeling," she said. "Is it because you're bored with the kitchen you've got, or because it really doesn't work? If it's boredom, then a relatively inexpensive reorganization may be all that's needed. It's a myth that a better kitchen will make you a better cook."

She feels that many kitchen remodels cost far more than they need to because the owner gets caught up in the "shoulds" of fancy cabinetry and specialized appliances.

Goldstein stresses the importance of utility. "If you do a lot of stovetop cooking, as I do, get yourself a quality commercial cooktop. Consider deeper countertops — 30-inch instead of the standard 24-inch — to provide enough

room for small appliances without cutting into work space." She suggests variable counter heights. "The standard 36 inches is not necessarily the best; the surface where you knead bread should be a couple of inches lower to give you good leverage."

Carlene Anderson at Custom Kitchens in Oakland has been a full-time kitchen designer for five years. A former home economist and cooking teacher, she is certified by the American Institute of Kitchen Dealers, following a highly technical course of study. Anderson carries each project from start to finish.

Anderson likes to discuss budget before she and the client begin to plan. "Many people are unaware of how much things cost these days," she says. "The unique measurements of each kitchen often rule out the possibility of using stock cabinets, and custom work, if it's any good, is not cheap."

Anderson feels bigger is not necessarily better. "What most kitchens need is a better utilization of the available space, not more of it," she said. "A good plan can save you money."