

# K+BB



DESIGN + INNOVATION + LIFESTYLE

## material world

concrete ideas lend massive appeal

modern masterpieces

appliances that really cook

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# Mass Media

Concrete and granite lend presence and weight to a Napa Valley kitchen

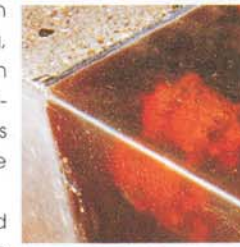
By Alice Liao

In Napa Valley, CA, where stellar vintages depend on a harmony of climate and earth, a healthy respect for the soil and what it can yield is only natural. Consequently, when the owners of Meteor Vineyard wanted to build a home on their 27 acres of land, architectural firm Cutler Anderson Architects designed them a 12,000-sq.-ft. house of rammed earth and wood that was five years in the making. Limited to a much shorter schedule of five months, Fu-Tung Cheng, principal of Cheng Design, was entrusted with creating its "heart"—a kitchen that would provide a hub for daily life and special occasions while fitting comfortably within the architecture of the home.

"We had to come up with a design that could complement yet, at the same time, hold its own against the rammed-earth walls and the mass of the project," said Cheng. Rammed-earth homes typically feature thick, substantial walls that are constructed by pouring a soil and cement mixture into a forming system. The mixture, which consists of sand and clay stabilized by a small amount of cement, is added in layers, and each layer is compressed with pneumatic tampers to a density of 100-110 lbs./cu.ft. The resulting walls can range from 18 in. to 24 in. in thickness.

To offset this mass and anchor the 500-sq.-ft. space, Cheng decided on an open-plan kitchen whose borders are delineated with low walls rather than full-height partitions. The walls are, in fact, custom concrete countertops that have been extended below the work surface to wrap around the bamboo cabinetry. Concrete was used because it "fits the bill as a material that won't float away in the middle of this house as would perhaps a series of wood cabinets," said Cheng. Embedding it with fossils, minerals, transmission parts and tile inlays enhances its visual interest and reinforces its heft.

As the homeowners enjoy cooking and entertaining, the kitchen is loaded with professional-grade appliances, which have been carefully integrated into the space for maximum functionality and minimal visual disruption. A U-shaped layout places the cooking station at the center of the space, allowing busy chefs easy access to all necessary tools and utensils, while an adjoining pantry, which Cheng also designed, houses additional equipment such as a pair of dishwashers—there are three total—and a freezer.



The cooking area comprises four gas burners, a wok, grill, steamer and fryer and is ventilated by a pop-up downdraft system and a sleek, 10-ft.-tall, stainless-steel hood that was created by Cheng as well. Behind and within arm's reach is a freestanding, welded-steel structure that encloses dual refrigerators and wall ovens. Cheng said, "Incorporating all of the equipment presented a challenge, but we had enough room that we could spread it around and still produce something creative."

Further exemplifying this creativity, a host of custom details help give the kitchen its distinct stamp and make life easier for the homeowners. A favorite is a steel dish rack that took longer to design than the entire kitchen, said Cheng. It is positioned above a concrete countertop that has been angled to direct water toward a sink. A black granite countertop is equipped with steel plates that function as covers for hidden electrical outlets. Near the stove, a wood cutting board sits at the edge of a 4 1/2-ft.-long, built-in trough sink that is lined with crackle-glazed, white tile. For added convenience, a perforated steel colander slides back and forth across the top of the sink.

The prevalence of steel unifies the kitchen and provides contrast to the more organic finishes used throughout the space. A minimalist bent has kept architectural lines clean and simple, allowing the focus to stay on the mix of textures and materials. In addition to the concrete and honed granite countertops, which weight the space and establish a sense of continuity with the home's architecture, Cheng has applied bamboo not only to the cabinetry but also to a rear wall, which contains shelving and additional storage units, and to the butler's pantry and powder room. Breaking from the Douglas fir that is ubiquitous in the home, Cheng chose bamboo in part for its sustainability and grain pattern. The resulting effect is one of cohesion. He said, "I treated the entire wall, the butler's pantry and the powder room as one big cabinet that you could walk into."

According to Cheng, the kitchen's effortless fusion of art and utility represents a culmination of ideas that have informed his work in the past 20 years. For these discriminating homeowners, this synthesis of aesthetics and function has furnished them with a versatile space in which to cook, convene and enjoy life's more earthly pleasures. ■

*(This page & opposite) Concrete countertops embedded with a variety of materials help anchor the open-plan kitchen, which was designed to serve as the "heart of the home." Custom-crafted conveniences such as an integrated dishrack with steel fines lend a uniqueness to the kitchen and make it more "user-friendly."*



**REAR WALL**

- Partitions off pantry and powder room, both of which were designed by Cheng
- Paneled in bamboo to promote continuity
- Conceals additional shelving and cabinetry

**APPLIANCES**

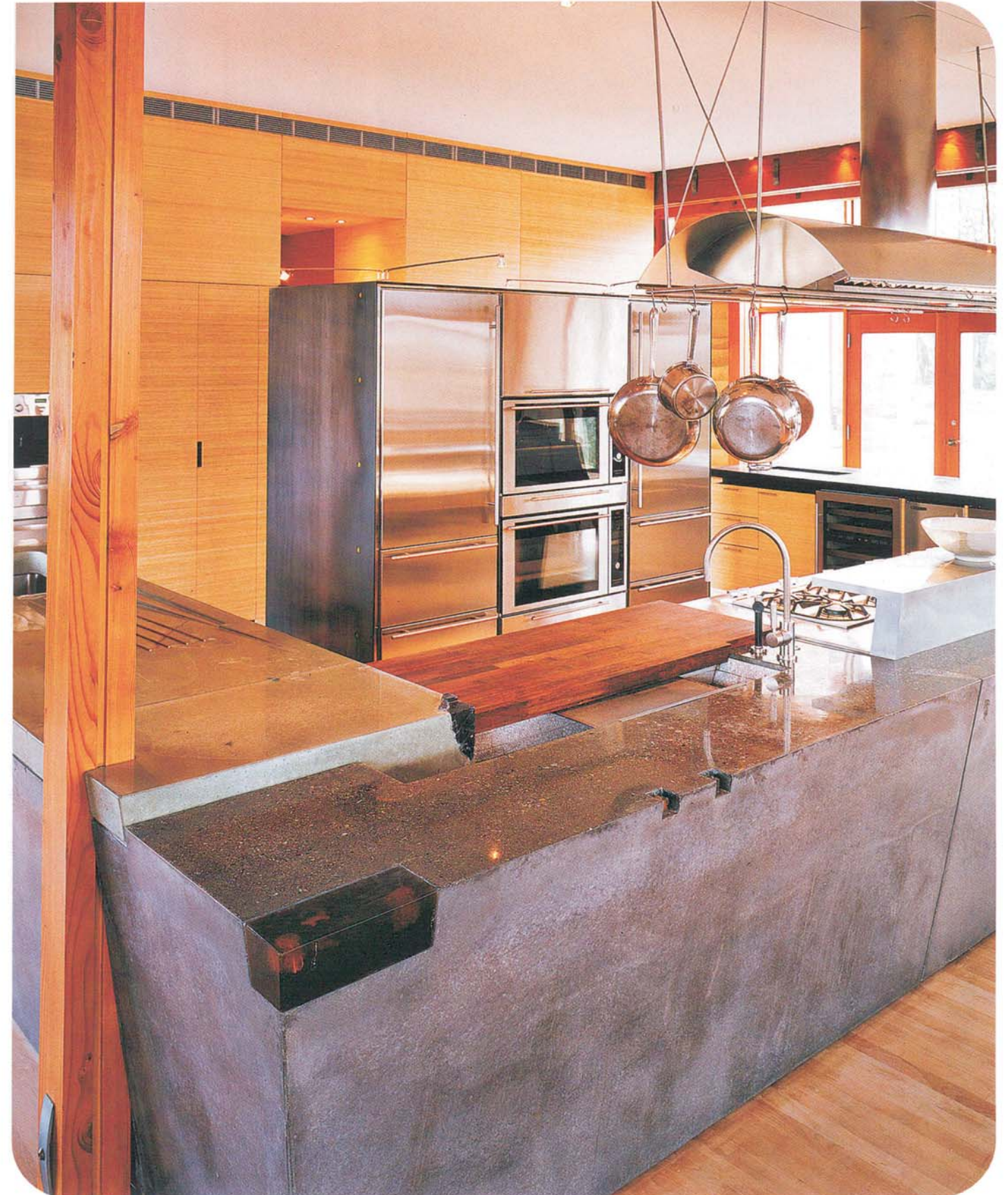
- Professional-grade appliances chosen for gourmet cooks
- Integrated into kitchen and butler's pantry to maintain uncluttered look
- Refrigerators and ovens ganged together behind stove for convenience

**COUNTERTOPS**

- Concrete counterbalances mass of home's rammed-earth walls
- Embedded with objects and materials to enhance appeal and sense of weight
- Wraps around cabinets to function as visual anchor
- Integrated features preserve clean look while providing convenience

**COOKING AREA**

- Cooktop features four burners and various extras for maximum convenience
- Ventilated by downdraft system and custom hood
- Zinc shelf above the stove conceals items and functions as serving area





(Left, top & bottom) At the center of the U-shaped layout, the stove and cutting board are integrated into a long, stainless-steel piece. The steel sits atop bamboo cabinetry, which is partially enclosed in concrete. Inlays in the concrete function as visual cues that reinforce the material's mass, while a built-in trough sink and sliding colander add a uniqueness and convenience. (Above) Art meets function in the custom concrete countertops, which assume a sculptural presence in the kitchen yet contain integrated features such as a draining board.



**sources**

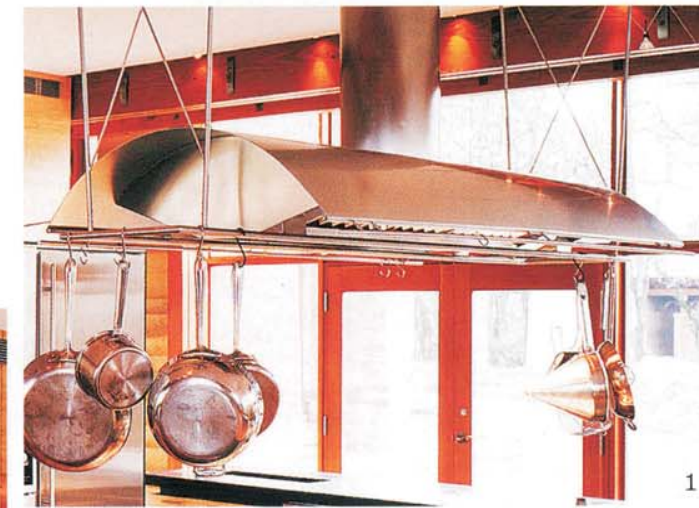
Designer: Fu-Tung Cheng—Cheng Design, Berkeley, CA

- Manufacturers
- Ventilation hood: Cheng Design Products; Thermador (remote blower)
- Countertops: Cheng Design Products
- Cabinetry & molding: Tanglefoot Construction; Plyboo (paneling)
- Faucets: Dornbracht; Duravit
- Custom dishrack: Alan Sklansky
- Refrigerator, freezer & wine cooler: Sub-Zero
- Oven: Küppersbusch
- Cooktop & downdraft ventilation: Gaggenau
- Microwave & trash compactor: KitchenAid
- Icemaker: Kitchen Maid
- Dishwashers, espresso machine & warming drawers: Miele
- Zinc countertop/shelf: Pacassa Studios
- Lighting: Tech Lighting

Photography: © Matthew Millman



2



1



3



4



5

**1** Cheng Design's Tidan ventilation hood is formed of durable, 16-gauge stainless steel and is designed for use with in-line or remote-blower applications. The hood is equipped with a factory-welded flue and apron, curved canopy, dual glass cantilevered shelves and a double-sided, front-mounted utensil rail. Width is 110 in. **Circle No. 125**

**2** Plyboo laminated bamboo from Smith & Fong was specified for the cabinets and walls in the kitchen, pantry and powder room. Available as single-ply panels or multi-ply plywood, Plyboo is formed of flat bamboo strips that have been processed and sanded to ensure a smooth and insect-repellent surface. Plyboo is offered in natural and amber colors. **Circle No. 126**

**3** Geocrete countertops from Cheng Design provide the visual heft necessary to anchor the kitchen in the home. Countertops can be designed with integral trivets, cutting boards and draining boards. The concrete is offered in eight colors as well as custom colors and embedded with different materials for visual interest. **Circle No. 127**

**4** For these avid chefs, Cheng specified Gaggenau's Vario 200 Aluminum Series cooktop. This modular, built-in series offers a two-burner gas cooktop; 12-in., three-ring gas wok burner; electric deep fryer with a cold oil zone and electronic temperature control; electric barbeque grill with two independent grilling elements; and a steamer. **Circle No. 128**

**5** One of three sinks is equipped with Dornbracht's Tara Classic Profi single-lever sink mixer. The fixture features a gooseneck spout with a swinging spray head and an automatic hydraulic diverter. It is available in a right- or left-handed configuration. **Circle No. 129**