



# Fond memories

Sea shells from the homeowners' personal collection are inlaid into this island to remind them of past holidays

Often, it can be the smallest details that make a kitchen remodeling project stand out. These details can give the homeowner a chance to express a little of their own personality.

The owners of this holiday home gave their kitchen a personal touch by incorporating shells from their own collection into the island design. The shells hold special significance, as they were collected over several years on favorite holidays.

Fu-Tung Cheng, the designer of this kitchen, is fascinated by the use of shells

in design. The ammonite shell is the icon of his company Cheng Design.

"It's a very compelling shape - like a snowflake, in that they all look similar, but no two are ever the same. The very structure suggests the order of society and life itself," he says.

The homeowners approached Cheng because they wanted to freshen up their holiday home that had been custom designed 20 years previously.

"The house itself is a nice shape, but it's very conventional. They'd never had

time to appoint it well, and there was no detailing work done," Cheng says.

Another motivation for the remodel was to combine the kitchen and adjacent breakfast room so the couple could spend more time together.

The homeowners liked Cheng's work for its sculptural elements, and the new island provided an opportunity to create a sculptural focal point.

Cheng has used this island design in several projects, and it can be built with open or closed shelves. The bamboo

**Preceding pages:** Installing an island in this kitchen provided an opportunity for a sculptural feature, and divides the kitchen into distinct cooking and preparation areas.

**Facing page, top:** The island was cast in concrete off site and assembled on site.

**Facing page, above:** Both the cabinets and floors are made from bamboo - a popular product, as it is an environmentally sustainable material.

**Above:** The black granite countertops contrast with a blue-grey Venetian plaster wall.



cabinetry is tapered, so it doesn't need a toe-kick. The oval shape of the island is both practical and aesthetic.

"It is easier to walk around rounded, half-circle ends. Elliptical shapes provide both ease and elegance – they are slender and not as ponderous as a rectangular island," Cheng says.

One side of the island's concrete countertop cantilevers over the edge, allowing room for people to sit. Its sharp edge is protected by an amber-toned resin bumper inlaid with the owners' shells.

**Designer:** Fu-Tung Cheng, Cheng Design and Construction (Berkeley, CA)  
**Cabinets:** Plyboo veneer, Häfele hardware; Doug Mockett & Sugatsune pulls  
**Countertops:** Custom Cheng Geocrete concrete island and countertop; granite countertops in Absolute Black  
**Flooring:** Plyboo flooring, Smith & Fong  
**Windows and doors:** Bonelli aluminum windows  
**Lighting:** Pendant light by Louis Poulsen; recessed ceiling lights by Elco  
**Backsplash:** Oceanside glass mosaic tile  
**Hot water systems:** In-Sink-Erator with Everpure water filtration system

**Faucets:** Grohe; Eurodisc  
**Oven, cooktop:** Küppersbusch  
**Ventilation:** Custom Cheng Flux Hood  
**Microwave:** Sharp  
**Refrigerator, freezer, wine refrigerator:** Sub-Zero  
**Dishwasher:** Fisher & Paykel DishDrawer  
**Waste unit:** KitchenAid  
**Built-in banquette:** Bubinga wood booth table; Plyboo benches; chestnut cowhide banquette cushions

**Photography by Matthew Millman**

**Above left:** An appliance garage on the countertop at left helps keep clutter hidden away.

**Facing page, far left:** Colors in the ammonite are natural, created by years of sediment build-up. When sliced open, the inside is as hard as concrete, and can be inlaid and polished.

**Facing page, left:** Shells inlaid in the resin bumper are from the homeowners' personal collection.

**Above:** A breakfast bay was installed with a booth table made of bubinga wood, and chestnut cowhide-cushioned benches.