



Solid foundation

An old brick fireplace – once used as a barbecue – was the starting point for the design of this kitchen

Every design ultimately draws its inspiration from somewhere or something, whether it is obvious or more subtle.

The original 1950s modern kitchen in this home featured an open brick fireplace – once used as a brazier or barbecue – on a brick hearth above the countertop.

Although the fire hadn't been used in many years,

designer Fu Tung Cheng seized on it as an inspiration for the design of the new kitchen.

"I decided to retain the brick hearth below the fire as a focal point, and used it to create a sense of mass in the kitchen," he says.

The countertop was then extended across the full length of the back wall of the kitchen. As well as the open fire, the top includes the cooktop and

ventilation hood in the center of it.

The thickness of the old hearth dictated the finished depth of the new countertop. The bricks were covered in a polished concrete casing, creating an imposing, 12in-thick countertop.

Finishing the countertop in concrete allowed Cheng to add some individualized details. For example, Russian

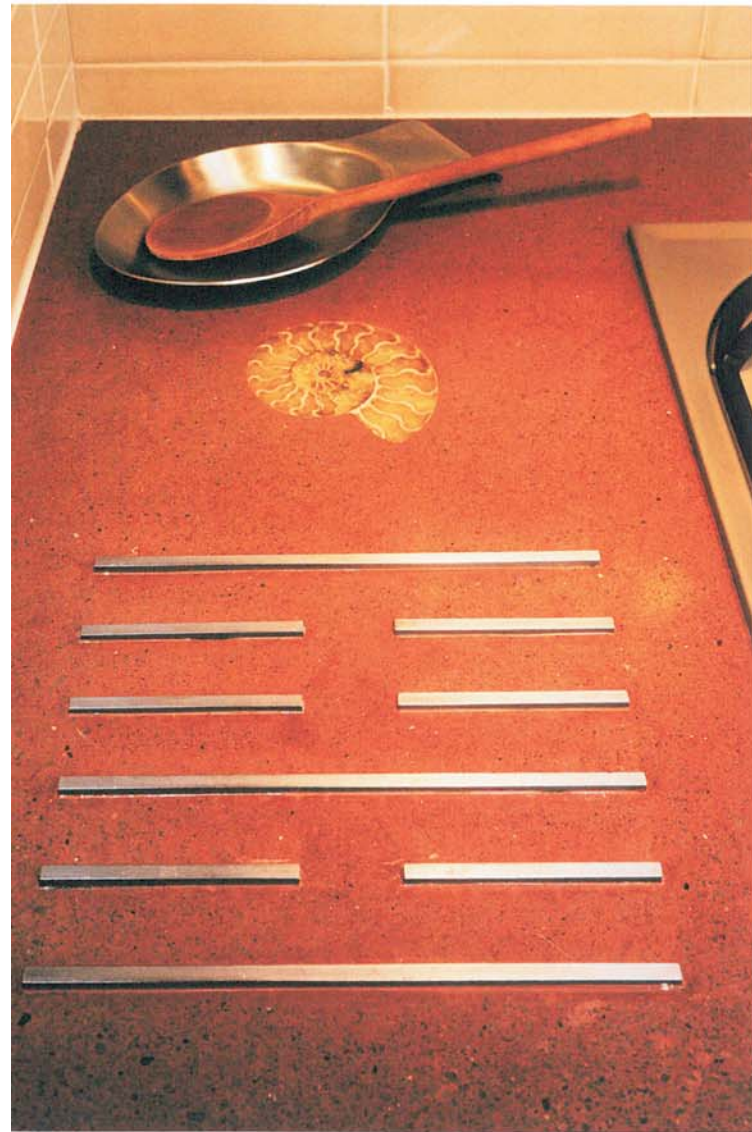
dolomite crystals and a fossilized ammonite are embedded in the surface. On a more practical level, brass bars, in the shape of a Chinese geomancy symbol, based on a hexagram and representing grace, form a trivet for hot pots and pans.

As a contrasting element to the concrete, the counter on the other side of the kitchen is made from stainless steel.

Facing page: Before designer Fu Tung Cheng remodeled this kitchen, it had small windows above the sink counter and a bank of cupboards separating it from the dining area. With new windows and less separation, the kitchen is now light and airy.

Above: The old kitchen included a built-in fireplace above the countertop. Cheng has retained the fire as a feature of the kitchen and modernized it by encasing the old brick hearth in concrete.





Preceding pages: A stainless steel countertop on one side of the kitchen offsets the rich, natural tones of the concrete countertop on the opposite wall.

Above: Brass bars, in a hexagram, based on Chinese geomancy, are set into the concrete countertop and form a trivet for hot pots.

Right: The colorful oblong mark in the countertop occurred naturally when the concrete top was poured.



A marble slab, inset into the peninsula, is framed in polished concrete. A concrete end wall on the peninsula anchors the countertop to the floor and visually links it to the other side of the kitchen.

Flat-paneled cabinetry, made from vertical-grained Plyboo, a light-colored plywood, complements the sheen of the stainless steel and the stronger tones of the concrete.

"We have used natural materials throughout the kitchen, because they add calmness and warmth to the space," says Cheng.

"Combining them with natural colors, like the green of the mosaic tiles, terra cotta and maize, give the kitchen an organic quality," he says.

While the new kitchen has much the same footprint as its predecessor, Cheng opened up

the windows and redefined the wall between the kitchen and dining area.

"We cut back the separating wall to create a visual connection between the two areas.

"The original kitchen was closed off, and it felt cramped and oppressive. Now, because it has an open, light and airy feeling, the kitchen harmonizes with the rest of the house," Cheng says.

Kitchen designer: Fu Tung Cheng, Cheng Design, (Berkeley, CA)

Cabinetmaker: Peter Malakoff

Cabinetry: Plyboo doors, maple boxes
Countertops: Geocrete, designed by Cheng Design; Stainless steel from Berlin Food Equipment Co

Flooring: Plyboo from Smith & Fong
Backsplash: Architectonics ceramic tiles from Waterworks; Loom ceramic tiles from Ann Sacks

Windows: Cheng Design in Mahogany

Lighting: Tech Lighting

Sink: Stainless steel

Faucets: Grohe Ladylux Café in Chrome Black

Refrigerator, oven, warming drawer and microwave: GE Monogram

Cooktops: Gaggenau

Ventilation: Vent-A-Hood

Dishwasher: Miele

Waste unit: In-Sink-Erator

Photography by Tim Maloney

Above: The open feeling of the kitchen is enhanced by the large windows in the dining space. With the wall between the spaces gone, the cook can enjoy the views and light that pours in through the dining windows. The owners and designer favored mainly natural colors, such as green, terra cotta and maize, and raw materials like concrete, wood and marble.