



# Cast in stone

A designer was called in at the eleventh hour to remodel this kitchen, and brought new life to the whole house

Take the inevitable desire for an updated interior after 15 years, add the owners' desire to achieve a home reflecting the look and feel of a Mediterranean house, and factor in a leak in the kitchen roof necessitating a remodel.

This was the situation in which designer Fu-Tung Cheng found himself when a colleague asked him to take a look at a kitchen half-way through a remodeling job.

"The homeowners were increasingly unsure about the direction their initial plans were taking and worried their one chance for a dream home would not be all they wanted," says Cheng.

"I was called in by my colleague Chadine Gong and by the time we had discussed plans for the kitchen, the owners were interested to hear about my ideas for the rest of the house."

It was the kitchen, though, from which Cheng sourced his clients' strongest feelings about the entire house – what he calls their emotional code.

"My clients wanted to capture a feeling of what a Spanish-style home really felt like. I translated this into mass and solidity with an emphasis on masonry materials, and we evoked that with cast iron, steel and concrete. The space needed to be strongly tactile with the thick walls

*Facing page:* Designed as a natural point of flow for traffic around the kitchen, the cone-shaped sink unit incorporates a storage bin, which the owners use for compost waste.

*Above:* A robust food prep island cantilevered over the sink anchors the kitchen, while the Cheng Geocrete countertop and slate wall pay tribute to the textures inherent in Spanish-influenced kitchens.



**Designer:** Fu-Tung Cheng  
NKBA, Ann Kim, Cheng Design  
(Berkeley CA)

**Main contractor:** Dennis  
Carlson, Chuck Hunt, D. Carlson  
Construction

**Cabinets:** Custom made from  
plyboo bamboo by William Guba  
& Associates

**Pantry doors:** Custom steel and  
3form panels by Cheng Design

**Countertops:** Cheng Design  
Geocrete, custom stainless steel

**Prep-island sink and island:**  
Geocrete concrete pedestal with  
integral sink by Cheng Design  
Geocrete, steel grating by  
Urban Accessories

**Faucets:** Grohe, Hansgrohe

**Cooktop and oven:** Gaggenau

**Backsplash:** China Gold slate

**Lighting:** Lutron

**Flooring:** Brazilian cherry

**Ventilation:** Custom design,  
plaster by Thom Bruce,  
Artisan Plaster

**Photography by Tim Maloney**

the plyboo cabinetry used in the kitchen features strongly in the living area's built-in furniture.

The homeowner says the reinvention has transformed her life, an achievement, says Cheng, that was due to her belief in his ability.

"Find someone with heart and talent to enhance your interior, have faith and let them run with it," he says.

"The design process is a two-way street and a good designer will never make assumptions, but clients will get so much more out of the experience if they communicate their true desires and trust their design team to make that a reality."



**Above left:** Brass inlays worked into the Cheng Geocrete countertop on each side of the Gaggenau cooktop function as trivets for hot pots. The backing wall is polished slate.

**Left:** A wall of concrete several inches thick runs up the side of the prep-island to form a chopping board, which is seamlessly integrated into the mahogany countertop.