

Gutting the kitchen and taking out the partition that separated it from the dining room allowed designer Fu-Tung Cheng to turn what had been a U-shaped kitchen into a spacious galley.



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glass
act

Walls of windows bring
the outdoors into this kitchen

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The low-slung, contemporary homes built in California in the middle of the last century set the precedent for indoor-outdoor living in the U.S. One example is this 1960 house in Orinda, whose owners have lived there 43 years. In 1971 they expanded it and redid the kitchen. But three decades later, as the garden matured along with their tastes, they wished for even more transparency between the kitchen and their tranquil

backyard. Three of the architects they consulted suggested pushing out an exterior wall—a cost-prohibitive solution, given earthquake-prone California's rigorous building and engineering codes. But Berkeley-based designer Fu-Tung Cheng had other ideas. With a few deft deletions and additions, he gave them a sparkling kitchen that seems to float against the greenery, while leaving its basic footprint intact.



LEFT: The sole wall cabinet sports sliding glass doors that reduce its visual weight and allow it to essentially disappear into the surrounding wall, which is all windows.

OPPOSITE: Instead of installing a double-oven range just for the sake of having more cooktop, this kitchen features a separate grill. The non-oven space below the grill permits extra storage.

Cheng, who heads up Cheng Design, is known for organic, sculpted lines and a down-to-earth style—exactly the look the wife was after. “I wanted more glass this time,” she says. “I wanted it to be a little edgy and very contemporary and kind of Zen.” Cheng gutted the kitchen and tore out a partition between it and the dining area, making way for a long, sleek galley in place of the old U-shaped workspace. He also extended a wall about two feet

on the opposite end of the room. “The old kitchen didn’t have this linear generosity,” Cheng explains. “Our idea was to stretch things out.”

Another house-opening move was to expand on the rhythm of existing clerestory windows. By filling the entire vertical space between clerestory and countertop with new windows and adding French doors, Cheng created a sweeping wall of glass overlooking



A stainless steel range hood with a curved front and a metal grate, mounted above the stovetop.

A built-in stainless steel microwave oven with a black window and a control panel on the right side.

A dark wooden shelf mounted on the wall, holding several bottles of oil, a can of cooking spray, and other kitchen items.

A stainless steel stovetop with a moka pot and a cutting board with fresh vegetables. Below the stovetop is a stainless steel oven with a towel hanging on the handle.

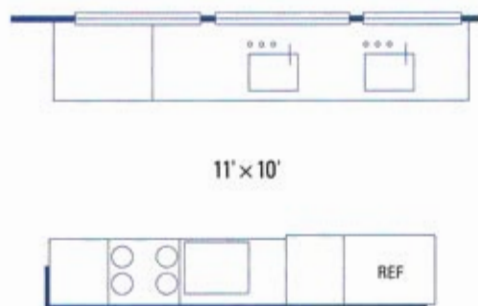
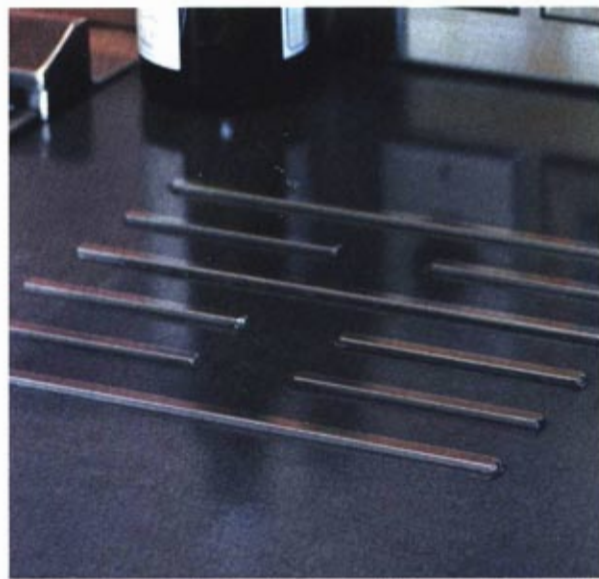
A tiled floor with large, square tiles in shades of red, orange, and brown.

design points

BRIGHT IDEAS

Abundant natural light makes this kitchen incredibly inviting. Designer Fu-Tung Cheng maximized the overall brightness with lots of glass, metal and clean lines.

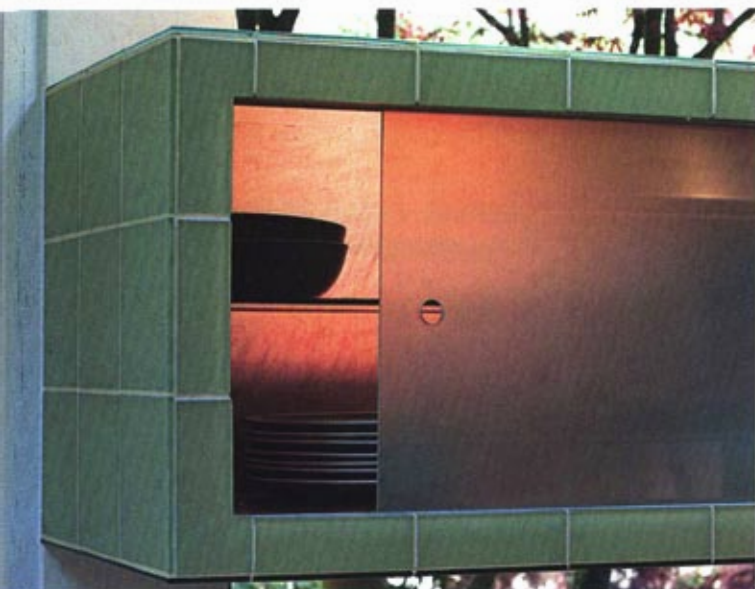
- ◆ Steel rods set into the countertop near a sink comprise a built-in drainboard (below). This largely removes any need for a dish rack, which would clutter up the countertop.
- ◆ Concrete and stone countertops (right) have a sheen that helps reflect all that California sunshine.
- ◆ The door hardware and wire shelves of the pull-out pantry (below right) also gleam in the light, but the decision to make these items metal was made primarily for stylistic and ease-of-maintenance reasons.
- ◆ The back of the glass-front wall cabinet is also translucent (opposite above left), giving the box a pleasing glow. The glass-tile sides and front frame accentuate the effect.
- ◆ A high-arc polished chrome faucet (opposite below left) adds elegance and a bonus glint of brightness.
- ◆ A stool is tucked away in a handy nook (opposite right) next to the sink, under a single drawer.



LEFT: The generous gap between the sides of the galley—and the separated single-bowl sinks along the outside wall—allow more than one person to operate in the kitchen comfortably.

the garden. To preserve that view from the kitchen, he omitted upper wall storage except for a single linear cabinet clad in reflective glass tiles that hovers above the counter.

On the galley's opposite side, an interior wall was notched out to allow natural light to travel into the living room. Sleek, almost seamless materials bounce light around and keep the focus on the outdoors. The stain-



less steel backsplash segues into a shelf and a box holding the microwave, and Cheng used his trademark concrete to wrap two end walls and part of the countertops. For the wife, who describes herself as “neurotically neat,” purging unused possessions to gain garden views was well worth it. “The openness is fabulous,” she says. “It makes this part of the house seem bigger.” ♦

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