

ORANGE COUNTY

NOVEMBER 2006  
\$3.95

# HOME

DECOR | FURNISHINGS | GARDEN | ENTERTAINING



## HOME COOKING

IN THE KITCHEN WITH A TOP O.C. CHEF

**HOME-DESIGN WINNERS**



Before the remodel the kitchen, shown in two photos at right, was dated and lacking in features, not reflecting the owners' sophisticated lifestyle and taste.



This kitchen remodel at the 2005 Philharmonic House of Design was done with a goal of creating a highly functional kitchen for daily use and culinary entertaining, with state-of-the-art materials.



Photos: Courtesy of Barbara McLane



# COOKING UP A GREAT KITCHEN

That gourmet dream you always wanted starts with a dynamic plan.

BY BARBARA MCLANE

For many of us a kitchen remodel starts simply enough. The oven breaks or a waterline leaks, damaging your kitchen floor. Then a streak of indecision follows: what to do? Should I fix? Replace? Reface? Update? Or totally reinvent how the kitchen should look and function?

Wouldn't one of the new wood choices look great? And how about some quartz or marble for the countertops? Then there are those dark cabinets. And gee, a stainless or copper fridge that we spotted on HGTV's "I Want That" might look great.

A neighbor recommends some tradespeople, a cabinet guy, he comes by and quotes you a price. Then he talks you into redoing the kitchen, top to bottom. He can handle the whole job and it will be done in no time. Who can resist?

But sometimes, when you replace a countertop here or an appliance there, or you have the cabinet guy redo the works, you may not be all that happy with the result. It isn't just an issue with remodels. Very frequently I get a call from a customer saying, "We just bought this new home and I hate my kitchen. I didn't get what I really wanted."

**INSIDER'S TIP:** Do your homework and consult a pro. A good place to start? Visit kitchen showrooms and review their actual work portfolios.

Have you ever wondered why some kitchens are sophisticated and simply



## About the columnist

Barbara McLane was born and raised in Poland and still travels to Europe frequently to draw inspiration from classic European design. After studying art history in Europe, Barbara studied architecture for four years at the School of Architecture at the University of Hawaii. She received her fine arts degree in interior design from Chaminade University of Honolulu in 1985. She worked for an architectural firm, and upon moving to California, she worked on an interior design team for a major homebuilder, and later also worked for several kitchen showrooms. In 2003 she established By Design Kitchens Etc. and has designed kitchens for many custom homes, plus showcase rooms for the Orange County Philharmonic House of Design.

stunning, while others fall short?

Fabulous functional kitchens are not a magical streak of lucky choices. The secret lays in the design approach. Experienced kitchen designers use an elaborate process that guides them to the right choices.

Want to understand the process, and how a pro can help? Here is a brief look at the steps, using my remodel of the kitchen at the 2005 Philharmonic House of Design as an example. This month I will talk about the broad brush strokes, pulling together the master design plan.

Let's get started:

**STEP ONE:** Gather information and determine your preferred style.

I always start by visiting the project site and interviewing the clients to learn their lifestyle, cooking preferences, and desired decor style - Ultramodern? Traditional? Arts and Crafts? Tuscan? Country? Or maybe something in between? At a site visit I get the feel of the architectural

### Talk to me

Tell me about your kitchen remodel experience. What weird little problem or issue ended up resulting in your complete overhauling of the space? Come on, we have all picked out a new pillow and ended up with a complete remodel. E-mail me at BasiaMcClane@aol.com.

space for a new kitchen and study the spatial relationship in context with the rest of the home.

With the owners of the House of Design I found that they enjoy entertaining around food, both formally and informally. In fact, their family and friends sometime engage in cooking contests. So

they wanted and needed more appliances than an average kitchen would require.

Their preferred style was sophisticated transitional with a clean, contemporary look.

**INSIDER'S TIP:** You may start preparing this information yourself by writing down all your dreams and wishes for your new kitchen. It is simple if you just tear out photos as you spot them in magazines or jot down notes as you spot ideas online or while watching TV.

**STEP TWO:** Establish design concept.

Having a clear vision helps you set goals and make choices. The design concept should be articulated and mutually understood because it becomes a guiding tool for all ideas, choices and decisions.

My design concept for the design-house kitchen was: create a highly functional kitchen for daily use and culinary entertaining with state-of-the-art materials.



Courtesy of Barbara McClane

The designer placed seating at opposite ends of this kitchen island. This added to the entertainment possibilities in the room, allowing guests to engage those doing the work and yet stay out of the cooking zones.

This kitchen needed to be a versatile space, and architecturally and stylistically compatible with and equal in grandeur to the rest of the home, reflecting the owners' sophisticated lifestyle and taste.

**STEP THREE:** Develop a dynamic functional plan.

This is the stage where I love to collaborate with the owners in the design process and together we come up with creative solutions for the new space plan.

The brainstorming process begins with

reanalyzing the old space, then I begin a "bubble" diagram, a sketch assigning special and functional zones. This eventually leads me to create elaborate design drawings that everybody is happy with.

In this phase we "nail" all the functional needs, assign cooking zones and begin selecting appliances and some major key materials such as cabinetry, flooring and surfaces.

Throughout the design process I enjoy "stepping out of the box," coming up with



Courtesy of Barbara McLane

The designer "stepped out of the box" by placing two large, single-bowl sinks across from each other in the center of the island. The innovative configuration allows several people to do cooking and preparation work at the same time, carrying on conversations and assisting the chef.

something unexpected and unusual – a uniquely fresh solution that becomes a design hallmark for the new and very original kitchen.

In the design house, one challenge was where to place a second sink in a somewhat tight, galley-shaped kitchen. In

### Coming next

Guest columnist Barbara McLane delves deeper into kitchen design in February in our annual kitchen design issue.

the old design, a main triple bowl sink was located in an island.

My solution? A completely new approach to the island. I placed two large, single-bowl sinks across from each other in the center of

the island, creating an amazing dynamic.

This arrangement added extra functionality – several people could do cooking and preparation work at the same time, carrying on conversations and assisting the chef. At opposite ends of the island I placed seating areas. This design solution added to the entertainment possibilities in the kitchen, allowing guests or culinary "judges" to engage those doing the work and yet stay out of the cooking zones.

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