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04.10

Need-driven kitchen design

2010 Market Trends report
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Update on cooking appliances



Need-driven kitchen design

A family's specific needs, not room size, drive kitchen design that maximizes floor space and value

By Rob Heselbarth, editor

ROBERT HIDEY ARCHITECTS

Irvine, Calif.
roberthidey.com

COMPANY STATS

Residential projects: 95 percent
Single-family projects: 80 percent
New construction: 96 percent
Design/Build projects: 98 percent

It's efficiency that drives the design of kitchens by Robert Hidey Architects in Irvine, Calif. And it's not the size of the kitchen that matters most; it's meeting the needs of each family and maximizing floor space that determines customer satisfaction.

As homes become smaller, the needs of the typical family remain the same, requiring those who design kitchens to be creative, says Scott Rivers, RA, CGP, studio director, Robert Hidey and Associates. One of those needs is storage, so Rivers and the team at RHA use every bit of space they can find.

"We've tucked storage space under stairs, in corners of cabinets, and have been pretty creative at using finding space to store things," Rivers says. "We've even created hidden storage such as a small pantry with a door that

opens to a more expansive pantry behind it. Unused ceiling space can also be turned into a storage area."

Most of the kitchens designed by RHA feature islands because of their versatility. As families use the kitchen for eating, studying, holding meetings and generally as a gathering place, an island serves many purposes, Rivers adds, such as a place to eat, store things, prepare food and do homework. "The kitchen is now the hub of the home so we make sure it's accessible and adjacent to all other living spaces," he says.

More than kitchens

RHA is a full-service architecture firm built on home design, with an emphasis on and respect for traditional styles both in aesthetics



In a large kitchen like this, space maximization isn't as critical as it is in a smaller kitchen.

and detail. Love for traditional style is meshed with contemporary layout including open floor plans and multiuse spaces. "We also pride ourselves in creating luxurious accommodations for the master suite, great amenities such as wine storage, and what we call the super laundry room. We also focus on ensuring ample storage space especially as it relates to

entry points. We're bringing back mud rooms because we find them quite useful where kids are coming in through the garage. This way they have their launch point in the house, and then we like to provide one more formal launch point in addition to the mud room," Rivers explains.

Not a full-fledged design/build firm in the traditional sense, RHA does not perform construction, but it will get involved in planning. "So in the sense that we are involved in construction from the early stages of planning and throughout completion, we practice design/build," Rivers says. "Formal education for architects trains you to work with the building contractor, and be involved right from the beginning from site planning through construction documents and cost analysis. Supervision of the project during construction is also part of the deal."

Benefits of being so involved in a project is the attention to followthrough and not forcing contractors to try and interpret what a designer meant with a particular design element. "In the execution of those details, we want to be present and involved. Oftentimes we become the interior designer, or even the landscape architect. And through the design/build approach, when the contractor is onboard earlier in the process and dealing with a tight budget and

About the cover project

ISLAND

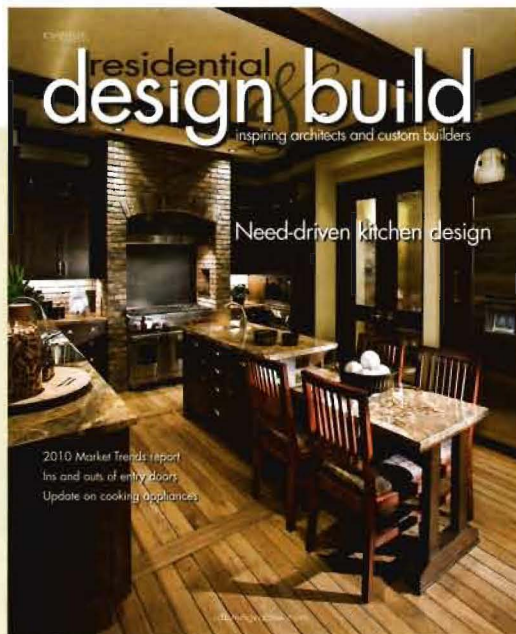
When looking at the kitchen on the cover of this issue, one observation might be that the island and connected table are too narrow. Scott Rivers explains that space requirements change with each family for which RHA designs. "Yes, the island is narrow, but it allows the overall footprint of the kitchen to be smaller but still deliver the functionality an island provides. The family is getting more value for the floor area, and is not compromising on functionality," he explains.

COUNTERS

Another conclusion one might make upon looking at the cover is there's not enough counter space. Again, Rivers insists counter-space needs change with each family. "Not every family is looking for the most expansive countertops they can get. Instead, they're looking for the most value for the floor area. When you look at an old farmhouse and shaker-style kitchens, they feature just the right amount of surface space a family needed; no more, no less. We try to do that here."

FLOORING

The pattern of the wood flooring in this kitchen reflects that of the ceiling which allows the island to float within it, Rivers says. "It's traditional tongue-and-groove with a clear stain to reveal the grain, creating a clean, contemporary look. We call it refined rustic."



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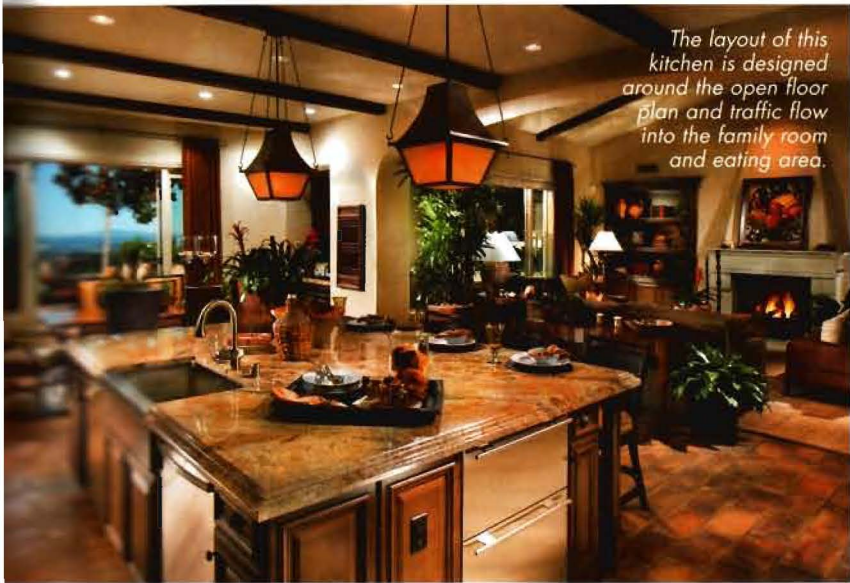
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COVER PROJECT STATS

Location: Durango
Home size: 3,320 s.f.
Cost: \$2 million
Photo: Christopher Marona Photography

MATERIALS

This kitchen also features a balance of materials, Rivers notes. "You'll notice no one material overwhelms you. The entire wall is not in stone. We want to select materials with different hues, different textures and reflective qualities, and use them together. We feel each material was appropriate to its task."



The layout of this kitchen is designed around the open floor plan and traffic flow into the family room and eating area.



Above: Guests can hang out using their own counter space while not disturbing any food preparation that might take place on the countertop below.

level of cost, it's important to be involved in early," Rivers says.

"When we take on a project our approach is personalized, so we assign a team leader who remains a constant throughout the project. It adds to the success, having that continuity," he adds.

Leadership continuity also keeps clients happy, which can be challenging when their design ideas differ from what RHA believes makes the most sense. "There's a way to work through that. You as the designer have a responsibility to know how your client's family lives and functions, and, for example, pre-

pare food in the kitchen. Some clients insist on a galley kitchen but we try to show them the benefit of an island kitchen. We work through it together, being a resource for them as architects should be. At the least, make sure your clients are making educated decisions," Rivers explains. ▀



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