

small spaces



Open response

Working with constraining environments, these projects optimize space, light and function to create clean-lined, efficient kitchens



Natural presence

The warmth of wood meets the cool of pristine white surfaces in this bright, breezy, and welcoming upstairs family kitchen

As the hub of the modern home, the kitchen has to be light, welcoming, and offer plenty of room to move. However, when available space is limited, the options include borrowing from nearby areas or evoking a sense of spaciousness through color and tone.

For this contemporary kitchen, architect Lindy Small followed both these design paths. Originally, this house, with spectacular views of the bay, was dark and broken into small rooms with an inefficient circulation flow, says Small.

“As part of the wider remodel, the owners wanted a large, open-plan living space with an

airy presence. So there had to be plenty of natural light and adequate cross ventilation.”

Small gained additional space for the new kitchen in two ways. First, a double height void, rising from the level below, was floored over – freeing up a corner of the room. Second, the architect removed two constraining walls between the kitchen and dining volumes.

“We added large windows at the rear of the kitchen, a corner window in the dining area and enhanced the indoor-outdoor flow. In another move, we raised the ceiling in both areas and installed ash panels on the living room ceiling.

Preceding pages and above left: Raised ceilings, new windows and a two-tone palette of white and wood give this kitchen a light-filled, expansive presence.

Top and above: The new kitchen contains a wealth of storage – both in the floor-to-ceiling volume and in the perimeter and island cabinetry. Long, slender cabinet handles and a prominent grain in the wood both emphasize a horizontality that makes the kitchen seem larger than it is.



Above: A deep composite wood bartop screens cooking clutter while new kitchen windows provide natural light and cross ventilation.

Story by Charles Moxham
Photography by Tim Maloney

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This evokes a more formal feel,” says Small.

The sense of space was optimized in other ways, too. A food pantry, extensive storage and most appliances are contained in a single large cabinet volume set to one side of the kitchen.

“Setting the cabinetry to one side, as one block, keeps the heart of the kitchen clutter-free. It also means daylight from the rear windows penetrates right through into the living spaces.”

A warm, natural palette and contrasting colors add to the generous feel. The substantial side cabinet is in European walnut while the living room cabinetry is in a similar but lighter

species, zebrawood, which also features in other areas of the home.

The darkly grained walnut surfaces anchor the floor-to-ceiling kitchen cabinet, and the finish offers a dramatic juxtaposition to the gleaming white two-pac finish on the perimeter cabinets and island. This contrast makes the kitchen seem even lighter, and so bigger. The island bar and oak floors extend the warm wood tones.

The stairs were also remodeled as part of the project. In another space-saving move, Small designed built-in zebrawood casework that doubles as furniture and a stair guardrail.

Architect: Lindy Small AIA, Lindy Small Architecture (Orinda, CA)
Builder: Bilbao Construction
Cabinet company: Bulthaup
Cabinetry: Bulthaup, composite, white; full-height cabinets in European walnut
Hardware, storage systems, faucets: Bulthaup
Countertop: Bulthaup, composite
Flooring: Oak
Doors and windows: Blomberg
Dining furniture: Living room Zebrawood cabinet by Marc Waidelich
Kitchen sink: Stainless steel
Oven, cooktop, microwave, dishwasher, waste disposal: Miele
Refrigeration: Sub-Zero

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Above: Information to come



Above: The perimeter countertops run straight up to the window with no backsplash to avoid obstructing natural light in this area.