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KITCHEN

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WELL-STAGED

A couple dish out food for thought by adding contemporary spice to a recipe for an old-fashioned kitchen.

THINK YOU LIKE TO ENTERTAIN? MEET SALLY AND Gordon Atkinson, two self-proclaimed foodies who wine and dine as many as 40 people at a time in their San Francisco home. When the couple renovated their 1890s Victorian, interior designer Steven Miller transformed the U-shape upper-level kitchen into an L with an island—and a livelier atmosphere for dinner parties. “It has a theater aspect,” Sally says. “Not like we put on a cooking show, but it’s a place to sit and set up as a bar or a buffet so everyone can come in and gather around while Gordon and I cook.”

Their kitchen grew about 3 feet on each end, swallowing portions of neighboring rooms to become an elongated space that better conforms to the home’s narrow width. Barriers between the kitchen and the dining room were lessened as well, improving traffic flow and smoothing the transition from a high-function, casually elegant place for preparing meals to a more formal atmosphere in which to serve and enjoy them.

For a new look to go with the new configuration, Sally assembled a materials mix that respects the home’s old age as well as its users’ modern needs, avoiding a “matchy” look at every turn. Sally doesn’t care for otherwise beautifully done kitchens where “everything is uniform,” she says. “I wanted it to feel less monolithic and more a combination of things.”

For example, Sally paired a furniture-style island with a circular table. Resembling a sideboard, the island has elegant glass doors on its more visible dining-room side and typical island storage on its hardworking kitchen side. The attached circular table rises above island height and becomes a bar during cocktail parties. “The table is

The gleam of metal surfaces leaves a modern edge on the vintage-minded kitchen in Sally and Gordon Atkinson’s Victorian home. The island is center stage for the love-to-cook couple’s crowd-pleasing culinary theater.

the same species of wood as the cabinets, but it has a slightly distressed finish,” Miller says. “It’s well-coordinated, but not necessarily matching.”

Surfaces suggest graceful aging, in keeping with the character of an 1890s home. “We didn’t want the kitchen to look so new because it would have been a total disconnect from the rest of the house,” Miller





in the details

Old patterns and patinas take on new forms, putting an exclamation point on period style.



1 Both the glass-front and solid-wood cherry cabinet doors boast cross-shape Arts and Crafts patterns that echo those found in the windows. Interior lights and cherry beaded-board backing lend design drama to items on display.

2 The zinc island surface packs the design punch of stainless steel, but conveys greater character and warmth. "It's not a slick, cold edge," Sally Atkinson says.

3 Stainless-steel backsplash tiles offer today's take on vintage-looking brickwork or subway tiles while reinforcing the metallic theme established by the appliances, island top, and pendants.

4 The boundary between the kitchen and the formal dining room is marked by the meeting of hardwood flooring and retro-looking linoleum in a checkerboard pattern. One of the island's beefy furniture-style legs crosses the dividing line.

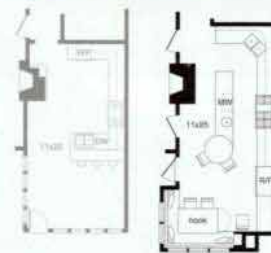
says. At the same time, prominent stainless steel, zinc, and other metals add contemporary zest that frees the space from the perils of period-correct rigidity.

Limestone on the perimeter countertops—chosen for its warm, weathered appearance—is embedded with spiral shells and slices of fossils, much to the delight of the couple's three young children. The zinc top on the island will develop an attractive patina, as will the linoleum floor, which "just gets better with time," Miller says. "We chose materials that age well so that the aging would be part of the design rather

than something [the Atkinsons] would always have to fight."

To complement the home's vintage elements, the Atkinsons embossed the ceiling with Victorian-style wallpaper, patterned the cabinetry after the Arts and Crafts designs in the windows, and opted for a backsplash of small-scale subway tiles. "It's a deliberate attempt to go back in time with materials that will fare better and last longer," Sally says.

The result is a kitchen that entertains notions of the past as it entertains guests of the present. **KHM**



BEFORE

AFTER

Changing the work core from a U to an L led to a more livable layout. This end of the island opens to a sunny eating area and includes a table of the same rich cherrywood and furniture quality as the cabinetry.

Resources begin on page 138.

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