

LOOKING UP

FOUR KITCHEN
DESIGNS TAP
INTO THE CEILING

BY EVA DITLER

Overhead treatments add personality, infuse drama and create cohesion in this quartet of kitchens.

BEAM TEAM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PREVIEWFIRST

Hints of butterscotch gold dapple a Santaluz kitchen redo with creamy delight. Designer Cheryl Hamilton-Gray transformed the 17-year-old, cherry-dated space into a bright, happy room. The new design meshes with the remodeled home's nod to a traditional California Mediterranean theme. But perhaps more important to a homeowner who relishes chef's duties, the facelift added function—and light.

"I love to cook," Alison Nutt says. "I cook dinner for my family every day. I enjoy being creative with food, and I change the menu up constantly. I also do a lot of entertaining here and love to figure out recipes and watch people's reactions when they get a good meal."

Before Cheryl came along, however, Alison was whipping up delights in the dark. During the day, she managed with the help of an expansive skylight over the island. At night, visibility for food preparations was a different story.

"That skylight looked like a big hole in the ceiling," Cheryl says. "To make it more aesthetic, we restructured soffits to center it. Then we flanked the skylight with corbelled beams that echo similar beams running throughout the home. The beams added character to a bland ceiling opening



and allowed strategic pendant placement to provide island illumination at night."

Carefully calculated, the soffit redesign also "lands" the posts that Cheryl used to embellish the cooktop area—a kitchen highlight behind the furniture-like island.

"That's the *pièce de résistance*," Cheryl says. "We redesigned the architecture around the hood to highlight the pewter shaft and provide a recessed backsplash area, which we tiled throughout. We added a simple geometric marble mosaic in coordinating colors above the four-foot range."

"The new industrial-style range with six burners and side-by-side ovens is awesome for someone who cooks," Alison adds. "We had double ovens before, but they were so small that you couldn't even fit a cookie sheet in them."

The range got bigger, the refrigerator smaller. The previous, double-sided Sub-Zero appliance hogged much of Alison's workspace. Cheryl suggested a split with a slim freezer placed on one side of the kitchen and a smaller refrigerator placed across the way. Resembling the new glazed cabinetry, both pieces seamlessly meld with built-in units that organize dishware, pots and pans, chef's knives, small appliances and a lineup of Alison's favorite cookbooks.

Cheryl worked the new space plan within the confines of the kitchen footprint but reconfigured pantry walls and door access to provide a more practical storage area. A beverage station hides behind the stove wall. A table and built-in bench, placed beneath a long window that looks out to the garden, create a dining area adjacent to the kitchen. To the side of the table, a Dutch door allows ocean breezes to mingle with the delightful aromas of Alison's cooking.

"My latest loves are a vegetarian cookbook and an air fryer, which is fun and easy to cook fish in," Alison says. She pauses and then adds, "Of course, it goes without saying that I also love my new kitchen. It's a cook's dream."

Above: Cheryl Hamilton-Gray created a focal point by the range with embellished trim for the hood and carved corbel brackets. A strategic soffit system redesign allowed for posts around the cooktop area.

Facing page, clockwise from top: Tile flooring, laid out in a herringbone pattern, looks like wood. It runs throughout the residence and, says homeowner Alison Nutt, "it changed the whole house." • A beverage station with shelving for cups and saucers, glasses and teapots includes an espresso machine, wine cooler and plenty of storage. • Another designated area houses dinnerware and cookbooks.

