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A soothing combination of natural materials and wood tones, this Albuquerque kitchen looks like it's part of the scenery outside. Designed around a center island, the space now boasts two sinks, multiple seating options, and mountain view—capturing windows.

fab four

a quartet of innovative kitchens designed for families and foodies

Ask anyone about their kitchen, and they'll probably tell you they either love it or hate it. As critical as it is to the home—as not only the cooking area but the de facto gathering spot for family and visitors—the kitchen may be the room that benefits most from considered design. The fanciest appliances aren't helpful, for example, if not arranged in a functional way. Those pristine white cabinets you've always longed for? They might not be the best choice for your rambunctious family of young children. Read on to see how several homeowners married their aesthetic preferences and practical needs to create magazine-worthy kitchens.



a new view

To live surrounded by the foothills, with the Sandia Mountains at the door and forever views of the sparkling city to the west was how one Albuquerque family wanted to wake up every morning. Five years after buying a home in their dream location, they decided it was time to make the indoors match the magnificence of their natural surroundings. The interiors of the home, from the 1980s Southwestern kitsch era, were crying out for an update.

"We were keeping the cabinets together with Velcro and duct tape, and we finally decided to redo the kitchen and baths," the homeowners explain.

On the recommendation from some neighbors, the family hired Diego M. Ruiz of Diego Handcrafted Homes. They knew great changes were afoot the day Ruiz sat in their old kitchen looking at the wall, outstretched his arms and exclaimed, "Windows!" Interior designer Laura Myers, who frequently partners with Ruiz and came to work on this project, also saw Ruiz's vision. Taking advantage of the scenery meant sacrificing upper cabinets, but the wall of glass was well worth it. "We used very warm, organic materials against a contemporary canvas," Myers says of the design.

Toasty woods, employed ceiling to floor, are lightened by the historic Anasazi feel of the dry-stacked stone and the modernity of the sleek stone banquette. A copper hood and live edge wood countertop add a subtly rustic note. Still Southwestern, but imbued with a sense of organic modernism, the new kitchen draws the foothills in, bringing a family's dream to life.

Left: Every member of the family, including the four-legged one, appreciates the breakfast nook with its built-in bench seating. Corner picture windows now offer 180-degree views of the Sandias.

resources

Designer/Builder

Diego Handcrafted Homes
diegoandcraftedhomes.com

Interior Designer

Laura Myers Interiors

Appliances

Builders Source Appliance Gallery
builderssource.com

Cabinetry

Woodlife Custom Cabinetry

Granite Countertops

Santa Fe Granite

Metal Fabrication

More Than Gates

Sink & Fixtures

Ferguson Bath, Lighting
& Kitchen Gallery
ferguson.com

Windows

Pella Window & Door
pellasw.com

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Materials in the kitchen such as the stacked stone walls were duplicated in the living room (seen straight through) and other spaces that were part of a larger remodel.



resources

Cabinets, Counters & Built-in Furniture

Kathy Jackson, Marc
Coan Designs

Flooring & Tile Supplier

The Tile Shop

Remodeler

Ben Nothrop, B.Y.N. Design

Table & Chairs

El Paso Imports of Albuquerque

Table Lighting

Creative Lighting of Albuquerque

Tile Installation

Sheri Crider, SCA, LLC

Above: Not one square inch is wasted in Maureen Horton's tiny kitchen, which uses white lower cabinetry and translucent upper cabinets to give the illusion of extra space. A swath of lime green Caesarstone gives the kitchen its fun kick.

Right: Softening shiny surfaces and contemporary finishes is a rustic dining table surrounded by Southwestern chairs and benches. Colorful pendant lighting draws the eye upward for appreciation of the space as a whole.

compact cooking

"I saw this space online," Maureen Horton says with a grin. "It was straight-up 1960s with low ceilings. It was a disaster." Naturally, she had to have it. The 875-square-foot Albuquerque condo she and her husband, Joe Bentley, purchased two years ago—sight unseen—was a diamond in the rough. Planning their relocation from Texas, Horton and Bentley bought the condo and handled the details from Dallas, barely visiting the site between closing on the deal and moving in.

Undertaking a remodel from afar didn't worry them, though. They had two aces in their pocket: a Dallas-based contractor who flew to Albuquerque to act as his clients' liaison (Horton did most of the design), and Albuquerque-based Marc Coan Designs, the kitchen design/build firm that executed the plan. "Maureen had a vision of what she wanted as soon as she bought the place," says Kathy Jackson of Marc Coan Designs, adding, "I would call it 'New Mexico funk' because it's so different!" Horton thinks of her kitchen as "modern eclectic."

Every space in the new kitchen is completely functional—hyper-functional, in fact. "You have to be smart about space when there is less of it," says Horton, who is an avid chef. The flat stovetop doubles as extra counter space, deep toe kicks visually float the cabinets, and a small under-counter refrigerator uses little space while encouraging fresh, almost daily, shopping. A cleverly hidden, multipurpose pantry neatly hides a wide array of cooking necessities and the laundry appliances.

Gorgeous lime green Caesarstone countertops pop against the white cabinets and black, white, and gray glass tile mosaic backsplash, adding to the cheerfulness of the compact space. Horton, who originally hails from Santa Clara, New Mexico, wasn't shy about using bright Southwestern colors and pairing recycled wood furniture against a thoroughly modern gallery of artwork. Durable porcelain tile mimics a wood floor, while a shiny hood amps up the modernity of the space.

Of her petite and peppy home, Horton says, "This is what I dreamed of as a little girl."



wholly unique

What do you get when you cross a detailed, do-it-yourself engineer with a perfectionist homebuilder? An incomparable kitchen with intrigue in every detail. That's what homeowners Neil and Susan Davies achieved in partnership with local homebuilding legend John Lowe of Panorama Homes.

Formerly residents of the East Mountains, the Davies wanted to move closer to Albuquerque without giving up the quietude of the Sandias. Sandia Heights proved a splendid compromise. The perfect lot, however, happened not to have the perfect house, so they razed it and started over.

Of particular note in the new build is the stunning kitchen, painstakingly designed by Neil and expertly crafted by Panorama. "Sometimes when we get with a customer, they start off with no idea what they want," says Lowe. Not the case here. Neil had clear plans for his kitchen and was intimately involved throughout the project, even installing the aluminum reveals at the bases of the walls himself.

The color and pattern choices in the kitchen are arresting and powerful. The mango orange of the soffit and island grabs the eye first, but is quickly subdued by the striking movement in the granite backsplash. "We like contemporary, but not sterile," says Neil. "We wanted something bright. Indeed, the wavy, three-dimensionally machined medium-density fiberboard (MDF) in the barstool area, also painted orange, brings fire and texture to floor level.

Unable to source existing products to match his vision, Neil custom-made the bamboo cabinetry and pantry doors himself. In keeping with the clean, flat surfaces, he elected to give the upper cabinet a single, oversized door, which swings up. Oven stacks on either side of the fridge serve as seven-foot-tall pillars, finished with black glass.

"I'm really pleased to have put the team together that was able to meet Neil's requirements," says Lowe. "The home is unparalleled."

resources

Builder

Panorama Homes
panoramahomes.com

Appliances & Fixtures

Ferguson Bath, Kitchen
& Lighting Gallery
ferguson.com

Countertops

Supplier: Arizona Tile

Fabrication & Installation:

Strahle Tile & Granite
strahletilegranite.com

Granite Backsplash

Strahle Tile & Granite
strahletilegranite.com



Neil and Sue Davies' one-of-a-kind kitchen is a mesmerizing combination of patterns, textures, and materials: stainless steel and dark glass appliances, bamboo cabinetry, and highly patterned granite, pulled together with citrus tones in the drop ceiling and 3-D fiberboard.