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Happy days

Marmoleum surfaces, subway tiles and traditional booth seats enhance the fifties diner look of this family kitchen

Many homeowners request a restaurant-quality kitchen, but not so many want to re-create a fifties diner. But that is precisely what the owner of this new kitchen wanted, say architects Emily Little and Paul Clayton of Emily Little Architects.

"The owner liked the idea of a kitchen for a short-order cook – a place where she could provide diner-style service for the family," says Little.

The new kitchen was part of an extensive remodeling program that created a large family home from two former duplexes. As the kitchen occupies the original garage space, there was plenty of depth to provide a series of separate work and seating areas. These include a traditional dining booth with bench seats, a curved bar, pantry, and separate food preparation area – similar to the back-of-house facilities in a restaurant.

The materials, notably the stainless steel countertops, white subway tiles and the Marmoleum floor, table and bar tops, also reference the fifties diner concept.

"For this project, we specified dark orange Marmoleum inset with yellow circles," says Little. "We wanted to create a fun atmosphere – this is a very lively family kitchen. The simple geometric elements repeat a theme that appears elsewhere in the house."

Little says Marmoleum was also specified for its environmental status, as it is a natural linseed-oil based product with no off-gassing.

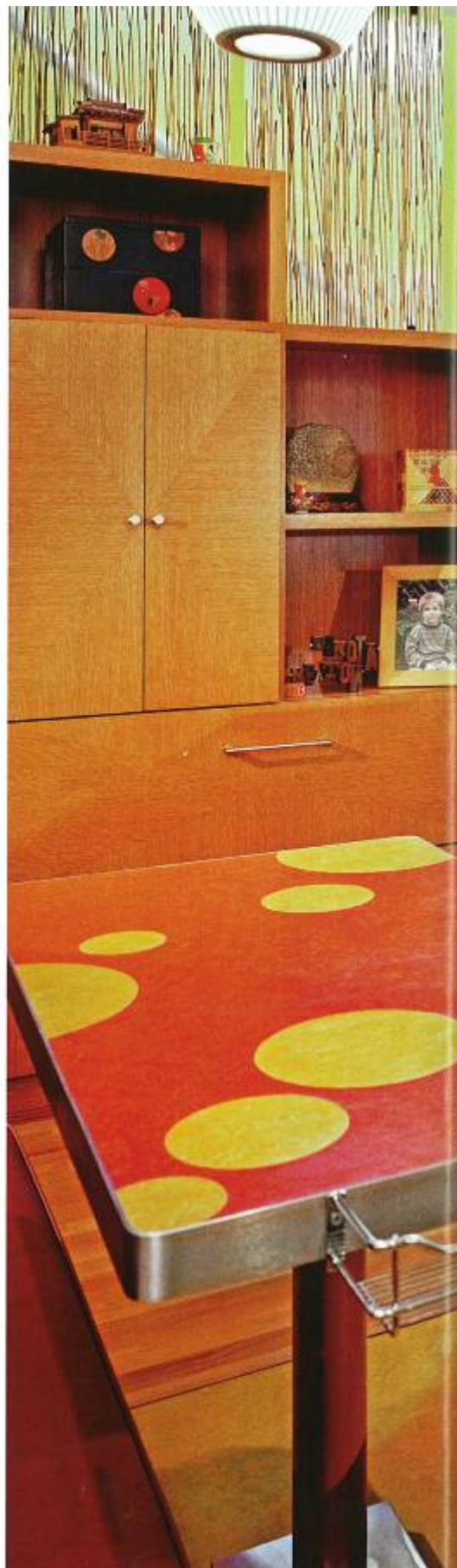
Another influence in the design and materials was the owner's interest in Japanese culture. Simple maple cabinetry features in the main kitchen area, while a Japanese tansu-style cabinet in front of the stairs has rift-sawn, book-matched white oak doors.

Overhead display cabinets have orange-painted interiors, reminiscent of a Japanese lacquer box. Again, these were designed to enliven the kitchen. Similarly, colorful doors on a microwave cabinet repeat the colors of the walls and furniture, further enhancing the whimsical look.



Left: Orders please – a colorful dining booth reflects the fifties diner influence on this new family kitchen. The kitchen incorporates several workstations, including a food preparation area that functions just like a back-of-house catering facility.

Above: Illuminated, orange-painted cabinet interiors further enhance the kitchen's lively look.





Architect: Emily Little, AIA
– principal, Paul Clayton, AIA
– project architect, Emily Little
Architects (now Clayton Levy &
Little Architects, Austin, TX)
Doors and windows:
Aluminum-clad wood from
Kolbe & Kolbe
Flooring: Marmoleum; red oak
Cabinetry: Maple
Tansu cabinet and bar front:
Rift-sawn white oak
Countertops: Stainless steel
Marmoleum, sealed with paste
wax and installed by Fashion
Floors
Wall tiles: White subway tiles
from Paltie; Häfele rack system
Paints: Benjamin Moore
Screen on stairs: Translucent
glass panels with imbedded
reeds by Lumicor
Stair railing: Hand-forged iron
by Todd Campbell Fibers
Studios
Kitchen sinks: Franke main
sink; Elkay preparation sink
Faucets: Grohe
Water dispenser: Insta-Hot
Range and ventilation: Wolf
Refrigerator: Sub-Zero

Story by Colleen Hawkes
Photography by
Thomas McConnell

Facing page top: The window
seat incorporates a Japanese
lattice screen, which conceals
a small dog kennel.

**Facing page lower, and
left:** A large cabinet in front
of the door functions as a
launch pad – a place for the
children's shoes, backpacks
and messages. In keeping
with the fifties look, the table
top has a stainless steel edge
with rounded corners.



Well connected

By creating visual and physical pathways between spaces – and through the repeated use of a linear motif – this kitchen becomes a central node to its adjoining rooms

From the outside, a design that is aesthetically pleasing may seem successful. However, creating flow of movement and connections between external and internal spaces is just as important as good looks.

Constructing pathways for light and people to travel, as well as facilitating the enjoyment of views, were the goals of designer Richard Landon when planning this kitchen. Landon



says the existing room, which adjoined the family and dining rooms, was an awkward size.

"The original footprint of the kitchen did not provide enough width for an island, which the homeowners had requested. Opposite the kitchen in the family room a set of French doors caused some problems in terms of furniture placement."

By replacing the French

doors with windows and installing a new single door, better furniture placement and easier flow of movement is obtained.

"This allowed for a peninsula to angle out into the family room, providing seating and enough clearance for a longer island. Now the homeowners can sit at the counter and greet visitors arriving at the front door," says Landon.

An ornate sideboard, which crowded the dining table, was relocated to the main entry hall leading to the family room.

"To keep the sideboard visible, we opened up the wall between the hall and the dining room," says the designer.

In place of the sideboard is a double-sided cabinet. In the kitchen, this consists of a cavity for the refrigerator and ovens, which allows more

These pages: This kitchen is closely linked to the adjoined family and dining rooms, through an open doorway to the dining room and a peninsula seating area that extends into the family room. Countertops are stainless steel in the work areas and a more comfortable zebra wood in the seating area. The island countertop is tough Pyrolays.



Above: The island is designed to add a sense of femininity to the linear nature of the kitchen. The legs resemble stiletto heels, and the drawers feature delicate pull handles. Adding to this effect is the gentle curve of the range hood. The oversized drawers feature a larger central drawer to emphasize the horizontal, in contrast to the repeated vertical lines. Toekick drawers add extra storage space. The sink is custom made with a sunken drainboard to hide dishes.

width for the island. On the dining side, an internally lit cabinet displays glassware.

Above this cabinet, a slice of the wall has been left open. This allows for a view of the chandelier in the dining room, adding atmosphere at night. It also enables sunlight to be shared between the two rooms, says Landon.

"Sunlight from two different directions is proven to lift your

mood. To accomplish this, and to allow for a taller homeowner to see the outside view, the tops of the kitchen windows have been raised into the rim joist of the floor above."

Echoing the true beam between the family room and kitchen, a decorative beam has been added in the dining entrance. Landon says that small details such as this help to subtly connect the house as a whole.

"There is a grid pattern that can be seen in the windows. This is repeated throughout the kitchen - in the limestone tile flooring and in the design of the cabinet drawers," he says.

A linear pattern is also repeated in the zebrawood island, peninsula and cabinets, and in the reed glass wall covering. To soften the look of these vertical lines, the drawers have a beveled edge.



Designer: Richard Landon, CMKBD, NKBA, Richard Landon Design (Bellevue, WA)

Contractor:

Ashley Remodeling & Construction

Kitchen manufacturer:

Aristocratic Cabinets

Cabinetry: MDF painted in Atrium, zebrawood with American walnut; toekick drawers in Wilsonart Brushed Iron laminate

Tile flooring: Arroyo Blue limestone, from Ambiente Tile, installed with Laticrete SpectraLOCK grout

Wall covering: 3/8" wide reed glass, custom glazed

Countertop: Stainless steel with orbital finish, by Metal Masters; zebrawood by Craft Art; enamelled Lavasone by Pyrolave, sourced by Fine Line Pacific

Lighting: Juno TCR recessed bars, from Seattle Lighting

Kitchen sink: Custom sink, by Metal Masters

Chef's sink: Kohler Undertone/Lyrac
Faucets: Arwa and Arwa-Twin model, from Gemini; Ekay by Arazzo

Cooktops: Wolf

Ventilation: Zephyr

Refrigerator: LG

Coffee system, steam oven, oven, and dishwasher: Miele

Story by Camille Butler

Photography by Jamie Cobeldick

Top: Above: An internally lit cabinet features as a display space for glassware.

Above: The basement below had no natural light source, so glass blocks were integrated into the family room floor. French doors were replaced by two windows and a single door, allowing for an L-shaped seating area, and leaving a spacious pathway through the room. The color palette in all three rooms is chosen to reflect the Seattle environment.