

## KITCHEN OF THE MONTH/PIEDMONT, CALIFORNIA

This kitchen has it all—acres of counter space, a table where the whole family can sit down and eat, and a **big stone fireplace** with a couple of easy chairs. No wonder no one wants to leave PHOTOGRAPHS BY KARYN R. MILLET

Old-fashioned beadboard on the walls and ceiling—not to mention a rustic stone fireplace—warms up a big room. The black leather Harry stools, designed by Christian Liaigre for Holly Hunt, are more urbane. The island is topped with honed Absolute Black granite. Transoms above the double-hung windows quickly cool down the room by letting out the hot air that rises to the ceiling. The combination of recessed and pendant lights on the ceiling offers bright, or more atmospheric, lighting.

## KITCHEN OF THE MONTH

The Bluestar range from Prizer is geared to the professional cook. Astier de Villatte pottery from Sue Fisher King rests on the stainless-steel shelf, underneath a Nicolson Sheffield clock from Restoration Hardware. The stainless-steel sink is by Elkay, and the gooseneck faucet is by Dornbracht. OPPOSITE TOP: The dining table, a vintage piece from Baker, is surrounded by Davis Allen's Andover chairs, a contemporary version of the classic Windsor. The Etruscan-style vase is a family heirloom. The Arris vase on the mantel was designed by Peter Fishel for Pentimento.



**CHRISTINE PITTEL:** *There's something so inviting about a fireplace in the kitchen. It seems like a new idea, opening up the kitchen and turning it into a room, but in those old farmhouses, everything happened around the hearth—you would cook there, eat there, and socialize around it. What was here before?*

**PETER FISHEL:** It was just a small service kitchen, typical for the time. The house is a 1929 Georgian Colonial, an early work by the Bay Area architect William Wurster. I used to make jokes with my wife and three children that for all of us to sit in the kitchen, I had to pull out a bread board.

**So the fireplace and all those windows are part of the new addition?**

Yes. We almost didn't put in the fireplace, because of cost, but it really makes the room. Our architect, Bill Holland, is terrific at planning space, and then I acted as art director—I'm a graphic designer, but I do a lot of interior design work. Bill did the structure, and my wife and I selected the appliances and the finishes.

**What did you choose for the countertops?**

That's Absolute Black granite, honed. We wanted the kitchen to look like something Wurster might have done—he was a great modernist who knew how to use traditional details but kept things pared down—and black granite is a simple, can't-bust-it material. That was important to us, with a lot of kids running around. And with black, you don't have to worry about staining.

**And black looks absolutely beautiful with the creamy limestone floor.**

Limestone makes sense, since we're constantly coming in and out of the yard.



The island also works as a breakfast bar. Egg cups and Star bowls, as well as napkins and silverware, are from Sue Fisher King.



An ogee edge softens the stainless-steel top of the floating island and gives it a more traditional look. OPPOSITE LEFT: The Traulsen commercial refrigerator is unusually deep. Just beyond it, from top to bottom, is a Miele steam oven, convection oven, and warming drawer. OPPOSITE RIGHT: Flowers are arranged in old apothecary jars on a vintage wrought-iron table in the pantry. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES.



We got rid of the old bulky radiators and went with radiant heat under the floor. *What's the deal with that cabinet on wheels?*

Originally, Bill designed the island as a peninsula, but that seemed to cut off the room, so I pulled off the connecting piece and created this floating island. You can roll it over to the stationary island if you need more work space, or push it up to the French doors and use it as a bar or service cart to the outside.

*When your fridge has glass doors, do you feel compelled to keep everything neat?*

All right, I'll admit I rearrange the shelves. The beauty is you don't always have to open the door to see if what you want is in there. Each decision about appliances was a balancing act. For me, everything is based on looks, but my wife is the practical one who had to vet all my choices because she has to cook with this stuff.

*I notice you chose undermounted stainless-steel sinks, which look very sleek.*

Very practical, too. Stainless steel doesn't chip, and it's easier to brush things off the counter into the sink when you don't have that lip. We picked gooseneck faucets because they're high enough to get a tall pasta pot underneath.

*Seems like you've got the best of both worlds—state-of-the-art appliances in a room that still has a homey, old-fashioned look.*

The original pantry counters were made of wood, and my wife was adamant that they stay that way in the new, expanded version. She brings the warmth back into things, whereas I, left alone, can be a little slick. And now we're all reaping the benefits of our new kitchen. She was always a good cook, but now she's a great one. ●

STYLED BY GRANT GIBSON

We saved the original pantry, rather than knocking down all the walls and incorporating it into the big room. **It's nice to keep the flavor of an old house,** which has all those little rooms for specific purposes.