



## 2

### Center of Attention

A dab of sea blue on glass mosaic tile echoes the unobstructed ocean view just outside Timothy and Merrilee Ekstrom's new kitchen in Point Loma. The reflection of color is striking but the main concept for the redo of this contemporary space was to create the kitchen as the heart of the home.

"The kitchen is an essential point of gathering for the house," says designer Esteban Lopez. "We were able to use the kitchen as the nucleus for the house — that was one of the key factors that the clients really wanted."

The home is U-shaped with an open-

entry courtyard on the east leading to a series of French doors through which is the centrally located kitchen. On the west, beyond another set of glass doors, is an expansive ipe deck that looks out to the ocean. The kitchen is flanked by the living room on the south, leading to a wing of bedrooms, and the dining room on the north, also leading to a wing of bedrooms.

"The Ekstroms have two young children and do a lot entertaining," says architect Vince Stroop. "They wanted to be able to socialize with guests from any part of the home."





Although the kitchen embraces a modern style with clean, simple lines, the environment is family-friendly and casual. Materials were chosen with the children in mind. The strongest presence in the kitchen is the three-inch-thick charcoal-black custom concrete, poured on site to form the 36-inch-deep farm-style sink, washboard and countertops.

*continued on page 55*

**Opposite:** A soft palette draws emphasis on the Venetian stucco fireplace wall used in the kitchen and living room of this Point Loma home.

**Above:** All palm wood veneered cabinetry was custom made for the space and all drawers and doors have soft-closing hinges. To create a sense of volume, structural beams are exposed and over-scaled lighting was used.

**Right:** As well as housing the cooktop, the custom concrete island serves as a casual community table when the more formal dining room is not in use.





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*continued from page 51*

"I wanted an interesting wood for the cabinets that blended well with the countertops and that had horizontal graining to tie in with the horizontal line of the ocean," says Merrilee. Custom cabinets veneered in a dark palm wood fit the bill.

"For the flooring we chose a very soft limestone-like tile, which is actually a ceramic tile, that echoes the colors of the sand and beach," says Lopez. "It's a close representation to Portuguese limestone. We increased interest in this space by using the tile in the kitchen and doing a running bond in the living-room space and down the entrance corridor. Then we took some CaesarStone, which is usually used for countertops, and used those for stair treads from the living room into the kitchen area. To create a change in scale, we did a modified basketweave in the kitchen, which leads down into the master-bedroom quarter and into the dining room as well."

Highlighting the space is a counter-height fireplace wrapped with chocolate-brown Venetian stucco. The fireplace, which serves both the kitchen and living room, is accented with stainless-steel surrounds that match the stainless-steel hardware on cabinetry.

Another focal point in the kitchen is the decorative beam ceiling.

"The architecture of the space is very barn-like," says Stroop. "It's a simple rectangle with open-exposed beam work made of kiln-dried Douglas fir."

Overscaled pendant lighting was installed between the beams. "The lighting is glass and powder-coated metal in a very shiny black to create some unification with the countertop and some dialog with the cabinets," says Lopez.

As Merrilee puts it: "Everything works together to create a clean, simple, really comfortable space. This kitchen speaks for itself." ∞

*Where to find it, page 142*



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