



The design of Suzanne and Lewis Cooper's kitchen changes with their needs.

# The HEART of the HOME

*Kitchen design is a mirror of your life*

By Jacque Crouse  
Photographs by Robert Matta

The ideal of the perfect kitchen constantly changes and evolves. The perfect kitchen of the 1960s, or even the 1990s, isn't in tune with lifestyles today. Chances are that in designing or remodeling a kitchen now, green technology might be a consideration. Convenience is high on the list of priorities for many busy families. And a serious cook wants space for some serious tools. On the flip side, amid all the new technology and cool gadgetry, kitchens today are harkening back to the days when families and friends routinely congregated, laughed, ate and drank there.

Susanne Cooper has remodeled the kitchen of her Alamo Heights home twice. The first time was to change the size of the original, which was built in 1927. The second overhaul took place about eight years ago and "I really got to make the kitchen I always wanted," she says.

That was a place where family and friends could "gather comfortably, so I wasn't isolated while I was cooking," Cooper says.

You'll find the same feature in kitchens from small to large. Few, however, will be as magnificent as the Burdick Inspiration Home in Huntington of Shavano Park, where the kitchen flows to a nearby family room, an indoor/outdoor gaming area and the pool area outdoors (which has its own outdoor kitchen).

"A lot of kitchens are becoming multiple areas, with large parties and small gatherings spilling out from there into family areas and other space like the outdoors," says John Bloodsworth, publicist for Burdick Homes. "The Inspiration Home was built so that the entertaining would flow that way."

People who are creating a dream kitchen should keep in mind what their budget is and how to strike a balance between finances and sound design, says Amy Kerr, a spokeswoman for Wolf Sub-Zero appliances.

"I think one thing that has changed in trends in kitchen remodeling and design is that people used to really go for the nicest, highest-end cabinets and granite countertops," she says. "More people seem





to be picking the things they are willing to spend on, and it isn't so much cabinets and countertops anymore."

She says people are trying to attain a balance of quality rather than spending top dollar on one area and cutting back in another. People now often pick mid-range cabinets and countertops and invest more in the appliances they really want.

"I see people with a \$250,000 or \$300,000 home picking Wolf and Sub-Zero, which are high-end appliances," she says. "It doesn't have to be the most expensive model to make a big difference in a kitchen."

Karla Toye and her husband decided to remodel the kitchen of their Alamo Heights home a couple of years ago. Toye, a food stylist, said they wanted to expand the area so it was more open with a living and dining area included.

They also expanded into part of the backyard to add space and made huge windows to enjoy the view into the newly landscaped yard. She added a commercial stove with gas burners, a griddle and electric ovens. She also splurged on a Heath ceramic backsplash. But there was one more feature she had planned.

Toye really wanted a wood-burning stove with a spit roaster, but changed her mind when she saw a pizza oven in the kitchen of the bed and breakfast where they stayed in Canada. She opted to add one to her new kitchen. "You can do dinner in there, breakfast, heat food, and make pizzas," she says. "I really love it."

"The kitchen is a really personal space," Cooper says. So, you should "really think through how you use a kitchen and how you cook."

One way is to visit other houses, including the \$3.5 million Inspiration Home where people can see great design and top-notch appliances, and then decide what features are most important to them.

The appliances and design of the Inspiration Home's



At the Burdick Inspiration Home, kitchen features include a built-in deluxe coffee maker (top) and a faucet over the stove, so filling large pots is easier than ever, as Pam Burdick demonstrates (below). The home also offers an extensive outdoor entertaining area with pool, fire place and grilling area.

“A kitchen is always a work-in-progress”



Suzanne Cooper, second from left, entertains her best friends, known as “the Ya-Yas,” in her kitchen.

kitchen promote both elegance and an easygoing philosophy of entertainment. The equipment and the way it is arranged are conducive to the comfort of both the cook and cook's guests. That was due in large part to the input of Pam Burdick, gourmet cook, designer and wife of builder Art Burdick. On one wall, there is a shelf area with a microwave drawer (push a button and it opens, push again and it closes); above it, a built-in coffee maker; and above that, a television. A plant embellishes the top shelf.

“I made it that way so that the microwave and coffee maker were not only accessible, but so that anyone who likes to cook they way I do could watch the Food Channel while they work,” she says.

On one side of this area for shelves and built-ins sits a Sub-Zero refrigerator with doors incorporated with the rest of the cabinetry and on the other side is the matching freezer. Sub-Zero invented dual refrigeration that means even in units that are all in one, the air from the freezer does not circulate into the refrigerator as it does in other refrigerator-freezers.

There are two dishwashers in the kitchen, but in an unusual twist they are placed in two entirely different areas. One is across from the ovens and cook top area, and next to a sink. The other is near a larger sink. This design provides two separate spaces for cleanup.

The larger sink has a “smart divide,” which is a double sink with a divider that is about half as high as the depth of the sink.

“You can place a whole cookie tray or large pan entirely in this sink and it fits,” says Monika Morris, interior decorator for the home.

On one side of the six-burner gas stove is a sunken, built-in steamer, and on the other, an “oil steamer,” as one chef called it. Most folks would recognize it as a deep fryer.

“The steamer can be used for vegetables of course, but it also can be used to steam meats that just fall off the bone or as a slow-cooker,” Kerr says. “The fryer has a constant temperature that does not fall when something is poured in, so you get a flash fry that leaves food crispy and not greasy. Both of the pans can be lifted out and cleaned. The steamer drains at the push of a button. These are great appliances for busy lifestyles.”

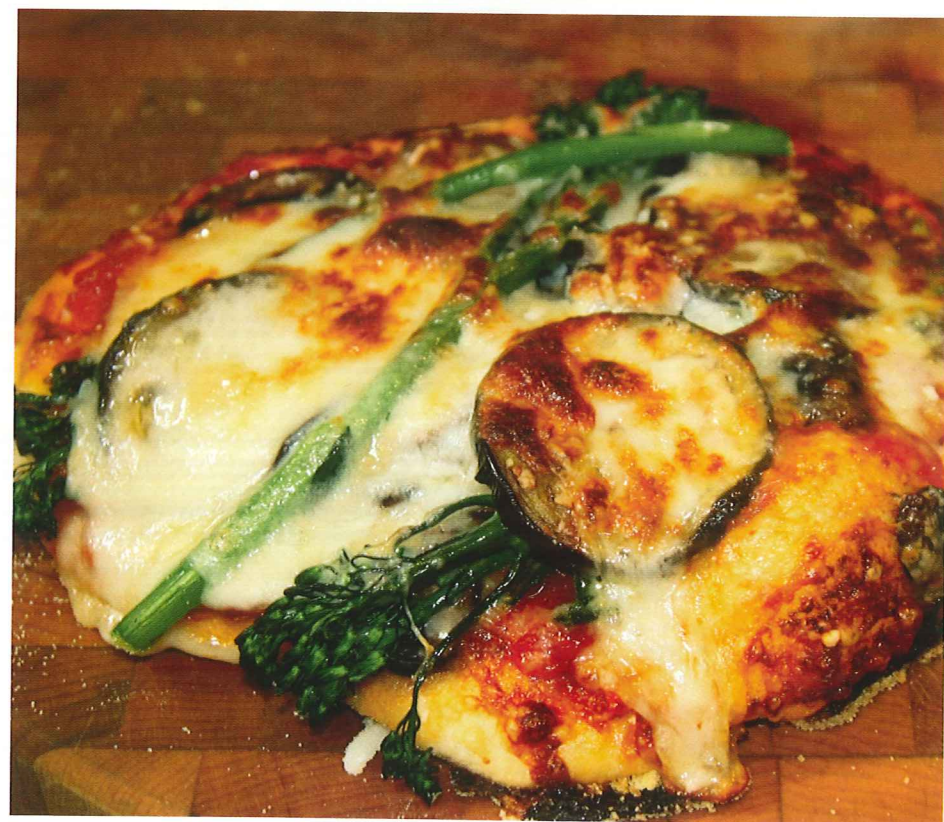
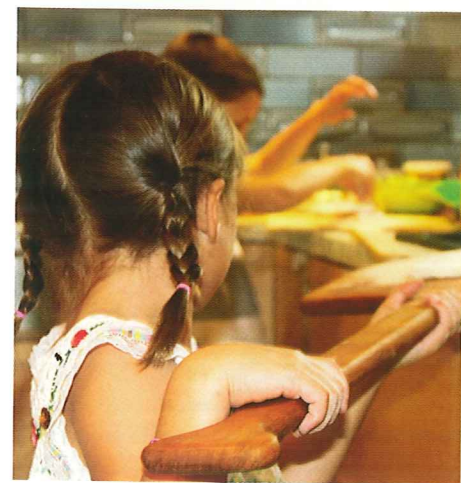
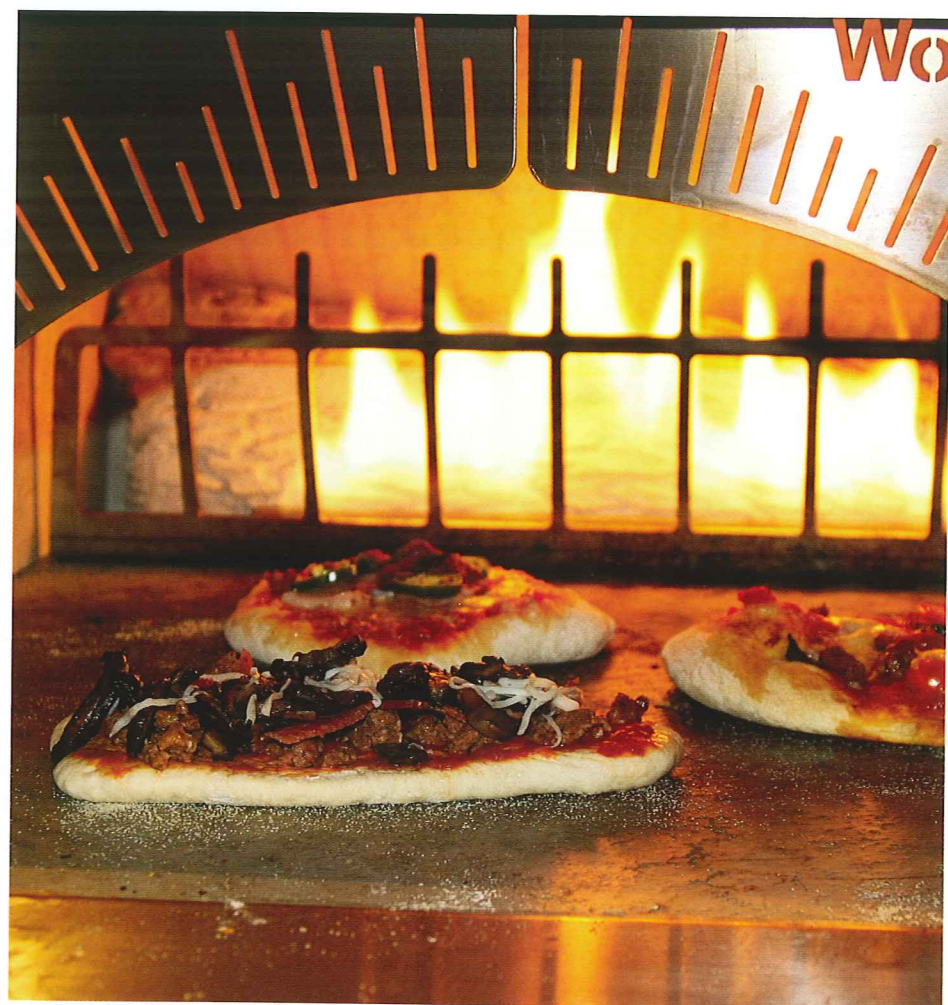
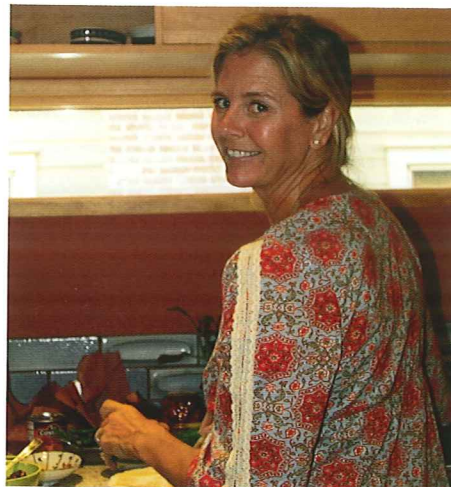
Kerr emphasizes that people can look at all these options and pick those that are affordable and that work for their lifestyles.

“Someone with a \$220,000 house may absolutely love to cook and decide to put all their eggs in that basket and get the top of the line appliances they want,” she says. “Others balance it differently.”

If you're working on a budget, listen to your instinct, Cooper says, because you are the one who has to use the kitchen. In her case, she knew she wanted a six-burner stove top with a griddle, and she could see herself using the entire set-up, though others tried to talk her out of it.

She didn't cave in, and she's glad she didn't, because there have been plenty of times when all of the burners have been in use and the griddle sizzled away.

Cooper has made numerous small adjustments since the latest remodel, and the work isn't complete yet. “A kitchen is always a work-in-progress,” she says. “It mirrors your life.”



When the Toyes redesigned their kitchen, the one thing the family wanted was a brick oven for making pizza as well as roasting whole fish, lamb chops and vegetables. The couple's daughter, Ella, and friends get involved in the fun and even the dog, Mama, likes to hang around while Karla Toye works. Lydell Toye is glad to wait on the family's patio, entertaining any guests that might drop by for one of their pizza parties.

Photograph by Pauline Stevens

