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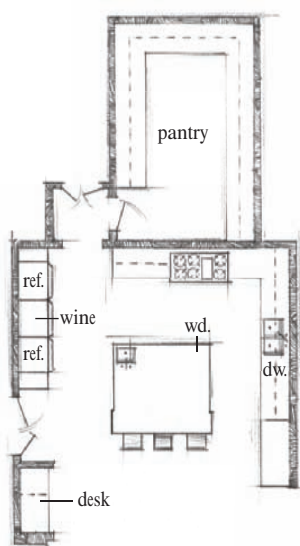


# Modern Bliss

Sleek silhouettes in a San Francisco kitchen create a serene backdrop for stunning landscape views.

Writer: Shannon Howard Photographer: Philip Harvey Field Editor: Sarah Alba

This sophisticated, modern kitchen still feels cozy thanks to a combination of clean lines with warm, neutral colors.



Broad vistas of the colorful Marin Hills led Shawn and Matt Gillam to design their new home with its environs in mind—even in a kitchen with no windows of its own. Pale oak cabinets with a horizontal grain stop short of the ceiling, creating serene, contemporary lines that reflect the natural beauty of the land with minimal visual distraction.

“We love to cook and entertain,” Shawn says, “so we wanted to keep the kitchen simple and open. It had to be calming, sophisticated, yet it also had to be a place where even our kids could feel comfortable.” Opting to finish their kitchen themselves, the Gillams conjured the same Zen-like air here as in the rest of the home, which project designer Michael Palza fashioned as a seamless expanse of living space enveloped by the landscape.

“I basically gave Shawn a blank canvas,” Palza says of the two-walled kitchen that opens to living areas where dramatic views are the focus. “The key was positioning the kitchen so its views are outward rather than inward.” The Gillams sited the island where a cook can take in expansive views from adjoining rooms. And on the windowless walls they employed a variety of natural materials, including oak

**Opposite:** Three appliances—a refrigerator, wine cooler, and freezer—are integrated into cabinets. Each appliance's drawers are paneled, while their stainless-steel doors are exposed.

**This Photo:** Sheets of stainless steel create a sleek, easy-clean backsplash behind the range, a 48-inch model chosen for its simple lines and convenient double oven.





**Right:** The stainless-steel backsplash rises higher behind the range, where it's most needed, and drops significantly around perimeter cabinets.

**Opposite:** Frosted-glass cabinet doors seem to float over the sink counter, adding an ethereal note to ample storage.

**Below:** An undermount sink eases the smooth transition between wood, metal, and stone.



cabinets and lava rock countertops, to buttress the organic feel and soften the largely minimalist style.

"I love the look of modern, but I also have two children," Shawn says. "I was originally thinking of concrete work surfaces and lots of stainless steel, but then I had my first baby and thought, **Wow, that's really impractical.**" With a robust balance of clean lines and warm textures, Shawn maintains the crispness she desired while still building a friendly and inviting atmosphere.

Her secret? Clever contrasts. Against a backdrop of pecan-color walls and ceilings, she and Matt chose ebony-stained floors. To rival the richness of their gray-tone Italian basalt counters, they selected pale oak cabinetry, cut on a horizontal grain. They also balanced heavy with light, tempering the island's heft with wispy steel barstools of Shawn's design.

This clean, elegant aesthetic is nearly impossible without one secret weapon: a pantry. The Gillams' walk-in is the true workhorse of their kitchen, keeping dry goods and other essentials out of sight but still easily accessible. "I don't think you can have a sleek, modern kitchen, especially one with so few walls, and not have a pantry," Shawn says. "It really



## BACKSPASHES

don't have to extend from counters to cabinets. This light valance tops the backsplash for modern flair, while discreetly concealing electrical outlets.





allowed us to focus on form in the public part of the room, and keep clutter very much under control!"

Shawn insisted on having no visible outlets along her kitchen backsplash. Instead, she designed an ingenious stainless-steel valance that conceals several plug-ins and sheds a band of light. The valance serves as a visual place marker, tying the stove area to the rest of the work surface and echoing the horizontal lines of the cabinetry.

"I'm against stuff, or at least seeing it laid out all the time," Shawn says. "So for this kitchen, I wanted to get the basics in place—everything we needed to cook a good meal or entertain friends—and then let the architecture do its work.

"I wouldn't call it jet-setting or ultra sophisticated because that would be too cold. But for this site, with the natural beauty we have to work with, I think it's the perfect mix of modern and comfortable."

**Above:** Everything has a place in the Gillam kitchen—pepper, utensils, even electricity. Two outlets hide beneath panels on the island.

**Right:** A delicate paper chandelier offers a stunning contrast against the kitchen's sturdy island, which thoughtfully orients the cook toward stunning landscape views.



**KEY TO THE LOOK**

- Cabinets:** Horizontal grain oak and frosted glass by Varenna Poliform; 877/827-3662; [poliformusa.com](http://poliformusa.com)
- Countertops:** Basaltina lava stone
- Flooring:** Espresso-stained oak
- Backsplash:** Stainless steel
- Vent hood:** Ventahood; 800/331-2492; [ventahood.com](http://ventahood.com)
- Warming oven:** Thermador; 800/735-4328; [thermador.com](http://thermador.com)
- Range:** Wolf; 800/332-9513; [subzero.com](http://subzero.com)
- Refrigeration:** Refrigerator, freezer, and wine cooler by Sub-Zero; 800/222-7820; [subzero.com](http://subzero.com)

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