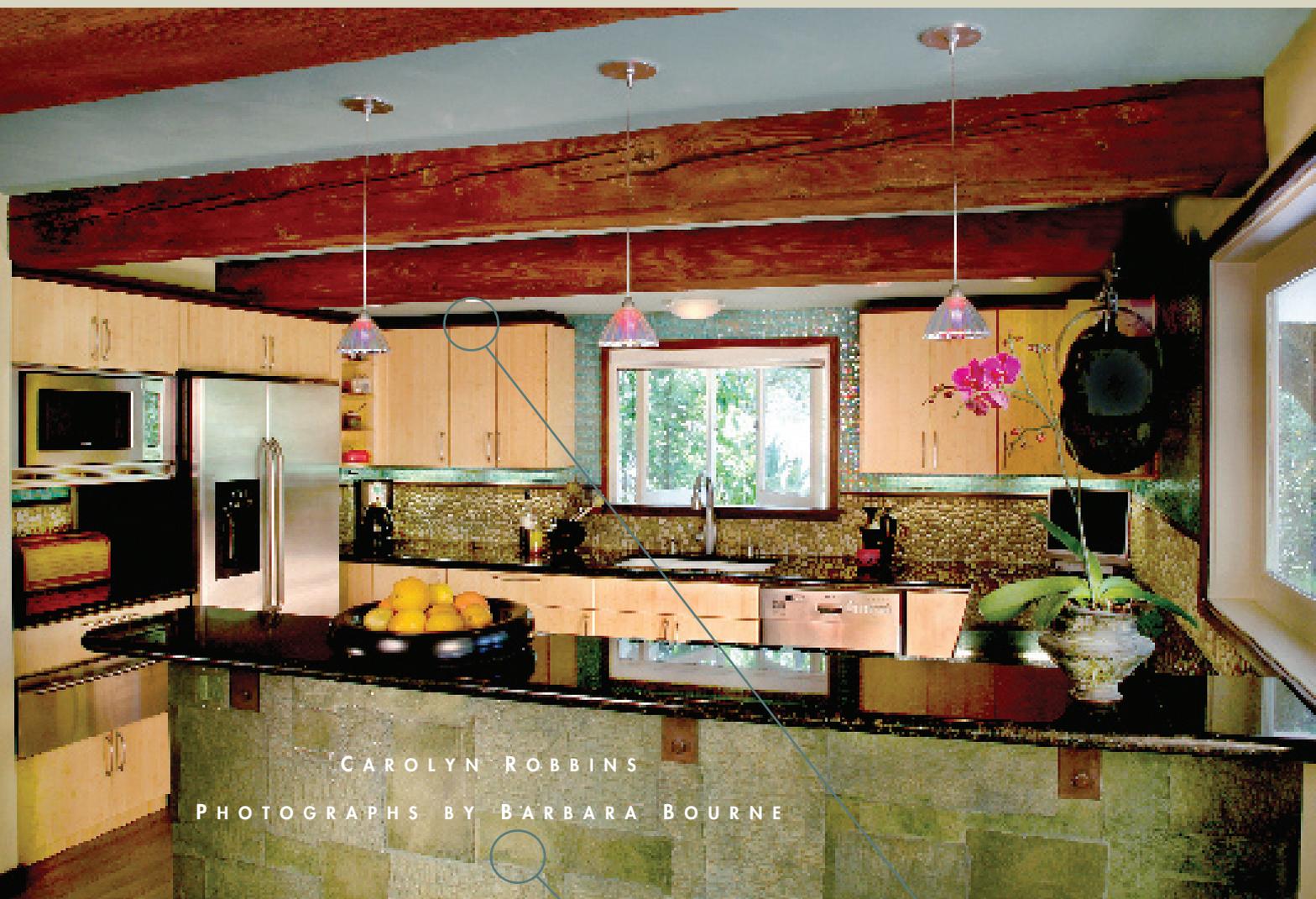


How to Green a Kitchen

An interior design team from San Rafael, California, shares the secrets behind this spectacular remodel.



CAROLYN ROBBINS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARBARA BOURNE

In remodeling this kitchen, our first consideration was how my design team, Carolyn Robbins Site Design (www.CarolynRobbinsDesign.com) along with Green Builders of Marin (www.GreenBuildersOfMarin.com), could work around the existing windows, plumbing and structural timber, which helped keep both resource consumption and cost lower.

■ We tore vegetable-dyed handmade paper into square and rectangle shapes and applied it to the face of this wall using a diluted, nontoxic wallpaper paste. We wanted to create a bark-style texture reminiscent of the old-growth oak trees outside the windows.

■ We trimmed the windows and the tops of the cabinets with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified ash stained to look like redwood (to match the original ceiling beams). Using the stained wood on the top of the bamboo cabinets creates an illusion of space between the lighter bamboo and the dark wood beams.

■ For the kitchen's original counter, we designed wider, 30-inch countertops to make the cooking area more luxurious. By adding a few inches in depth instead of installing new counters, we provided more square feet of work space but used less counter material—in this case, reclaimed granite.

■ To avoid expensive wiring changes, we kept the sink and appliances in their existing locations, but substituted new, energy-saving models, including a Bosch dishwasher (www.Bosch.com) and General Electric refrigerator (www.GEappliances.com). We also double-insulated the warming and standard ovens for general heat retention.

■ On the ceiling, Olivetti Mineral Finishes' blue, all-natural lime paint, which contains no solvent and is low in toxic VOCs (volatile organic compounds), picks up reflections from the blue-green opal tile on the walls (www.OlivettiMineralFinishes.com).

■ Rather than installing a new window, we removed one of six patio doors and restructured the space as a picture window. This extends the kitchen and lets in more natural light to reduce the need for electric lighting. We installed a custom, double-pane window with an FSC-certified poplar frame.

■ The Broan Elite RMDD Downdraft System (Rangemaster) eliminates the need for an overhead exhaust hood, which would have divided the room and required more ductwork and a larger fan (www.Broan.com). We built the range counter and the higher wall/counter, which were the only real physical changes we made to the room.



■ The iridescent glass tile is from the Sicis company's Iridium collection. The Italian company recycles its unused glass product back into new tiles (www.Sicis.it). The tile enhances the room's natural light by refracting the filtered sun that enters. For the countertops, we bought surplus butterfly granite from Urban Ore, a recycled materials outlet in Berkeley. The smooth river stones on the backsplash, from Island Stone Pebble Collection, reflect in the dark granite as if in water (www.IslandStone.com). Note: Although the stone is natural, it's imported from Indonesia and India, which expends a lot of fuel for shipping.



■ Our team took the original kitchen cabinets to The Away Station, a local recycling service, and replaced them with Plyboo bamboo cabinets that are low in formaldehyde (www.Plyboo.com).



■ The natural Marmoleum flooring creates a beautiful surface, and it's made from nontoxic ingredients such as linseed oil and wood flour (www.TheMarmoleumStore.com).

■ Low-voltage W.A.C. decorative pendants with dichroic glass shades complement the iridescent tile and drop pools of light on the bar top (www.WACLighting.com). By fitting the fixtures with bright 37-watt MR16 lamps, we were able to use three bulbs instead of four for the same lighting effect, reducing the lamps' energy use. **NI**