THE PERFECT KITCHEN

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Keeping It Personal

How *does* one begin to think personally about the kitchen and then translate that into a design? The key lies in picturing it as a room that you have a relationship with and imagining what that emotional experience should be like—that, to my mind, is the essence of successful kitchen design. When pondering how you want your kitchen to look, you should absolutely refer to the tear sheets and books and online image banks that you've been saving. But no less important is thinking about all the kitchens in which you've had memorable experiences and examining those memories closely. Look at it this way: if you were designing the perfect beach house, you'd first think experientially rather than aesthetically, going back in your mind to all the great waterfront getaways you've visited. Was there a view, a veranda with curtains that fluttered in the ocean breeze, a chair that reclined at just the right angle? All of these components would come to mind precisely because you'd want to create a dependably enjoyable experience. And your kitchen—the room in which you and your family and friends spend so much time, your home's default comfort zone—is no different. How it looks is tightly bound up with what you like to do in it—or think you might enjoy doing in the future—and how these activities make you *feel*.

So give yourself the time and the permission to fantasize about the kitchen experiences that would give you maximum comfort and enjoyment. Perhaps it's brewing a perfect cup of coffee and sitting quietly with it at a table washed by the morning light. Or gathering with family members who help you prepare a sumptuous holiday dinner. Or perhaps you've always wanted to have your cookbooks on a shelf at eye level above your prep area, rather than in a cupboard, so you can immediately survey your options.

However you choose to design your kitchen, it's useful to remember that every component—including the food itself and how you arrange and display it—is part of an overall experience combining aesthetics, utility, and, not least, taste.

This kitchen is at once grand in scale and unpretentious in character. It makes good use of its generous space, enjoys natural light and green views, and can accommodate multiple cooks simultaneously while welcoming the individual. Its cheerfulness derives from the fact that every surface—floor, walls, cabinets, and ceiling—is painted an identical shade of white.

ABOVE: Two elements supply the surprise here: the rough-hewn wide plank floor and the grisaille artworks. OPPOSITE: Continuing the floor, materials, and counter height from the kitchen into the flower room creates continuity while establishing a basis for difference.

Floors

Kitchen floors matter. Partly because you'll be dropping food and liquids of every sort on them, and they need to be able to take a beating. But floors also matter because, depending on the complexity (or lack thereof) of the rest of the space, they can serve as the room's major decorative element. Floors also set a mood. And depending on whether or not they continue into adjoining spaces, kitchen floors can connect the room to its surroundings or demarcate it as a stand-alone zone. Alas, when it comes to kitchen design, there's no rest for the weary: even the floors demand that we think.

MATERIALS

- Wood
- Porcelain
- Cement tiles (plain or patterned)
- Terra-cotta
- Terrazzo
- Natural stone
  - Marble
    - Polished
    - Honed
    - Textured
  - Limestone
  - Bluestone
  - Travertine

Accessories

In my mind, accessories fall into two categories. There are the major ones, notably range goods and pot racks. And then there are the second-tier accessories, for example the aforementioned pot fillers, instant-hot taps, pet-feeding stations, and similar amenities. Consider what small things might make a difference in your kitchen experience. If you hate waiting for the teakettle to start screaming, a tap that dispenses boiling water will put a smile on your face every time it's used.

TYPE
Range hood
Pot rack
Instant hot
Garbage disposal
Soap dispenser