



PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARK DARLEY PRODUCED BY WENDY ANN SILVERSTEIN STYLED BY AARON HOM

dream space

Stressed by city living and craving something new, a chef builds her ideal kitchen and finds life, and love, at home on the ranch. By Jill Connors

When Linda-Marie Bauer looks out at the 80 acres of her Lazy Susan Ranch in the Napa Valley, she sees a landscape that has changed her life. As the owner of the Moa Room, a small, acclaimed San Francisco restaurant, she was looking for a retreat from the demanding pace. Three years ago, she moved to the ranch, a newly single mother with two young sons. Driven by the desire to make a new life for them as well as start a business selling herbs to professional chefs, Linda-Marie had a clear vision. The ranch was the answer—for a life centered on the outdoors, with space for her children to play, and room for a garden. It also offered the charm that could only come from a Victorian farmhouse built in the 1870s. The obvious drawback was the tiny galley kitchen. Fitted for the house long ago, it was inadequate for this mother-chef-businesswoman in almost every way.

Transforming the space wouldn't be easy, and her wish list was long. Linda-Marie wanted a complete kitchen filled with professional equipment, but she also wanted a place where her boys would feel comfortable. She enlisted the help of interior designer Lou Ann Bauer, and by the time they finished she not only had a new kitchen, she had a new sister-in-law as well.

Before the renovation could begin, the women took a long look at what was already in place. "It was a flat-roof add-on from the '60s that didn't fit in with the house at all," Lou Ann says of the tight quarters. Realizing they faced an overhaul, they decided to approach the project in an unconventional way. "We picked out the appliances and the antique pieces first," says Lou Ann, "and then designed the room around them." The La Cornue stove commands center stage, and Linda-Marie is smitten with it. "It has eight burners and a French top, which are great for cooking sauces," she says with a smile.

But in the beginning, all Linda-Marie really craved was light. Lou Ann and project manager Charles Carlson started by designing a 20-foot peaked ceiling topped with a cupola custom-made with Victorian tracery glass. It is delicate and decorative and allows sunshine to flood the space. For added illumination, salvaged etched glass was used above the main sink, and a glass cabinet was cleverly designed to brightly display Linda-Marie's collection of vintage glass kitchenware. "We installed a window facing the rear porch that acts as the cabinet's back wall, then fit the cabinet with glass shelves," says Lou Ann. "The light comes right through the window in the afternoon, and it's wonderful."

A pair of vintage sinks, stumbled upon by Linda-Marie and Lou Ann at a salvage shop, were lovingly restored and are used to great effect. One, a 1940s enamel fixture with built-in drainboards, serves as the main sink in the kitchen, while a 1950s deep porcelain version, installed near the door to the garden, is perfectly convenient for washing vegetables just in from the garden. For added vintage appeal, Linda-Marie chose honed travertine for the floor and ▶

ROOMY AND BRIGHT
OPPOSITE: Rolling library ladders provide access to upper-level storage.
BELOW: Etched glass and a vintage porcelain sink, both rescued from salvage shops, add old-world charm to the hi-tech kitchen.





mismatched marble and limestone for the countertops (some in beige and white Italian marble and some in yellow limestone). A butcher block she rescued from a Parisian flea market serves as the main chopping area.

A blend of high performance and Victorian-era charm, the renovated space is now a roomy 21 feet by 36 feet. Along with the 72-inch-wide stove are a custom-made stainless steel hood, a commercial baking oven and refrigerator, and newly built wooden cabinets that maintain an antique flavor with flush inset doors and vintage hardware.

But Lou Ann's greatest contribution to her client's project had little to do with additions or surface solutions. Midway through the extensive renovation she realized how much Linda-Marie had in common with her brother, Rod, and introduced the two. Rod, an accomplished chef himself, was relieved to meet a woman who shared his passion for food as well as his sensibility, and the two embarked on a romance that neither of them expected. Yes, it was a match made in culinary heaven, and last fall, at just about the time the kitchen made its debut, Rod and Linda-Marie married.

Today, the couple has the perfect kitchen for cooking happily ever after. The completed space not only satisfies the couple's passion for food, but it's as functional as it is comfortable. "That was Lou Ann's genius," says Linda-Marie. "She made a space that was generous but also cozy." There's also a lot of cooking going on. Both Rod and Linda-Marie keep the burners going professionally, but they've also made it a family affair. Her two boys like to cook, and she encourages kids from their classes at school to come out in the spring and plant French pumpkins, "the kind for cooking, not carving," her oldest says. Then they come back in the fall, find their pumpkins, and bring them inside to make pies. "What we cook is always related to what's growing," she says.

Linda-Marie Bauer may have abandoned big-city life, but she has discovered a rich lifestyle built around family and good food. And she's made room for all the cooks in her kitchen. ■



Tailor-Made Storage

One chef's storage solutions:

- Cabinetry was installed up to the 12-foot ceiling line, accessed by three rolling library ladders.
- Vertical drawers installed beneath the vintage butcher block conceal the four types of recycling bins required of a California kitchen.
- Open shelving above the counter contains supplies needed for canning.
- Wedge-shape drawers were built in the corners of the base cabinetry in order to utilize every inch.
- Counters are a deep 30 inches instead of the conventional 24, creating extra drawer storage and extra surface work space as well.



KITCHEN CULTURE
Large windows were installed wherever possible. The custom-made 800-pound stainless steel hood hovers over Linda-Marie's other splurge—a handmade French stove. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The butcher block was a flea market find. **TOP LEFT:** A 15-by-15-foot conservatory now serves as the dining room, offering soaring views of the vineyards.