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An Eastern aesthetic and a lifestyle-based layout produce hardworking harmony.

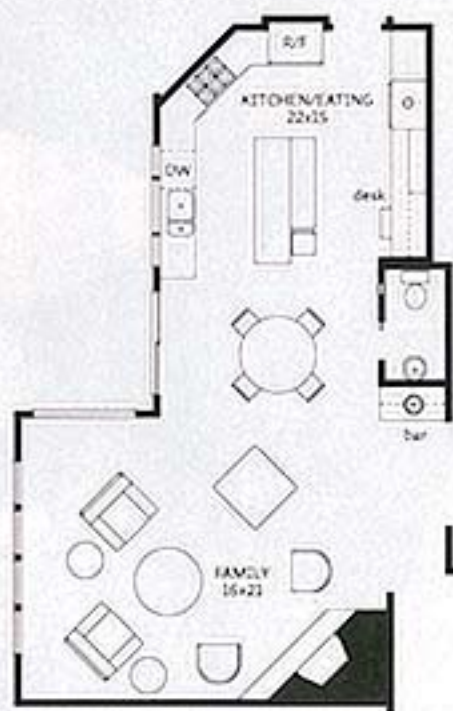
# ZEN ZONE



WRITTEN BY AMBER DAWN BARZ PHOTOGRAPHER LAURIE BLACK FIELD EDITOR BARBARA MUNDALL



THIS PHOTO: A corner cooktop anchors the new layout in Shelli and James White's kitchen. Clean-line cabinets and bamboo flooring convey Asian style. OPPOSITE: The sleek faucet has a pull-down sprayer.



**ABOVE:** A two-level island and a small eating area with a bar-height table suit the kitchen for entertaining. The use of light and dark stains creates visual interest in the cabinetry. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** A small bar area with its own sink and storage for beverages further boosts the kitchen's hospitality potential. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT:** Designer Arlene Lord removed a wall between the kitchen and family room to ease interaction between the spaces. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:** A new desk area occupies a wall that was bumped out into the garage.

## THE ANCIENT EASTERN TRADITIONS OF

Zen and feng shui continue to influence modern home design. A case in point is Shelli and James White's kitchen in Portland, Oregon. Just as a Zen garden contains the five feng shui elements of nature—water, earth, fire, wood, and metal—the couple's kitchen includes stylish and functional representations of each.

"The principles of feng shui are centered on making your home feel welcoming and in harmony with the environment in order to reduce stress and feel content," says kitchen designer Arlene Lord, a member of the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA). "That's really what every kitchen remodeling is about—making a work space as functional and attractive as possible by matching the layout and the look to the owner's lifestyle."

To better equip the Whites' kitchen for entertaining, Lord removed a wall between the kitchen and family room. She then increased the size of the work core by bumping out the kitchen 2 feet into the garage. "The square footage provided by moving the garage wall out 2 feet made room for a center island and for additional storage cabinets," Lord says. She also set the cooktop on an angled wall between the sink and the refrigerator, making it easy to step from one work area to the next and leaving lots of uninterrupted counter space on the island.



To ensure a tranquil ambience, the couple opted for the clean lines and earthy color palette of contemporary Asian style. "To show Arlene the look we liked, we cut pictures from magazines," Shelli says. "Everything we showed her was warm, inviting, and simple. We have busy, demanding jobs, so we wanted a relaxing, easy ambience at home."

Sleek cabinets cut from fine-grain hemlock and stained a latte color set the tone. For a touch of contrast, a few cabinets wear flat-panel doors and a darker espresso-color stain. Gray porcelain tiles cover the perimeter work surfaces and the lower level of the island, while honey-tone bamboo warms the floors. Other countertops are gray laminate.

Stylish green and yellow accessories visually link the neutral interior to backyard views. Enlarged sink windows and new sliding glass doors provide light and outdoor access. "The whole area feels much more sunny and inviting," Shelli says. "The change enables us to see our backyard and mature trees from almost anywhere in the room."

The desire to create a stress-reducing kitchen extended to the project's budget. "We originally planned to cover the floor of the family room with bamboo, like we did in the kitchen, and to use granite on the countertops, but we scaled things back to keep the budget in check," James says.

"Those amenities can always be added later, if the Whites choose to do so," Lord says. "Either way, they have a kitchen that exudes harmony and balance—it's very Zen." ❧

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 130

