

# A Curvy Booth Improves a Kitchen

A dated ranch house gets a new kitchen built around a great place for the whole family to hang out

Architect Dulcie Horwitz and her husband, Howard, live in one of those exuberant Southern California ranch houses that manage to wrap the look of mid-'50s futurama technology in a blanket of Bavarian detail. Charming, quirky, and not exactly suited to the family's needs, the house is a work in progress.

The original kitchen had an odd problem: It returned too little utility for the amount of space it occupied. Galley style, with 6 ft. between opposing counters, the old kitchen had way too much floor space and not enough counter and sit-down space. The adjacent dining room, on the other hand, wasn't quite big enough. As shown in the floor plans, the Horwitzes' first move was to expand the dining and living areas toward the backyard. This allowed the new kitchen to claim a bit of the dining room, eventually making room in the kitchen for a central island.

Dulcie's tastes tend toward light, openness, and vaulted ceilings. Howard favors the warmth and atmosphere of a timber-frame hunting lodge. Both got their wish. White surfaces are predominant, punctuated by deep cherry-stained cabinets built by Howard and decorated with details inspired by the great Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh.



BEFORE

**Problem: Wasted floor space**

**Solution:** Move the east wall of the kitchen 5 ft. into the dining area, creating enough space for a generous island with room for a cooktop and counter area for barstools.





**Problem: Fussy finishes**

**Solution:** With two boys and dogs, forget about high-maintenance finishes. The counters are honed granite, and the floors are 1x tongue-and-groove oak, which will stand up to many refinishings. The painted baseboards and cabinets are wiped down and touched up with fresh paint as necessary. Simulated leather upholstery in the booth is tough and easy to clean.



**"aha!" moment**

Cozy corners under dormers are in short supply in the ranch-house suburbs of Southern California, but this house had one on the south side, overlooking the big downslope backyard. Architect Dulcie Horwitz tinkered with the space, inspired by the proportions and style of the booths in a favorite San Francisco bistro. Adding storage cabinets to each side of the alcove dialed in the dimensions for a welcoming booth with comfy cushions. This is where the kids do their homework, guests hang out, and the family takes most of its meals. Once this space had been thought out, the rest of the kitchen fell into place.



**Problem: Not enough storage space**

**Solution:** On the north wall of the kitchen, a pantry with a sliding door borrows shelf space from the adjacent hallway. Drawers under the booth benches and the adjacent cabinets augment the pantry space.

**Design:** Dulcie Horwitz, Architect, Thousand Oaks, Calif.; [www.horwizaandd.com](http://www.horwizaandd.com)

**Construction:** Phillip Wenger, Ventura, Calif.

**Continued on p. 52**





**Problem: No connection between the kitchen and the living spaces**  
**Solution:** Make the kitchen's east wall partially transparent, with glass doors and a generous pass-through.

## Cool detail

With a couple of big, hungry dogs to feed, convenient storage for plenty of kibble is a must. Howard Horwitz built this hopper-style drawer on heavy-duty drawer slides. It's in the cabinet next to the booth.



**BEFORE**

### **Problem: Dark, gloomy ceiling**

**Solution:** Paint the beams and ceiling planks creamy white, and add a centrally located skylight. The cabinet partition between the dining area and the kitchen stops short of the ceiling, allowing the kitchen to borrow daylight from the center of the house.