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hidden agenda

This kitchen's warm and contemporary bistro style veils a full menu of restaurant-caliber capabilities.



THIS PHOTO: Curvaceous cabinets, granite counters, and a semicircular cooking area bring high style to Grace and Miguel Ortiz's high-capacity kitchen. OPPOSITE: Grace has two stainless-steel sinks at her disposal, each a foot deep and 30 inches wide, to handle colanders, stockpots, and pans too big for a dishwasher.



When the kitchen in Grace and Miguel Ortiz's new Mediterranean-style home in Hillsborough, California, was finished, architect Blair Barry bet the couple they would never run out of storage.

Given the size of the room—"bigger than a two-car garage," Barry says—it seemed like a safe bet. Not so. "I just bought one of those deli-style meat- and cheese-slicing machines," Grace says, laughing, "and had to put it in the garage."

A culinary school graduate, Grace often makes feasts for 30–60 guests at a time. She has an appetite for appliances rivaled only by her recipe repertoire. Her kitchen includes a built-in freezer and a refrigerator, an additional built-in refrigerator-freezer, a microwave oven, a wall oven, two dishwashers, a trash compactor, and a French range.

"It's phenomenal the amount of food she brings to the table," says Barry, who collaborated on the project with kitchen designers Elaine Hall Murray and Christine Lopez. "She actually uses all those appliances, all those work surfaces, and all that storage all of the time. What she wanted was the equivalent of a restaurant kitchen."

One that didn't look institutional. "Neither Miguel nor I wanted an industrial-looking, high-tech kitchen," Grace says. "We wanted it to look warm and friendly because we knew it would be where all of our family and friends would gather." Pot racks, open shelves, and utensil hooks were rejected in favor of closed-door storage. Warm maple cabinets and oak flooring balance cool stainless-steel backsplashes and granite countertops.

To suit Grace's height—barely 5 feet 2 inches—key countertop sections were installed at a lower-than-typical 34 inches. "Lower countertops really help give me some leverage when I'm rolling out pastry dough or chopping vegetables," Grace says. "But they really don't seem to be an impediment to taller friends who cook with me."



TOP LEFT: Windows in the curved wall give a panoramic view and complement other windows in the newly built home **TOP LEFT:** ABOVE RIGHT: The 10x13-foot three-tier island has a prep sink, a dishwasher, and storage



The island and its integrated breakfast table feature brilliant blue granite countertops. High function and striking design make the island the room's focal point.



“ We wanted it to look warm and friendly because we knew it would be where all of our family and friends would gather.”

—homeowner Grace Ortiz



well-rounded menu



- Shaped like a wine goblet, an island with an attached breakfast table helps define the primary semicircular cooking area.
- A built-in refrigerator pairs with a built-in freezer to anchor one end of the main cooking corridor, while a wall oven occupies the other.
- The island's sink and dishwasher face a coffee bar and refrigerator-freezer, forming a mini kitchen.
- A bar in the adjacent family room lets guests get beverages without entering the kitchen.

OPPOSITE: To make cooking easier for 5-foot-2-inch Grace, range-side counters are 34 inches high instead of 36 inches. ABOVE LEFT: Miguel samples Grace's latest creation. For baking, she prefers the built-in electric wall oven rather than the range ovens. ABOVE RIGHT: A refrigerator, microwave oven, and espresso machine comprise a mini kitchen for Miguel.

A generous semicircular cooking zone is defined by the island on one side and a sweeping arc of cabinets and windows on the other. "The curved cabinets and the bay window soften the contours of the kitchen," Barry says. "The large oval soffit above the island does the same thing, keeping the ceiling from being a relentless flat surface." Two large undermount stainless-steel sinks, each a foot deep, cater to Grace's high-volume cooking and high-speed cleanup. "When I make stock, I use these huge pots, and I need sinks large enough to move them around in," she says. "One is for washing, and the other is for rinsing."

Although the kitchen was designed primarily for Grace, Miguel has his own mini kitchen on one side of the island. It includes a refrigerator, microwave oven, and espresso machine, along with storage for coffee cups and condiments. The island's vegetable sink and dishwasher are just two steps away. "The objective there was to keep his movements in the kitchen as minimal as possible," Grace

says. "I run all over the kitchen when I'm cooking, but he doesn't have to move more than a foot or two." Along with the 10x13-foot island, Miguel's kitchenette offers work space for guest chefs, leaving the main cooking zone free for Grace.

Standing at her French range, Grace can maintain contact with guests and spectators as she cooks. "Granted, it's a large kitchen," she says. "But we have lots of relatives and a large circle of friends, and I cook for large numbers of people all the time. I'm passionate about cooking. So far, the kitchen has met every challenge—except for the deli slicer." **KBI**

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