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**These pages** Arched doorways leading to and from the kitchen feature custom, 10-foot-high hardwood doors. **Far right** The spacious kitchen opens to an intimate courtyard for entertaining outdoors when weather permits.



# CUCINA DE

## MONTECITO, CA



A European-country sensibility produces a one-of-a-kind kitchen where an artist cooks up conversation and memories

PRODUCED AND STYLED BY **CHAR HATCH LANGOS**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **GREY CRAWFORD**  
WRITTEN BY **SHERISE DORF**

A well-appointed kitchen, large enough for multiple cooks and plenty of guests, was the main draw when Carin Gerard and her husband decided to buy their Mediterranean-style home in Montecito near the southern California coast. "I'd spent several years studying fine art in Tuscany," explains Gerard,

# LL'ARTISTA

a professional artist who exhibits at the John Pence Gallery in San Francisco. "In Italy, the kitchen is the most popular room in the home, and the natural spot for everyone to convene. That was what I wanted in our house—a place where we could entertain six or sixteen, with plenty of room to cook and have everyone hang out and sample the meal in progress.

Thanks to a central location that connects one side of the house to the other, the spacious 25-by-22-foot room already functioned as the heart of the 4,500-square-foot home. The kitchen's 15-foot beamed ceilings, three skylights, ample center island, and generous cabinet and counter space meant that "the bones were there," Gerard says. "But I wanted it

to feel more intimate and inspire [all kinds of family gatherings from] great conversation over cappuccino to a big meatball cook-off!"

She hired interior designer Hélène Aumont, of Europa Design in nearby Santa Barbara, to make the cosmetic changes that would imbue the space with Mediterranean warmth. Aumont took one look at the kitchen and decided she liked the floor plan: The center-island work flow was efficient, and the abundant natural light and artificial overhead lighting were perfect. Unfortunately, the all-white scheme was not suited to the sunny European-country aesthetic the homeowners wanted. So Aumont painted the walls a golden yellow and the Shaker-style cabinets a creamy white "so they look clean but not sterile," she says.

The owners wanted the restyled kitchen to inspire everything from "great conversation over cappuccino to a meatball cook-off!"



Next, the designer installed a white porcelain French farm sink and a luxe faucet "that really appeals to serious cooks because of its powerful spray." She replaced the sleek cabinet hardware with antique scalloped pulls. The hand-planed, wide-plank floors with wooden pegs were finished in walnut to match the ceiling beams and the 10-foot-high custom doors.

## swipe this style

If you love food (who doesn't?) and just mentioning the word *Italy* starts Puccini scores running through your head, you're a primo candidate for the romantic look shown in this kitchen. Use these ideas to get started:

❖ **Plan for family.** Everyone ends up in the kitchen! Ensure there are enough work areas for everyone to prep, cook, and socialize comfortably—together.

❖ **Blend rustic with refined.** Exposed beams and a pro-look range with an elegant chandelier and oil painting? But of course! Currey & Company ([curreyco.com](http://curreyco.com)) makes stock metal chandeliers with glass accents similar to the custom-made one shown here.

❖ **Art, appreciate it!** Consider a painterly faux finish for walls. Accent with colorful paintings, prints, sculptures, and decorative pottery. Vietri (800-277-5933, [vietri.com](http://vietri.com)) makes dinnerware, bakeware, and accessories similar to those shown in this kitchen.

❖ **Move on out.** You'll enjoy the great outdoors more with an alfresco (that's Italian!) dining and entertaining area. KitchenAid (800-422-1230, [kitchenaid.com](http://kitchenaid.com)), Viking (888-845-4641, [vikingrange.com](http://vikingrange.com)), and Wolf (800-332-9513, [subzero.com/wolf](http://subzero.com/wolf)), are just a few of the manufacturers making hardy sinks, refrigerators, grills, smokers, and other items for outdoor kitchens.



**This page** An archway opens to a sunlit dining room, which the owners use for both formal and casual meals. Wrought-iron French doors give onto a lap pool and frame distant ocean views.

**Far left** Generous glass-front cabinets flank the Wolf range, a focal point, thanks to Gerard's oil painting of a pastoral allée.



Aumont also added a vertical storage cabinet to house the homeowners' extensive collection of colorful rustic platters from the Grazia ceramics factory in Deruta, Italy. She hung 18th-century Italian plates over the archway to the dining room, where wrought-iron accents and Italian furniture add to the Mediterranean look.

The designer then turned her attention to another potential focal point: the stainless-steel Wolf range. "It feels very original to be able to hang an oil painting [above the stove], without worrying about damage from the heat. If it gets ruined, Carin will paint another," laughs Aumont, who gives the homeowner high marks for both


## Bright ideas: Make your kitchen glow with windows, skylights, and reflective surfaces

her talent as a painter and her willingness to help with the makeover.

In fact, when Aumont suggested replacing the cut crystals hanging from the wrought-iron chandelier with colorful glass drops handblown by an Italian artisan, Gerard embraced the idea. Her husband, unfortunately, vetoed it. This might have stopped a homeowner who was less involved in this dynamic process.

"One night," Gerard recounts, "I sneaked into the kitchen with wire cutters, climbed up on the island, and cut off the [clear] crystals." Then

designer and client attached the new, colorful glass drops with twist ties to test for their placement. Aumont finished the job by oxidizing standard wire to faux-age it, then reattached the new glass gems with the wire.

The result? "It's my husband's favorite thing about the room now," says Gerard, "and it makes a wonderful conversation piece." 

**Above** The new bay window overlooks a courtyard and verdant garden beyond. A French farm sink and a faucet with powerful spray appeal to serious cooks.

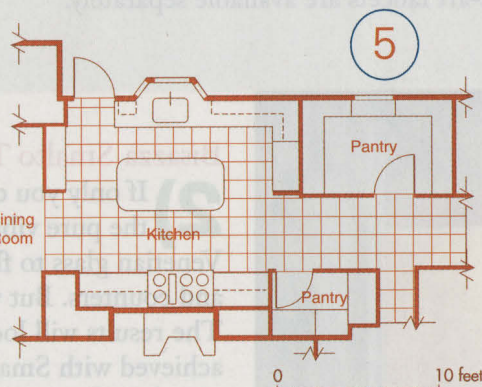


**1. Swapping clear, cut crystals for colorful, imported handblown glass drops** customized the wrought-iron chandelier, which hangs from the kitchen's unusually high ceiling and provides one of the room's decorative focal points.

**2. A vertical storage cabinet** houses the homeowner's extensive collection of rustic ceramic platters from Deruta, Italy.

**3. Slide-out drawers** supply storage space for the homeowner's much-loved collection of hand-painted Italian ceramics. **4. Old-fashioned scalloped cabinet pulls** look right at home alongside a collection of beautiful antique silver.

**5. "The bones were there,"** says owner Carin Gerard of the efficient kitchen floor plan.



- **Range** by Wolf; 800-332-9513, [subzero.com/wolf](http://subzero.com/wolf).
- **Farm sink** by Herbeau; 239-417-5368, [herbeau.com](http://herbeau.com).
- **Faucet** Ladylux Plus in stainless with soft black accent by Grohe; 630-582-7711, [groheamerica.com](http://groheamerica.com).
- **Chandelier** Custom, in wrought iron with colorful handblown glass drops, from the Hélène Aumont Collection, Europa Design, 805-884-0440.
- **Cabinets** Custom by Starbuck Minikin, 805-962-8305.
- **Refrigerator** by Sub-Zero; 800-222-7820, [subzero.com](http://subzero.com).

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