

KITCHEN OF THE MONTH

Kitchen by RUARD VELTMAN

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

If you really want to live in your living room, why not tuck a kitchen in at the end of the dining table?

Interview by
CHRISTINE PITTEL

Photographs by
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The big Dutch “gable” on the wall, painted with easy-to-wipe oil paint, acts as a decorative backsplash. A slab of travertine serves as a work surface. Professional series cooktop by Viking.

CHRISTINE PITTEL: *This is an unusual layout. You’ve got a cooktop, a sink, and a big, long table in your living room.*

RUARD VELTMAN: Why not? It’s the most beautiful space, so why would I not want to be here every day? So many people are scared to live in their living room. They’ve got a formal living room and dining room in the front of the house and they end up living in the back, in the kitchen. I dreamed of a house where you really do cook and eat and live in one room.

Kind of like an old Colonial farmhouse.

Or an old Dutch farmhouse. I’m originally from Holland and I remember gathering around these large tables for dinners that lasted three or four hours. I love that camaraderie. My wife and I will sometimes do six or seven smaller courses just so we can prolong the time at the table. We wind up sitting here for hours, even though this is just one part of a large living room.

Where’s the refrigerator and oven and all the rest of the stuff?

In a working pantry, off to the right. When this house was built back in 1949, that was the original kitchen. But it had no windows. I couldn’t imagine cooking there. The table is in the original dining room, which we opened up to the living room.

So how does the cooking work?

You bring all your ingredients in here. I enjoy making a meal—washing the vegetables in the prep sink, chopping them on that piece of stone.

What’s the idea behind the stone?

To keep it simple. At one point I thought of designing some sort of island to float over the table, but then I thought, ‘No. Too complicated.’ It should feel as if you went into your backyard and just found a piece of stone. It’s propped up with two blocks of oak to raise it to counter height. You can bring over a hot pan from the stove and serve from here. >>

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Did you try to make the cooktop and the sink disappear?

Not totally. I wanted them to look like two pieces of cabinetry that just happen to function as a sink and a cooktop. Both have stainless steel on top, but it's recessed. If I had wrapped them in stainless steel, it would have looked too much like a kitchen.

The cabinets feel modern and traditional at the same time. Contemporary lines, and then beadboard in front.

Actually it's not beadboard, just planks glued together with a little separation in between, to give it a bit of age and make it look more handcrafted. Modernism is often so clean and so pure that it doesn't allow for any imperfection. It's equivalent to meeting someone who has perfect teeth, perfect hair. You think, 'What's wrong with this person?' You need to mess it up a bit.

So where do you make coffee?

In the pantry. If you want to, you can bring the coffeemaker into the main kitchen area, but otherwise it's nicely contained on a shelf out of the way. I'm torn between two things: a very clean, modern kitchen with everything hidden, and a very utilitarian space with everything on open shelves—glasses, dishes, equipment, food. By having two rooms, I can have it both ways.

What's on that wall in the pantry?

Two more sinks?

Actually, four. That's a 12-foot-long secondhand sink that I found in this restaurant supply place, and it has four bays. Overkill, I admit, but I like those big gestures sometimes. It was also instant countertop and I adore it. You can do anything in there and you can't hurt it—wash up paints and paintbrushes after the kids, wash muddy boots, wash clothes, wash the dog. And after a dinner party we can quickly put everything in there and turn off the light and go on with the evening. >>



LEFT: The dining table is 11 feet long and made out of reclaimed teak by Verellen. Veltman designed the hanging light fixture. "I wanted it to look effortless, as if you had just strung something together," he says. He also designed the bronze sconces.

BELOW LEFT: "I hate those two-level sinks with a tiny vegetable basin, so I designed my own, with a larger basin on one side. This is the 'clean' sink, just for vegetables and fruits. No greasy pots and pans. The faucet is very simple and the handle is within the sink, so you don't have to reach up with a wet hand and get the wall wet." Faucet by Dornbracht. BELOW RIGHT: Artwork is grouped in a niche. Antique chairs from Herron House Antiques.



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WHAT'S COOKING?

"The main reason to love this is the peppery arugula, combined with the Parmesan-crusted chicken," Veltman says. "The recipe is simple but the taste is complex."

CHICKEN MILANESE RUGHETTA

Serves 4

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup panko bread crumbs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 egg
- 4 chicken cutlets (about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick)
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 4 cups arugula

1 Stir together panko, Parmesan, and rosemary on a large plate. Whisk egg in small shallow bowl. Sprinkle chicken cutlets with salt and pepper. Brush on all sides with egg. Dredge in panko mixture, turning to coat evenly.

2 Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook until golden brown and cooked through, about four minutes per side. Transfer to plate.

3 Reduce heat to medium. Cool skillet slightly. Add remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and vinegar. Stir, scraping up browned bits, until vinaigrette is just hot.

4 Top chicken with arugula (be generous). Add cherry tomatoes. Drizzle with vinaigrette and sprinkle with salt and pepper.



LEFT: If you're going to have 12 feet of sink, you need those extendable industrial spray faucets, by Fisher, to clean it up. For a party, the Veltmans sometimes put a chopping block over two of the sinks and set up this area as a bar. Sink unit and stainless-steel worktable from Recycled Restaurant Equipment. Sub-Zero refrigerator. BELOW LEFT: Veltman likes beer and has Stella Artois on tap. BELOW RIGHT: Open shelves hold glassware and white dishes. "If you want to be timeless, keep it simple," he says.



GET THE LOOK...

Dining table by Verellen: 336-889-7379.
Dining-area faucet by Dornbracht: 800-774-1181.
Cooktop by Viking: 888-845-4641.
Four-bay sink and worktable from Recycled Restaurant Equipment: 704-807-3105.
Refrigerator by Sub-Zero: 800-222-7820.

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