


BY INGRID ABRAMOVITCH PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANA GALLAGHER STYLED BY SACHA DUNN





The Abbaka range hood's motor is located outside the house, eliminating noise in the kitchen. The range is by Wolf. The furniture in the room, including the Dune stools in chestnut, is by Liaigre for Holly Hunt. The vase is from Nicole Farhi.

# STEEL THIS KITCHEN

A HAMPTONS HOUSE DESIGNED BY CHRISTIAN LIAIGRE GETS A SLEEK COOKING AND ENTERTAINING SPACE WITH THE HELP OF RESTAURANT CONSULTANT MARK STECH-NOVAK

For

or want of a horseshoe, a battle was lost. For lack of a good chiropractor, Mark Stech-Novak got a new career. He had studied Gallic culture and wine making at a university in France, trained in Europe as a chef, and worked at top San Francisco restaurants for more than a decade. Then he threw his back out. In search of less physically demanding work, he realized he had a deep insight into what makes commercial kitchens function. Now a leading restaurant consultant, Stech-Novak has designed kitchens for such four-star chefs as Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Alain Ducasse, and Thomas Keller.

It was through Vongerichten that Stech-Novak met French interior and furniture designer Christian Liaigre. The pair collaborated on two restaurants for the New York-based chef: Dune, in the Bahamas, and Market, in Paris. The chance to work with Liaigre again persuaded Stech-Novak to take on a rare residential project: the vast kitchen of a house in Southampton, New York, with an enviable view of the Atlantic.

The clients, a couple who own and manage stylish hotels, had commissioned Liaigre to design the architecture and furniture for their new house. They wanted a kitchen where they could both cook and entertain, a serene room that felt stylistically of a piece with the rest of the house. "They wanted their kitchen to feel furnished, not built in," says Stech-Novak.

For the kitchen consultant, the challenge was to interpret the Liaigre style in a practical environment. "Christian's pieces have unmistakable weight and presence," he says. "But I'm still stuck with the world of functionality." ▸

# TRADE SECRETS

Since both men use the same design software, Stech-Novak was able to analyze the proportions of Liaigre furniture. The key to the kitchen's design was the mathematical formula he came up with, a ratio of horizontal to vertical lines that perfectly echoes the Liaigre geometry elsewhere in the house.

To further the connection, he encased the stainless-steel cabinetry in the same dark-stained walnut and oak that Liaigre used for furniture and for architectural elements such as door and window frames. The illusion of a furnished room was created with cabinets and kitchen islands that, raised on legs, appear to be freestanding. Plumbing and electrical lines are disguised discreetly underneath.

Stech-Novak's experience as a chef is most obvious in the way he planned for activity in the space. The kitchen islands are 39 inches apart, wide enough for two people to pass through, but close enough that they are just one step away from each other. While the workstation devoted to food preparation looks out on the dining area and ocean so the cook can socialize with friends, the island containing the stove top and oven deliberately faces the back wall. "When you work at a stove, you want the focus in the pan, or you can burn yourself," he says.

Overall, Stech-Novak says, he tried "to keep it simple, with minimal gewgaws." With its attention to details that truly matter, it's the kind of calm, efficient work space that could only have been built by one who has felt the heat of the fire. □

## DINING IN

- THE KITCHEN'S SUN-FILLED DINING AREA KEEPS GUESTS CLOSE TO THE COOKS, AND CRISP TABLE AND CHAIR DESIGNS BY CHRISTIAN LIAIGRE LEND THE SPACE AN AIR OF CASUAL REFINEMENT.
- KITCHEN DESIGNER MARK STECH-NOVAK CHOSE UNOBTUSIVE PIN LIGHTS FROM LUCIFER LIGHTING THAT DON'T MAR THE ROOM'S VENETIAN PLASTER CEILING.
- THE LIMESTONE FLOORING'S COLOR AND STRIATIONS COMPLEMENT THE WOOD AND STEEL FIXTURES.



## SPOTTING THE POTS

- FOR A BETTER VIEW OF THE COOKWARE, MINI HALOGEN LIGHTS WERE INSTALLED IN THE PULLOUT DRAWERS OF THE CABINETS, DESIGNED BY STECH-NOVAK AND CREATED BY SML STAINLESS STEEL GROUP, QUEBEC CITY. THE COOKWARE IS FROM E. DEHILLERIN, PARIS.
- BERNARDAUD'S SQUARE FUSION PLATES ARE ALSO USED AT THE RESTAURANT JEAN-GEORGES, NYC.

## STEP SAVER

- THE ISLAND DEVOTED TO FOOD PREPARATION CONTAINS REFRIGERATED DRAWERS, CUSTOM-MADE BY SML, THAT MINIMIZE TRIPS TO THE LARGER REFRIGERATOR.
- STECH-NOVAK DESIGNED A GENEROUS, 39-INCH-WIDE SPACE BETWEEN THE PREP ISLAND AND THE RANGE AND OVEN, SO TWO COOKS CAN FREELY WORK AT ONE TIME.



## SUBTLE REMINDER

- CUPBOARD AND DRAWER HANDLES BREED BACTERIA, SAYS STECH-NOVAK, "BUT EVERYONE FORGETS TO WIPE THEM DOWN." HIS SOLUTION: HIGHLY POLISHED EDGES THAT MAKE FINGERPRINTS VISIBLE SO YOU'LL REMEMBER TO CLEAN.
- FOR TIMES WHEN THE COOK IS HOME ALONE, THERE'S A SLEEK, DISCREET SHARP AQUOS LCD FLAT-SCREEN TV.

## WASTE NOT

- THE TRAULSEN REFRIGERATOR HAS A GLASS DOOR, SO YOU CAN SCAN ITS CONTENTS WITHOUT WASTING ENERGY.
- STECH-NOVAK SPECIFIED A "VERY FORGIVING" ONE-DIRECTIONAL BRUSH FINISH FOR THE STAINLESS-STEEL COOKS, SO SCRATCHES ARE EASILY BUFFED OUT.



## DOING THE DISHES

- FOR HYGIENIC REASONS, STECH-NOVAK SEPARATED THE SINKS USED FOR FOOD PREPARATION FROM THOSE USED FOR CLEANUP. THIS ONE IS LOCATED NEAR THE TWO VIKING DISHWASHERS.
  - BAKED-ON MESSSES WON'T STAND UP TO A BLAST FROM THIS COMMERCIAL-QUALITY DOMO SPRAY FAUCET ON A SWINGING ARMATURE, FROM KWC.
- SEE SHOPPING, LAST PAGES.

