

kitchens with islands



Pursuit of happiness

This modern Asian kitchen celebrates Chinese feng shui and has a symbolic pillar of good fortune at its heart

A contemporary Asian kitchen needs a layout that responds to symbolic as well as practical requirements – on the one hand conforming to the guidelines of feng shui and on the other, offering all the amenities required by a modern cook.

Prior to this remodel, an existing wood kitchen had taken up a similar volume – although a long island had not made good use of the available space. For the revamp, the owners asked Elina Katsioulas-Beall of DeWitt Designer Kitchens to create an Asian-style kitchen that would reflect the

principles of feng shui and incorporate the auspicious octagonal bagua symbol into the design. This is considered to bring happiness, good luck and prosperity. The owners also asked for large work surfaces and a better connection to the dining area.

“In response, I moved the cooktop from a large island to the back wall and introduced a hexagonal island as a focal point. The eight-sided bagua now appears as a butcher’s block by the window, on the island, and overhead as a soffit and a tray ceiling set within it,” the designer says.

***Facing page:** A traditional Japanese cherry blossom mosaic backsplash, feng shui flow between octagonal bagua elements and slat-fronted cabinets all contribute to the aesthetic of this Asian-style kitchen. Seen together, the hexagonal island and ceiling feature comprise a pillar-like central form that represents luck and good fortune.*

***Above:** Designer Elina Katsioulas-Beall introduced only one above counter cabinet element. And even here she designed it to reach the ceiling to create a column-like effect. This cabinet conceals a television set.*



“In keeping with the Chinese aesthetic, I designed the cabinets with slat fronts. The black granite countertops and warm red cabinetry and walls further this look.”

The cherry blossom with rising moon mosaic backsplash, while more Japanese than Chinese, also adds to the overall feel. An obi, or ceremonial sash, was added as a wall feature at the other end of the space, behind the dining table.

“The octagonal-shaped island neatly addressed convenience as well as culture,” says Elina Katsioulas-Beall. “Most sides

correspond to an area of operation – facing the wall of ovens, the cooktop area, the washing up and prep area, and looking to the dining area – as a serving buffet.”

The design also embraces the dining area more fully with the introduction of a credenza in this area. The previous oversized island had not allowed space for this. The long, back-lit piece is in the same style as the kitchen cabinetry, and helps draw the spaces together.

Now the owners can store all plates and glassware conveniently, just a step

from the dining table, the designer says.

“This kitchen also reflects a modern sensibility. The curving stainless steel range hood is framed by simple granite forms and all the cabinetry handles are in a minimalist style.

“With all refrigeration and a pull-out pantry integrated into a corner cabinet, the space has an uncluttered appeal – the eye is drawn to the central island feature.”

[See an image gallery for this project online](#)

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Kitchen designer: Elina Katsioulas-Beall NKBA, DeWitt Designer Kitchens (Pasadena, CA)

Cabinet companies: Perimeter cabinetry by Columbia Cabinets; island and lattice panels by Benchmark Cabinets

Cabinetry: Perimeter, maple with mahogany stain; island in maple, in Heritage Red by Benjamin Moore

Hardware: Top Knobs

Countertops: Granite, Absolute Black and Juparana Allegra, from Empire Marble & Granite

Flooring: Roman travertine from Bell’s Tile Works; black trim tilework from Walker Zanger

Doors and windows: Wood, stained to match, from Pella Windows and Doors

Walls: White Taffetas from UltraGlas

Lighting: Pendant from Cherry Tree Design

Decor elements: Antique refurbished shoji screens from Yoshino Japanese Antiques

Backsplash: Stone mosaic mural from Francois & Co

Kitchen sink: Milla, stainless steel

Faucets: Brizo, brushed stainless steel

Oven: Thermador

Cooktop, hood, refrigeration, dishwasher: Miele

Microwave: GE

Story by Charles Moxham

Photography by Suki Medencevic

Facing page: A Japanese shoji screen protects the butcher’s block bagua element on three sides. These special areas are set in maximum light. The screen is backlit, adding to the natural light coming from the adjacent window. A contemporary pendant also adds illumination.

Above: Different sides of the octagonal island respond to different areas of the kitchen – and the dining area. The designer was able to make use of an existing ceiling space to create the feature soffit. This is painted silver to enhance its reflective qualities. The credenza to the left extends the functionality of the kitchen into the dining area.