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# BC HOME & GARDEN

## INSIDE AND OUT

KITCHEN RENO ON A DIME  
CREATING AN OUTDOOR  
ENTERTAINING AREA

**OPEN CONCEPT** A traditional, separate cooking area is connected to the main kitchen and living space with a glass door and windows for the illusion of one big space. Light, hardwood floors contrast with the dark, custom cabinetry and also serve as an extra reflective surface. In the Chinese kitchen, light, porcelain tiles (selected for their durability) blend with the hardwood floor. The functional layout is the perfect place for the Guo family to fry, sizzle and experiment.



# FUSION + FLOW

A Shanghai family blends traditional Asian influences into their contemporary Point Grey home for an elegant balance

TEXT SINEAD KEENE. PHOTOGRAPHY JANIS NICOLAY

Susan Li and Jason Guo knew exactly what they wanted when they purchased a lot in the stunning Point Grey neighbourhood of Vancouver in 2010. Since relocating from China's largest city eight years ago, the Shanghai family has been enchanted by the contemporary style of West Coast architecture. Although eager for a modern home built with natural stones and cedar wood, the couple also wished to preserve certain

elements of Asian culture in their new abode. To achieve this unique balance, they employed John Henshaw and Joy Chao of the Vancouver-based architecture firm John Henshaw Architect Inc. to help them achieve the perfect marriage of traditional and contemporary design.

#### ENERGY FLOW

The ancient Chinese art of feng shui is based on

## A Traditional Chinese Kitchen Gets a Modern Makeover

Rich aromas and heavy smoke are often associated with Chinese-style cooking. A gourmet cook, Li wanted to ensure that her new kitchen was the optimal space in which to cook family favourites such as steamed fish, dumplings and tasty stir-fries. Traditionally, Asian homes have a separate room for cooking. This proved challenging as the very core of this home was the intermingling of space and light.

The solution was to create a separate cooking area connected to the kitchen and living space with a glass door and windows for the illusion of one big space. The five-foot by 10-foot room hosts a six-burner stove with a heavy-duty commercial fan to manage smoke, a storage area and space for food preparation. Stainless steel was used instead of tiles to ensure ease in the cleaning process.

Integrating such a functional space into the kitchen plan proved no challenge for Henshaw and Chao, whose experience in the Asian market has equipped them with problem-solving tools for such traditional requests. We have designed these quite a bit over the years, says Chao, so we perfected the science behind it and know how to design it in a way that flows well. So, even though it's a separate room, it is not completely cut off.

The layout makes taking food out of the fridge, prepping on the island and then cooking a snap. It is organized in a very functional way, explains Henshaw. The room serves as the perfect location for Li to fry, sizzle and experiment.

the practice of arranging your environment so that chi, or energy, flows gently through the space. With this in mind, Henshaw created an open floor plan for the living area, creating optimal light and stunning views of the North Shore Mountains and an adjacent park. "If you come in from the garage at the back you can look through the house and see the view in the distance," says Henshaw. "It was a concept we incorporated to increase the spaciousness and the spectacular view from the house."



**SHELF LIFE** The custom curio cabinet is the architect's interpretation of a dining room buffet. The engineered walnut shelves match the kitchen cabinets.

This elegant, open-concept design resulted in the abandonment of traditional plans including room divisions and even the barriers of interior and exterior space. As a result of the unique topography of the site, the living area is designed to flow into a sleek wooden deck merging outside and in. A wall of nine-foot-high windows binds the deck to the luxurious indoor living area and can be opened to unify the two spaces.

### CULTURE FUSION

While many Chinese homeowners who settle in British Columbia are preoccupied with perfecting the art of feng shui, Li and Guo adopted a more relaxed approach to design.

The home may appear to have a subtle Asian influence to the untrained eye, but special care was given to weave in elements of feng shui. Becoming familiar with the intricate Chinese art, centred on placement and flow, was a learning curve for Henshaw, but something he has perfected after a number of years in the business. For example, when you walk in a front door, the

stairs should not be seen. Upon entering a bedroom, the foot of the bed must first be visible, as opposed to the side.

"With feng shui," adds Chao, "you don't want the front door streamlined to the back door. When you do that, all the good energy is coming in and then going out the back door right away."

### SOCIAL HUB

Li and Guo's home has become a hub for family and friends for activities ranging from wine tasting to video gaming. Simple furnishings are combined with rich bursts of colour from plants, accessories and art commissioned especially for the home. Li describes this space, complete with a volcanic ash bath and functional Chinese kitchen, as their dream home. Elegance and light is underpinned by comfort and practicality resulting in a space of low-key luxury and a fusion of tradition and contemporary. ■

STYLIST Maureen Willick See SOURCES on page 42



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