



The Suis refurbished their vintage Wedgewood stove and modernized the rest of their kitchen. Below, a closeup of the scene that daily transports the homeowners to Italy.

They admired its charm and long-lived usefulness and wanted to keep it in the family. However, at nearly a century old, the classic appliance was showing its age. In the Bay Area, that's a good problem to have. Reliance Appliance, Berkeley's vintage stove specialists, to the rescue. Now the focal point of the kitchen, the exquisitely refurbished vintage stove sparkles with newly chromed griddle tops, hinges and handles, and adds chef's-kitchen credibility.

With such an exceptional focal point, Sui chose a somber gray color for the walls and cabinets to showcase the vintage appliance. Enlivened with contrasting stone countertops and opalescent glass tile backsplash, the glass tile provides an elegant transition between counters and cabinets plus a pop of sparkle. Vintage brass lighting, colorful Roman shades, and delicate, stained glass windows further enhance the Italian coffee bar feel.

The kitchen's island is spacious and comfortably scaled, imparting an intuitive flow while providing space for casual dining or kid's homework. A small, vintage-inspired WC steps away from the kitchen is a welcome convenience.

Like any visitor to the Old Country, Sui took hundreds of photos of the bucolic Mediterranean countryside, choosing one for a backdrop for her dedicated coffee nook. The image was truly picture perfect but would be marred by the presence of an electrical outlet.

"I love this image; it transports me back to Italy every time I look at it," said Sui. "So I hired a faux finishes painter to disguise the outlets on the photo and make it whole. It's the perfect backdrop for our daily coffee ritual."

Some folks just have their priorities right.

SHELTER

The Kitchen of Her Dreams

A Mediterranean countryside scene transports a homeowner to Italy for each cup of coffee she enjoys in her revamped kitchen.

By Ramona d'Viola

An Italophile who loves to cook, trapped in a tiny kitchen for way too long: an all-too-common "recipe for disaster" in the East Bay's older homes. Jenny Sui's 1960s-era galley (in a 1920s-era Alameda home) was long overdue for a makeover.

The struggle was real. After 15 years of making do with a cramped kitchen cooking for four (or more), Sui, and her husband, James, turned to Alameda's kitchen remodelers CUCINA (formerly Cucina di Cannelora) to bring a decidedly Italian flair and function to their home.

So enamored of *la dolce vita*, the Suis had the exterior of their home painted to resemble an Italianate villa, replete with curly clusters of grapes. They wanted their kitchen to match that Italian passion.

CUCINA's lead designer, Linh Nguyen, worked closely with Sui, who had a very clear vision of what she wanted — a spacious, traditionally inspired kitchen with ample counter and storage space and spot dedicated to the art of espresso drink-making. *Che meraviglia!*

After taking the room down to the studs, CUCINA's designers added 6 feet of depth to the 12-foot-6-inch-wide floor plan. The new space expanded the kitchen's footprint significantly,

while providing additional square footage for an upstairs laundry room and master bedroom patio.

Once the construction was completed, Sui brought *la cucina dei suoi sogni* (the kitchen of her dreams) to bear, including refurbishing a vintage stove and finding a faux finishes painter.

The home's original Wedgewood was still in use when the Suis purchased their Alameda home.

Resource

CUCINA, 1918 Broadway, Alameda.

