

A TUDOR FOR TODAY

WITH PLENTY OF TEXTURE
AND SUBDUED HUES,
A MODERN MATCH IS MADE



The Ann Sacks St. Petersburg chiseled limestone fireplace sets the tone for architect Nils Finne's goal of bringing freshness to the kitchen yet blending it with the rest of the home, built in 1932. His theory for the loveseat and coffee table is, "Every kitchen needs a lounging area." The Robbinses love having people over for dinner. "We have them jump in sometimes and help," Dick says. "We had a pizza party, and everybody did their own pizza."

WHEN WINTER gets gloomy, the gloomy go for pizza.

But Bonnie and Dick Robbins don't go far. Just down to the kitchen to fire up the pizza oven.

The Robbinses live in a grand old Tudor Revival on Lake Washington, a home of pedigree: built by noted Seattle architect A.H. Albertson in 1932. Red-brick exterior, clay-tiled roof, immense planks of sugar-pine paneling in the entry. Green lawn rolling toward blue water. An interior of subdued elegance and quiet colors that suit this house of a certain age.

But the kitchen had not aged well. It was dowdy. It was outdated. (No, really. It had a horizontal cabinet refrigerator.) It was way too small. And, worst of all, it had no pizza oven.

"Dick just insisted on the pizza oven," says Bonnie Robbins.

"A winter food," says Dick Robbins.

"The Napoli kind," says Bonnie.

"Often with very little or no tomato sauce," says Dick, a man who packs a thermometer gun that tells him when the oven is ready. "A real thin crust, almost crispy, and you need it about 700 degrees for a *thin* crust."

To get their piece of the pie, they turned to architect Nils Finne of Finne Architects.

"When I met Dick and Bonnie, they said they'd been waiting 35 years to do this," he says.

"This" turned out to be punching out the back wall of the 4,500-square-foot stately home, adding a sitting area, fireplace/pizza oven, an island, and counters and cabinets to spare. Finne's challenge was to make it modern, yet make

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Northwest Living by Rebecca Teagarden
photographed by Benjamin Benschneider



Dick Robbins and Finne had what they call "a couple of schemes" going to chill the island limestone on command, making it perfect for rolling out pie crusts. The solution turned out to be a simple one: Fill the counter with ice packs, cover with towels and wait half an hour. The random-width ceiling coffers play against the random floor planks.

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it match. He did so by keeping colors subdued and letting textures go wild.

"I wanted to get into the spirit of the home, but I also wanted something of today," he says.

The result is a quiet riot of surfaces that allow shades of white to go deep.

Pratt & Larson Mojave field tile has the look of troweled plaster. The limestone for the fireplace/pizza oven, Ann Sacks St. Petersburg chiseled limestone, is just that — very chiseled. A bit of the exterior brick can be seen inside around the windows. The red-oak floors mimic the random-width planks in the living room. The randomly spaced ceiling coffers echo the floor.

And then there are the cabinets. One of a kind.


To simulate the hand-chiseled gouges of the limestone, Finne called for cabinet panels cut with a CNC (Computer Numeric Controlled) router. And, now, where limestone leaves off, cabinets begin.

Making it personal, Finne designed a breakfast table and small oval coffee table with blued-steel bases for the room. Both feature contemporary lines with chestnut-stained mahogany tops. The breakfast table is made cheerful

with a scalloped edging. He also drew up two blued-steel and blown-glass chandeliers for the room.

It was an exacting project by an exacting architect for an exacting client, an engineer. For example, there was a complicated crossing-of-the-flues challenge to work in both oven and fireplace. But Dick was left impressed: Finne "moved the bearing wall, and he replaced it with these huge steel beams," he says.

Before the room was cast in stone — and tile and wood — it was created temporarily in movie-set ply, foam and cardboard. Everything. Even the chandelier bowls were mocked up in foam. The ceiling coffers in ply. Heights were raised and lowered. The kitchen island, they discovered, was a foot too big. No problem. The offending 12 inches were sawed off and it was just right.

"We wanted something where our guests could be with us while I cook. And we love the kitchen for just the two of us," Dick says, sharing a noon-time peanut-butter-and-jelly on wheat with his wife. 

Rebecca Teagarden is assistant editor of Pacific Northwest magazine. Benjamin Benschneider is a magazine staff photographer.



Bonnie and Dick Robbins enjoy meals just for the two of them in this cozy corner of their kitchen. Finne designed the table and chandelier. Glass artist Paul Cunningham crafted the blown-glass shades, and Matt Shoudy pounded out the metal work.

The players

Design is a team sport for architect Nils Finne of Finne Architects (www.finne.com), and he credits the artisans, most of whom he has worked with for the past 10 years, for the fine results.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR:

Paul Vassallo, project manager; Ian McMillan, superintendent. Schultz Miller Construction, Seattle

CABINETS, TABLES:

Jim Sciscoe, Seaboard Cabinets, Seattle

LIGHT FIXTURES, STEEL

TABLE BASES: Matt Shoudy, ILLUME, Seattle

BLOWN-GLASS LIGHT SHADES:

Paul Cunningham, Seattle

PIZZA-OVEN MASONRY: Jerry

Frisch, Lopez

Quarries, Everett

FIREPLACE SCREEN:

Jeff Holtby, Whidbey Island



To echo the textured limestone used on the fireplace/pizza oven, Finne had the one-of-a-kind cabinet panels cut with a CNC (Computer Numeric Controlled) router. The textures and color blends of the cabinets, Pratt & Larson Mojave field tile and Jura Gold limestone counters add depth and play to the room.