# When KITCHEN Meets

## For a perfect combination, mix one part kitchen with spaces for both indoor and outdoor dining

BY CHARLES MILLER

I finally found the dining room of my dreams, and it's in somebody else's kitchen. The dining room turned up in Eugene, Oregon, at Gary and Jan Halvorson's new house. The dining area, along with a small fireplace, is at one end of the room (photo facing page). At the other end is a kitchen with an island big enough to roll out a pizza the size of a poker table (photo right). Just past the island, the L-shaped sink counter is illuminated by sunlight filtered through nearby fir trees. The space manages simultaneously to encourage a sense of calm and to promote the contemplation of complex meals that take hours to prepare and enjoy.

As editor of the *Kitchens & Baths* issue, I get to visit lots of first-rate kitchens. Something about this one, however, puts it in a special class. It has the same level of finely crafted cabinetry, stone counters and restaurant-grade appliances that populate top-notch kitchens all across the country. But many of those kitchens might as well be trade-show displays. They're as generic as a spec house. On the other hand, the Halvorsons' kitchen suits its site and owners so well that I had to go back for a closer look to find out what makes it tick. Here's what I learned.

### This kitchen is right in the middle

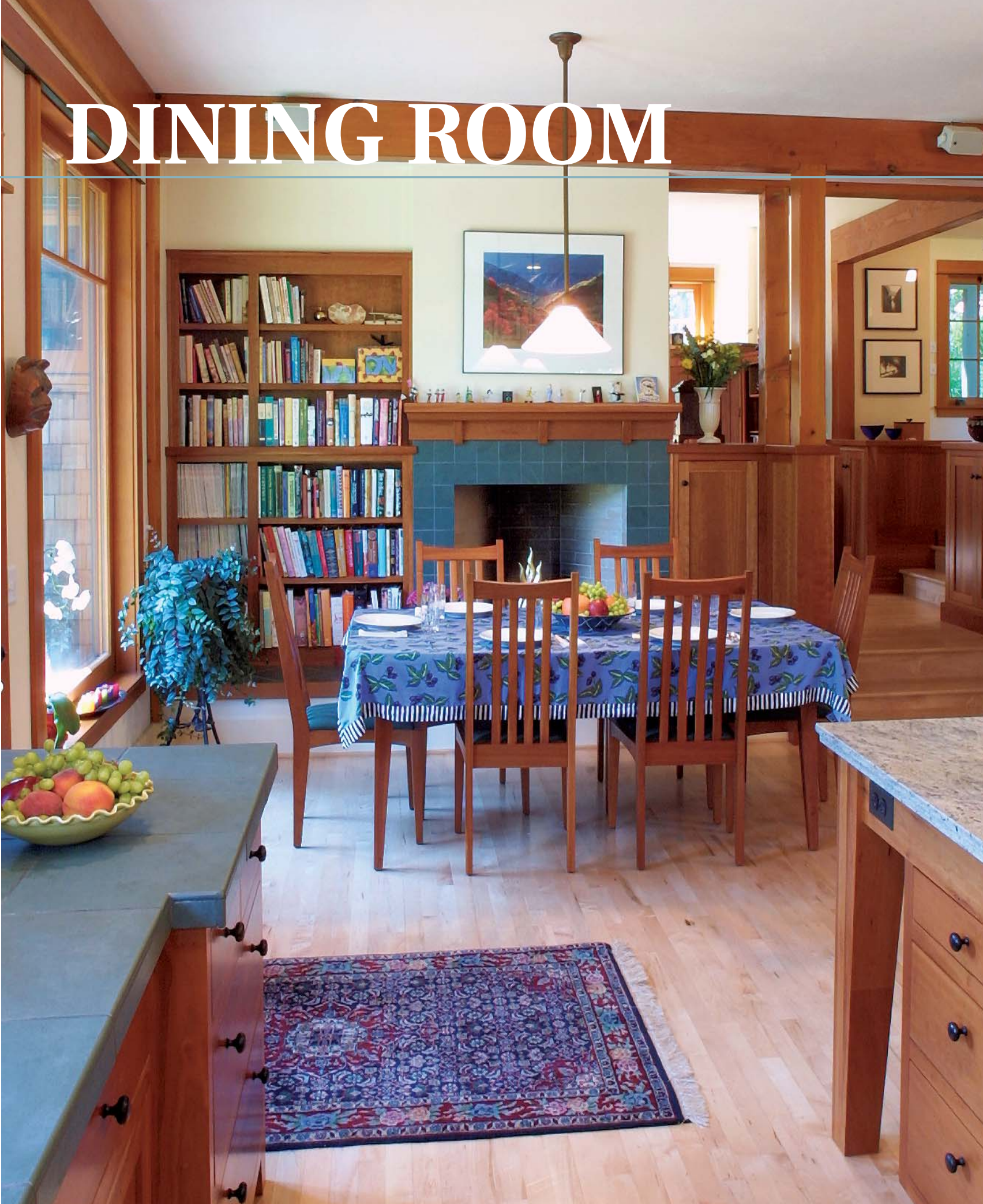
The Halvorsons' house is on a steep hillside, and it's set back a bit from the roadway. Visitors walk down a flagstone path through a garden, arriving at a covered porch. Inside the front door, the entry vestibule narrows into a hallway that leads to and overlooks the kitchen and dining room four steps below (floor-plan drawing, p. 51). On a small scale, it's a little like that feeling you get at a stadium when you squeeze through a tunnel and emerge into the daylight with the field spread out before you. This kitchen generates a real sense of arrival.

As the social center of a contemporary home, the kitchen must be the mother ship to the family's activities. The danger is that the ship will become swamped with activity, leaving a frustrated cook shooing people out of



***Books, food, fire.*** *A nearby library of cookbooks, a fireplace and a table for meals or family projects add another level of livability to this kitchen. Photo facing page taken at A on floor plan. Photo above taken at B on floor plan.*

# DINING ROOM





***Southside dining.*** *A flagstone patio off the kitchen is bordered by a garden full of fresh herbs. Built on a steep hill, the patio is supported from below by a sizable retaining wall. Photo taken at C on floor plan.*

the way. To avoid this frustration, architect Rob Thallon made plenty of adjacent places for other activities. A built-in desk next to the stairs is the mail-sorting, bill-paying station. This is also the computer zone where son Sven and daughter Sonja can instant-message their pals.

The dining table can be dressed up or down, depending on the situation. The kids can spread out homework on the table and be within easy earshot of Mom and Dad while they work in the kitchen. For special dinners, the family can dial back the pendant light, get out the candles and put a log on the fire.

Two pathways cut through the room. Both lead to social spaces on the edges of the kitchen: the flagstone terrace to the south and the music room/screened porch. These roads are well traveled, but neither traverses the workshop part of the kitchen (top photo, facing page).

Elbow room at the kitchen corner is generous but not wasteful. The distance between the island and the slate-tile counters is 48 in. This space is enough for a couple of people to work in the corridor between counter and island without getting in each other's way.

Mingling the dining room and kitchen into one larger room seems to have created a multiplier effect. The combined space is about 15 ft. by 24 ft., but it comes off as larger than a pair of 15-ft. by 12-ft. rooms. That's because the larger room can take advantage of long diagonal views through big windows.

At 10 ft. 3 in., the ceiling height is in scale with the room. A band of 6x10 timbers encircles the room at the wall-to-ceiling intersection, adding a low-key emphasis to the sturdy nature of the space. And the tall walls accommodate lots of south-facing glass overlooking the gardens and forest.

## Well-organized storage lets the people see the view

There aren't many upper cabinets for dishes, pots and pans, and foodstuffs in this kitchen. With such pleasant views, it makes sense to go for the glazing. A pantry on the north side contains most of the canned goods and pasta boxes (photo bottom left, facing page). Spices and dried beans have their own space in the shelves next to the pantry door. Items to be recycled are collected in the pullout bins in the island (photo bottom right, facing page).

Dishes and bowls have a short trip from the dishwasher to their home, a deep drawer between the dining table and the dishwasher (photo below). Just past the dining table is the most attractive storage of all: a half-dozen shelves loaded with cookbooks and magazines.

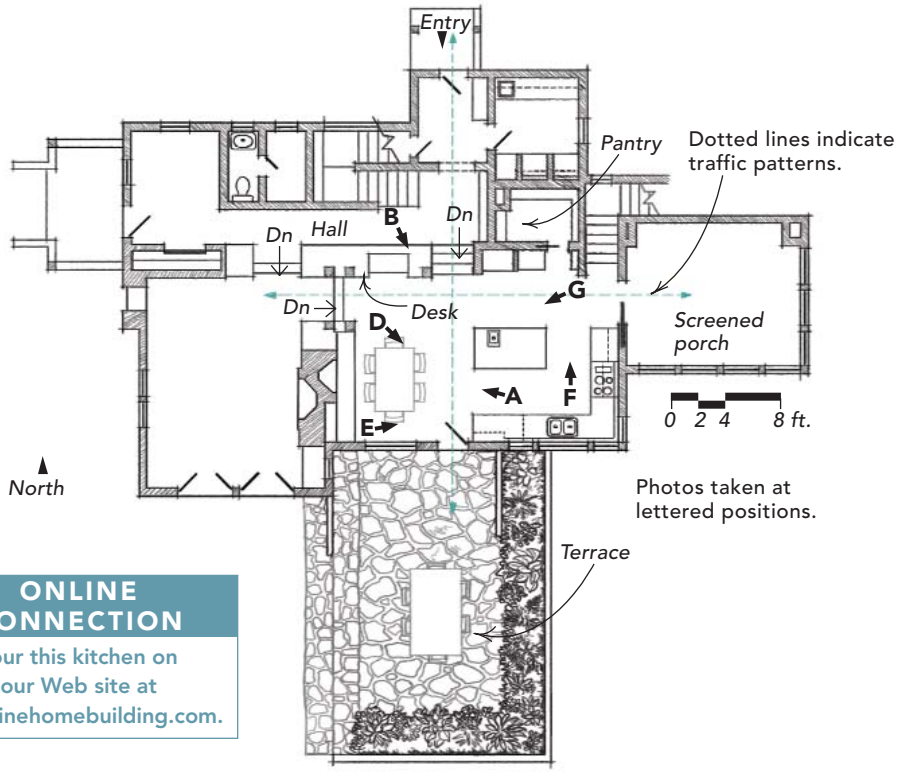


***A linear path for the dishes.*** *A big drawer midway between the dishwasher and the dining table keeps the china close at hand and cuts down on the need for upper cabinets. Photo taken at D on floor plan.*

## THE ROADS LEAD TO, AND THROUGH, THIS KITCHEN/DINING-ROOM PARTNERSHIP



***Out of the flow.*** *Food-prep areas are in the corner, away from the foot traffic to the screened porch and the patio. The 10-ft. ceiling allows an extra row of high windows to take in the south-facing view. Photo taken at E on floor plan.*




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***On-site grocery store.*** *A pantry behind the fridge provides storage space for the big things. Smaller containers tuck into the shallow cabinet next to the pantry's doorway. Photo taken at F on floor plan.*



***Island as table.*** *Tapered legs at each end of the island give it a visual lift. Shelves for cookware occupy one end. The other is shelfless, leaving space for a pair of bar stools. Photo taken at G on floor plan.*

Cherry (cabinets) and maple (floors) are the predominant woods in the room. They make for a warm backdrop to the green-slate tiles and patches of intense color: Jan's tablecloths, framed photos, a pink grapefruit here and there. There's no competition between the kitchen and the landscape. It is a collaboration.

### Grounding the kitchen

Vacant lots are few and far between in Eugene, particularly one with a patch of forest close to town. The Halvorsons found one with what turned out to be a manageable drawback: The lot is steep enough that it spooked other potential buyers. It didn't look like it would be possible to have a house and a garden on the same site, at least in close proximity to one another. That was a problem, especially for Jan, who wanted a genuine, on-the-ground patio, not a deck hanging out in thin air. Thallon suggested a series of terraces and a hefty retaining wall to create a level spot next to the kitchen (photo left, facing page).

The result is a 12-ft. by 20-ft. flagstone patio off the kitchen, with space for a grill, a dining table and planting beds for herbs. Three rows of flagstone steps on the uphill side of the patio double as festival seating during get-togethers, overlooking the summer dining room. □

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Charles Miller is editor of *Kitchens & Baths*. Photos by the author.

Drawing: Paul Perreault