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Six stunning kitchens on display at Lafayette Juniors Kitchen Tour

By Catherine Kauder



Lori and Scott Loughran-Smith's bright kitchen leads into the casual dining area. The pantry is behind the island. Photos Sora O'Doherty

quartzite countertops and a honed Turkish limestone backsplash, giving the kitchen a light and airy feel.

A large Shaw front apron fireclay farmhouse sink sits across from a six-burner Wolf range. A contractor who owns Construction Plus, Scott Loughran-Smith, designed and built the exquisite wood hood over the range. Working with Premier Kitchens on their cabinetry, the couple put other unique touches into the kitchen, such as lighting the tops of the cabinetry and installing glass panels on the sides of the upper cabinets, adding more light into the space.

Other custom touches give the kitchen warmth and personality. Vintage barn glass pendants hang from the slanted ceiling and statement-making industrial iron sconces with Edison bulbs flank the French doors that open out to their beautiful backyard and saltwater pool. Dark hardware on the alder wood cabinet doors give an interesting contrast to the textured brushed nickel pulls on the lighter cabinets. The couple put an old photo of the original home in the kitchen to show how much the neighborhood has grown since the house was built in 1941.

Homeowner Lori Loughran-Smith was hard-pressed to pinpoint one feature she enjoyed about her kitchen. "I love everything about it!" she says.

In the Upper Happy Valley area, homeowners John and Leslie Visbal built a modern kitchen perfect for their busy lifestyle and love of entertaining. The Visbals enlisted architect Steven Kubitschek and Woehrle Construction to help them bring their vision to life.

The sophisticated kitchen features clean, light grey cabinetry with Quartzite countertops and sleek Thermador appliances. Zebrino marble, a playful grey and white striped material, is used for the backsplash behind the range and for the counters in the bar area. Floors made of American scraped hickory provide a subtle contrast to the muted tones of the kitchen and surrounding modern furnishings. Interesting light fixtures from City Lights, such as the starburst pendant over the small dining table off the kitchen, function almost like pieces of art in the home.

"We like modern, clean design," says homeowner John Visbal. Since the couple both serve on the boards of nonprofit organizations, their house has served as the location of numerous fundraisers and holiday get-togethers.

Indeed, the layout of the home creates the perfect flow for hosting gatherings large or small. The front foyer flows seamlessly into the living room, kitchen and dining rooms. The back of the home features a wall of fully retractable Marvin multislide doors, which open the kitchen to the beautifully landscaped backyard and pool area. The kitchen windows above the fireclay sink fold out and open out to a bar and covered patio area complete with an outdoor fireplace. Two dishwashers and two ovens - one electric and one gas - make cooking and cleaning for a large crowd almost effortless.

In addition to these two kitchens profiled, the other homes featured on the tour include a California contemporary style kitchen, an updated traditional ranch, a cutting-edge European influenced kitchen and a contemporary farmhouse.

Tickets for the annual kitchen tour are now on sale to the general public for \$50 (\$45 tax deductible), with a box lunch available for \$15. Tickets can be purchased online at www.lafayettejuniors.org or the day of the event at Premier Kitchens (3373 Mt. Diablo Blvd.) in Lafayette.

The nonprofit beneficiaries of this year's tour are No One Left Behind, Girls Inc., City Slicker Farms, White Pony Express and the Contra Costa Crisis Center. These organizations were selected by the Lafayette Juniors for the exceptional support they provide to women, families and individuals in need throughout the East Bay.

Founded in 1953, Lafayette Juniors is a nonprofit organization comprised of local women dedicated to raising funds and offering service in support of other non-profits that serve women, families and seniors in need throughout Contra Costa and neighboring counties in the San Francisco area. Over the past 18 years, the Lafayette Juniors have raised more than \$700,000 for Bay Area nonprofit groups.



One of two dining areas in the Visbal home, this one with access to the bar.



John and Leslie Visbal are delighted with their perfect-for-entertaining kitchen. Photos Sora O'Doherty



The second dining area in the Visbal home features a City Lights starburst pendant lighting fixture.

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