



WRITER: GEORGIA HASSE
PHOTOGRAPHER: BARRY HALKIN
DESIGNER: CARMEN VONA

A KITCHEN WITH CURVE APPEAL

A contemporary vision comes to life
in an Atlantic City townhome

WHEN CREATING THE KITCHEN FOR HIS NEW BEACHFRONT townhouse, this homeowner knew exactly what he wanted: curves. To make it happen, he sought assistance from Carmen Vona of Carmana



CAMEL TONES add a warm touch to the high-gloss finish on the cabinetry (left). A closed-pore polyester seal reflects the kitchen's voluminous lighting and makes cleanup a breeze. The design's unique two-tiered granite countertop includes the breakfast bar. SOURCES: kitchen design, cabinetry, and hardware, Carmana Designs in Philadelphia; Thermador double oven with integrated microwave, Art Handler's Appliance Center in Pleasantville.

■ Modern stainless-steel elements such as the sink and appliances combine with custom hardware to complement the kitchen's streamlined cabinetry and tiered granite countertop (above right). The curved flyover lighting unit echoes the shape of the peninsula. SOURCES: bar stools, Roche-Bobois in Paramus; lighting, Artemide in Farmingdale, New York; range hood, Zephyr in San Francisco; cooktop, Wolf; sink, Franke; kitchen accessories, Häfele America in Archdale, North Carolina.

■ Designer Carmen Vona applied curly-maple veneers to the refrigerator/freezer unit (left) to integrate it with the other cabinetry. SOURCE: Sub-Zero bottom-freezer and refrigerator, Art Handler's Appliance Center in Pleasantville.





THE CONCAVE profile of the three-door pantry brings the curves into the dining area while providing generous storage for both dishes and kitchen items. A round dining table and chairs fit comfortably into the curve of the pantry. **SOURCE:** chairs, Roche-Bobois in Paramus.

Designs Ltd. in Philadelphia.

After about a year of building and tweaking, the homeowner has an award-winning, ultramodern kitchen that was worth the wait. "This kitchen is an extraordinary work of art and a wonderful place to entertain," he said. "People are absolutely mesmerized by the design."

The designer and homeowner worked together on all aspects of the project, from concept and development to finishing and installation. The finish was particularly challenging. The homeowner requested a custom finish that would showcase the lines of the cabinetry. After a number of

attempts at the ideal hue, they opted for a sunset orange with caramel undertones to complement the grain of the sequence-matched and numbered curly maple veneers.

The stained wood is protected under a 100-percent closed-pore polyurethane finish that provides a high-gloss contemporary look and is "also incredibly easy to clean," said Anna Marie Vona, the designer's spouse and co-owner of Carmana Designs. "My husband and I are passionate cooks, and keeping a hygienic atmosphere in the kitchen is important to me. The polyester sealer we use in the formula makes cleaning a breeze because

grease cannot permeate the wood. In five years, this kitchen should still look new." That finish, coupled with a powerful exhaust fan inside an Italian-made stainless-steel hood, will prevent typical kitchen grime and buildup.

A champion of the expression "a place for all things and everything in its place," Vona's goal was to make practical use of every square inch when designing the cabinetry. To do so, he utilized a variety of innovative accoutrements by kitchen- and bath-savvy German manufacturer Häfele. He installed the company's soap dispensers, tilt-out sponge trays, and cutlery and spice drawers so that countertop clutter is virtually eliminated. Vona's priority on function also marries form in a streamlined concave pantry unit that provides liberal built-in storage with curves that flow into the dining area.

Keeping both a modern aesthetic and everyday practicality in mind, a two-tiered Absolute Black granite countertop and backsplash boost the workspace while enhancing the cabinetry's warm caramel palette. Custom-cut brushed hardware — fashioned into straight tubular pulls from raw stainless steel — maintains the pristine, uncluttered look.

The curves emerge again in the kitchen's gravity-defying flyovers, which feature integrated pendant and halogen recessed lighting by Artemide. Anna Maria Vona said her husband mirrored the curves of the peninsula on the ceiling to achieve balance and proportion, "a certain yin and yang, by using both symmetrical and asymmetrical designs."

When asked what he liked best about the kitchen, the homeowner answered that it was watching the project evolve through various stages of development as much as the finished product. "My dreams actually became a reality. I thoroughly enjoyed the creative process and was confident that Carmen ... would achieve precisely what I had in mind." The project's success was validated when Carmana Designs won first place and best of show in *Custom Woodworking Business* magazine's 2004 Design Portfolio Awards Contest.

But this kitchen was only chapter one for Vona and his client. The homeowner has also tapped Carmana Designs to tackle the kitchen design and installation for his primary home in Pennsylvania. The plan is to retain a similar streamlined and curvaceous design, crafted this time around in a pale English sycamore. ■