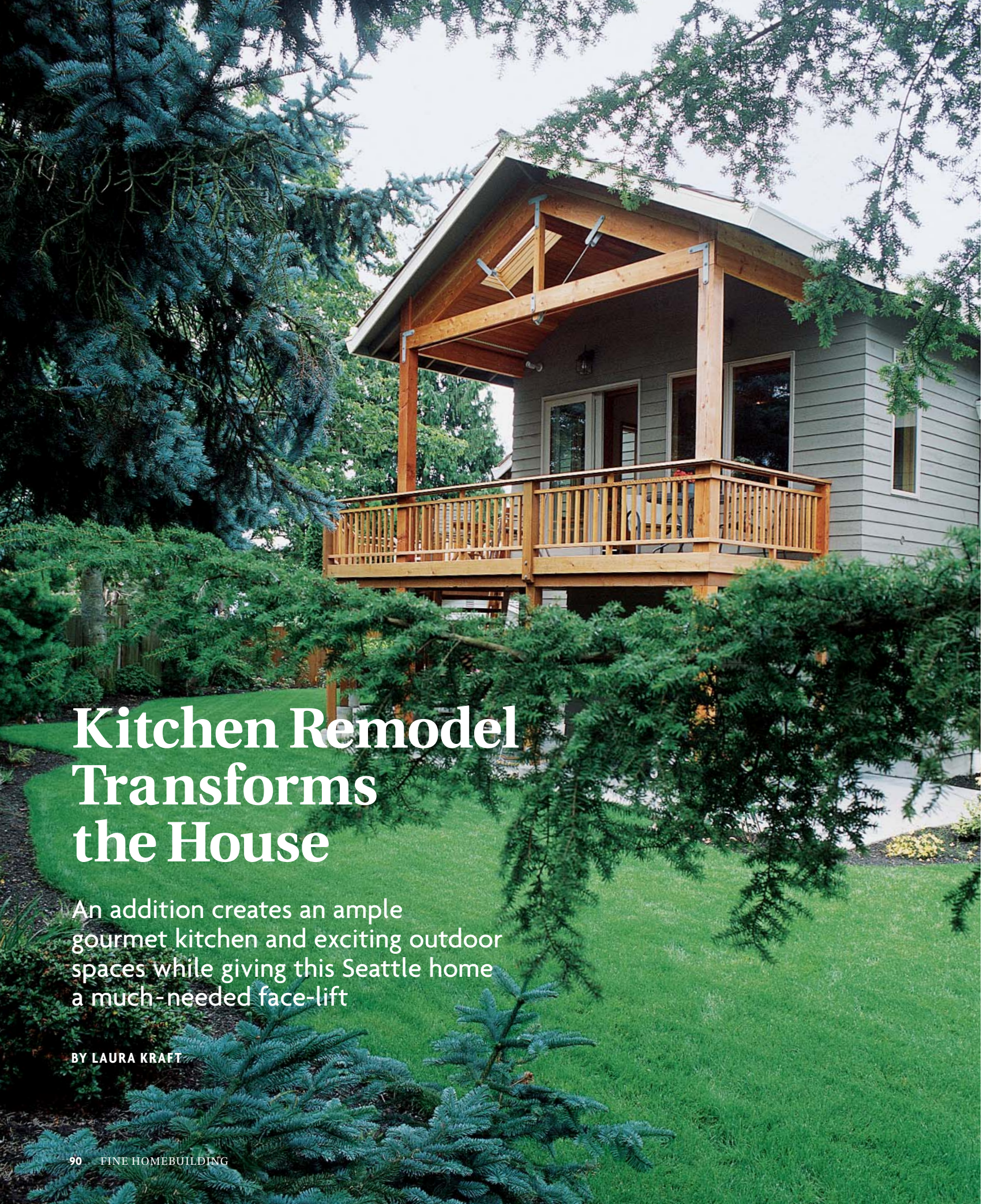


Kitchen Remodel Transforms the House

An addition creates an ample gourmet kitchen and exciting outdoor spaces while giving this Seattle home a much-needed face-lift

BY LAURA KRAFT

My clients, Bob and Judy Niskanen, had lived in their 1970 North Seattle split-level home for 16 years. As the last of their three children neared the end of high school, the Niskanens foresaw a change in lifestyle that they wanted reflected in their home.

Their existing kitchen was small and outdated with a cramped, informal eating area. This kitchen arrangement had suited the Niskanens while their kids were growing up and whole family gatherings were rare and often brief. But with the kids grown up, they now needed a larger eating area for more leisurely family gatherings, along with an expanded, updated kitchen for preparing gourmet meals.

A plan of attack

I began by assessing the home's strong points that needed to be preserved and reinforced. Outside, the Niskanens enjoyed long-range views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains from an unattractive '70s-style deck. The living room and formal dining room inside shared those same views through large glass doors and windows.

Besides the problems with the kitchen, negative points of the house included a south facade that was flat and uninteresting (photo below). The deck that wrapped around the south side to access sliding-glass doors to the eating area was too narrow to be of any use. Also, the deck stairs that led from the house to the lower level were inconvenient at best.

I drew up several different possibilities to give Bob and Judy a place to start. They picked and chose parts of each scheme before we settled on a final direction. They wanted me to include a strong diagonal gesture in the plan, exposed structure in the ceiling of the addition and a covered porch outside the kitchen (photo facing page).

From flat to fancy. A covered porch on the kitchen addition (photo facing page) dresses up the original facade (photo above). Photos taken at A on floor plan.

Kitchen in the middle. The central truss bay is home to the heart of the well-lighted kitchen with plenty of countertop space ready for action. Photo taken at B on floor plan.

Truss bays define spaces in the addition

The addition continues the lines of the original kitchen out from the south wall of the house, more than doubling the area of the old kitchen (floor plan p. 93). Following Bob and Judy's wishes, I introduced exposed structure in the form of trusses that span the addition. The trusses are set on 8-in. by 7-in. fir columns and are spaced to create a series of bays inside the addition. The truss bays are treated as separate compositions, each with a distinct purpose. Together, the bays carry a visual rhythm through the addition.

The innermost and largest bay comprises the refrigerator and microwave cabinetry, additional small-appliance and pantry storage, and a compact kitchen office. This bay also houses the doorways into the adjacent formal dining room and hallway.

The next truss bay houses the heart of the working kitchen along the west wall (photo above), including the kitchen sink and a large expanse of countertop workspace. On the east wall, the addition takes a slight jog after the first truss, creating space for a built-in hutch and a smaller built-in cabinet nestled between the truss columns (photo p. 93).

A kitchen peninsula extending from a column on the west wall helps to define an intimate reading nook tucked into the bay on the south side of the addition. The expanded informal dining area fits nicely into the other side of this bay.

Generous windows and 8-ft. sliding-glass doors let lots of natural light into the addition. The sliders open onto a covered porch built within an exterior truss bay, which continues the bay rhythm to the outdoors.

Missing conspicuously from this discussion of the bays is the kitchen island, which houses the cooktop and oven. I placed the island diagonally in the room to cut through the rectilinear spaces of the truss bays, breaking them up but unifying them at the same time. The diagonal placement also funnels traffic flow around the hub of the kitchen and toward the doorways.

Another unifying factor throughout the addition is the custom cabinetwork by Bob Willman of Cottage Lake Wood Works in

Bottom photo this page: Laura Kraft

Spokane. Bob built all the cherry cabinets to the level of fine furniture, including the beautiful built-in hutch with glass doors and shelves.

The industrial delicacy of exposed structure

The clear-finished trusses not only set the rhythm of the room, but they also look and feel satisfying in their own right. Kron-Kellet Contractors worked diligently fabricating them on site out of #1 Douglas fir. The top chords are solid 4x10 beams, while the bottom chord is made of a pair of 2x10s. A 4x4 king post connects the top and bottom chords. Steel connections were specially fabricated and left exposed at every intersection of the truss members. Diagonal webs made of steel rod hang from straps on the top chords and wrap around the bottoms of the king posts. At first, the steel fabricator wouldn't provide the steel rods for the webs because he knew that bending steel weakens it. However, my engineer, Peter Nalis, assured us that the stresses were well within safe limits.

But the trusses are just part of a hybrid roof system. We had to satisfy the energy-code requirements of Washington state (R-30 for

OUTDOOR SPACES FOR ALL OCCASIONS

The new deck outside the addition is made up of different sections that serve different functions. The intimate covered porch (photo left, taken at C on floor plan) can be enjoyed in all types of weather. The sunny, open area boasts striking views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains (photo below, taken at D on floor plan). A deck bridge connects the two spaces, letting daylight reach the lower level.

roof insulation). The easiest, most economical solution was to build a 2x12 insulated roof. With a structural ridge beam or collar ties, this system can be structurally sufficient by itself.

We also could have furred down the ceiling between the trusses for the insulation, but that solution would have hidden the top chord. And the Niskanens were adamant about having the aesthetic benefits of fully exposed trusses. My solution was using the trusses to support the 2x12 insulated layer above. With the trusses holding up the insulating layer, the 2x12 roof didn't need a structural ridge beam.

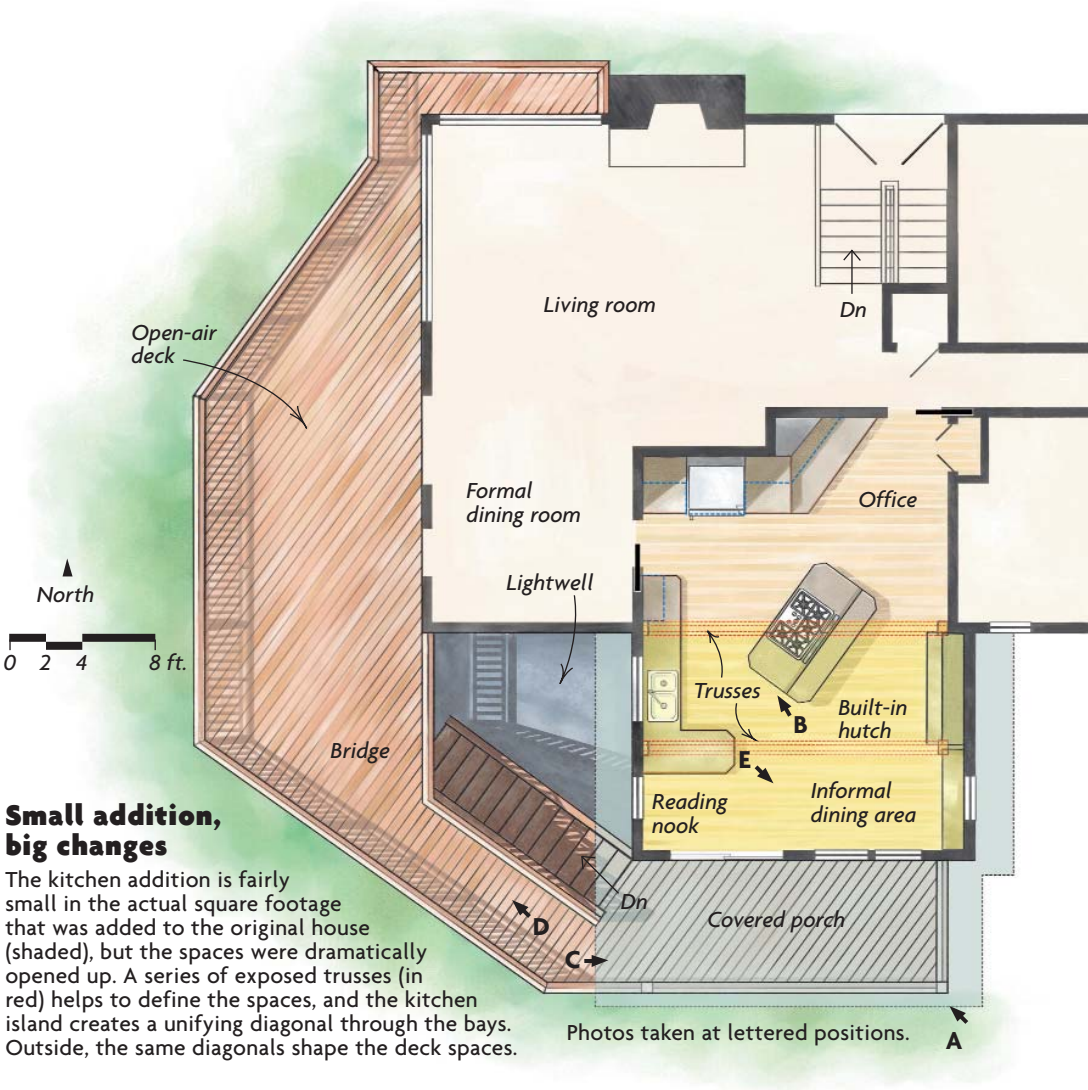
In addition to their structural and space-defining functions, the trusses were to earn their keep in another way. I took advantage of the double 2x10 bottom chord to conceal low-voltage overhead lighting that complements the natural lighting from the windows. Additional task lighting is installed under the upper cabinets as well as over the sink and stove. The hutch also has built-in lights that shine through glass shelves.

A deck with a different angle

The final design element is the house's new deck, which is made up of three distinct sections. The first section is the covered porch outside the addition (top photo, facing page). With a nearby bank of conifers, this part of the deck is meant to be quiet and intimate. The roof overhead means that the porch can be a cool, shady spot on a sunny day, or dry and protected in Seattle's infamous rainy weather.

The second section of the deck is a roomy, open outdoor space (bottom photo, facing page) where Bob and Judy can enjoy Seattle's mild summer weather and the distant views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. I continued the strong diagonal from inside the addition to help shape this open part of the deck. The decking laid out on a bias further reinforces these powerful diagonal shapes.

The third part of the deck is a bridge that connects the open part of the deck to the covered porch. Filling in the corner formed by the addition would have blocked light to glass doors in a basement-level family room. But the bridge, built on a diagonal, leaves the corner open as a lightwell to the lower level. A stairway alongside the bridge provides convenient traffic flow between the deck and the lower level. □



Small addition, big changes

The kitchen addition is fairly small in the actual square footage that was added to the original house (shaded), but the spaces were dramatically opened up. A series of exposed trusses (in red) helps to define the spaces, and the kitchen island creates a unifying diagonal through the bays. Outside, the same diagonals shape the deck spaces.

Built-in kitchen furniture. A beautiful cherry hutch is built between the posts of the central truss bay. Windows in the next bay light up the informal eating area. Photo taken at E on floor plan.

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Drawing: Paul Perreault. Bottom photo facing page: Lani Doley.