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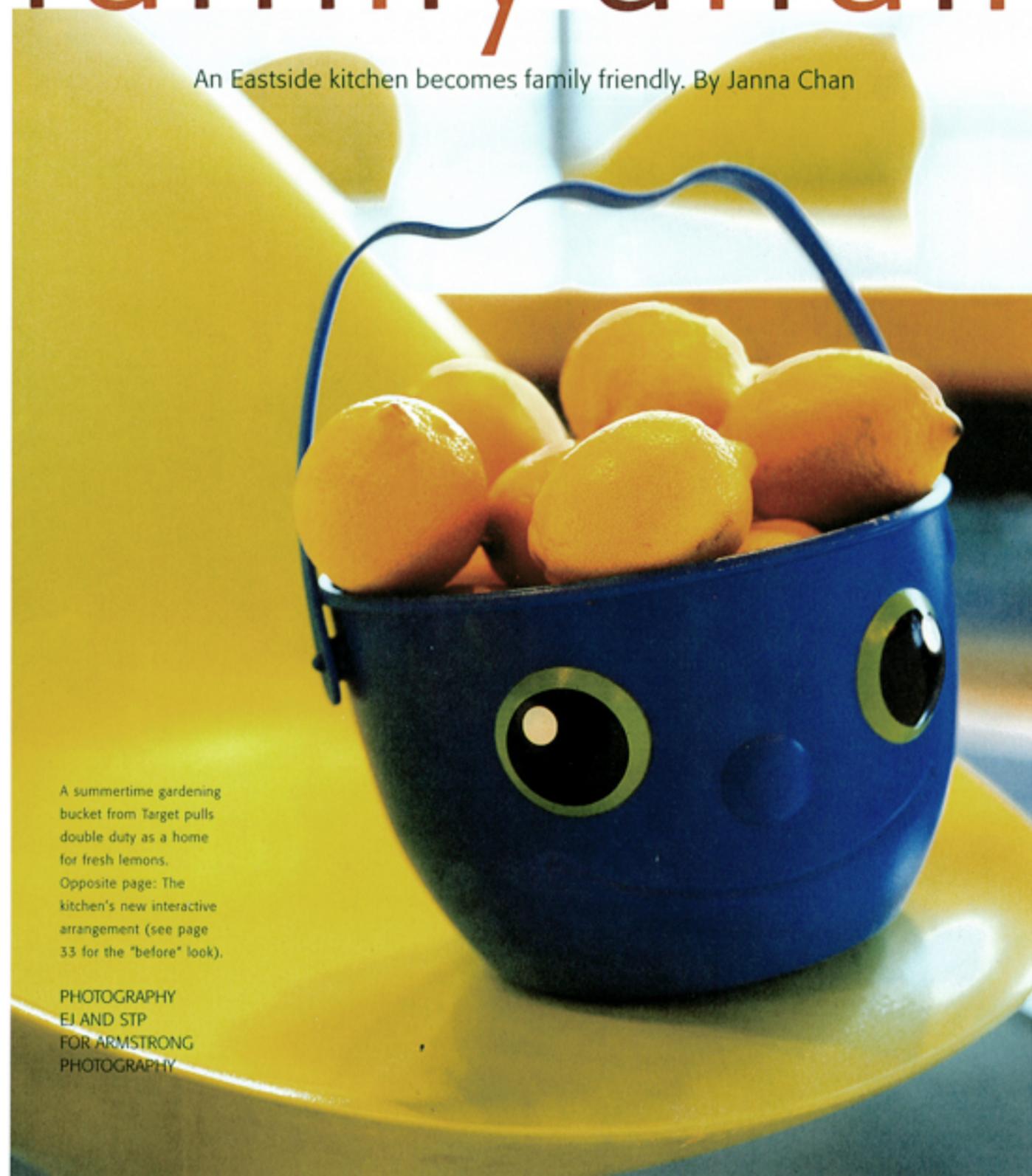


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# family affair

An Eastside kitchen becomes family friendly. By Janna Chan



A summertime gardening bucket from Target pulls double duty as a home for fresh lemons. Opposite page: The kitchen's new interactive arrangement (see page 33 for the "before" look).

PHOTOGRAPHY  
EJ AND STP  
FOR ARMSTRONG  
PHOTOGRAPHY

# W

hen Linda and Cameron (who requested surname anonymity) bought their 5,500-square-foot Bellevue home nearly six years ago, they were impressed by the sleek, sedate colors of the kitchen. ✨ Done up in black, white and speckled gray, the kitchen was modern and upscale. But with their first daughter on the way, and eventually two more daughters in the next two years, the couple soon realized that "modern and upscale" didn't impress a toddler armed with crayons. ✨ A full-time mother, Linda spends nearly 80 percent of her time at home in the kitchen area with her daughters. The previous kitchen, while beautiful, didn't function logically for a large family. The layout of most of the major appliances, such as the dishwasher, sink and microwave, caused congestion in the aisles. The refrigerator door opened into a walkway, often blocking entry into the kitchen, and a 5-foot granite wall separated mom from where the girls would be playing. "I'm only 5 feet 4 inches, and I couldn't see over the wall to check what the children were doing in the family room," explains Linda. "So, if anyone squeaked I would have to run a pattern. I felt like a quarterback."



"The kitchen has our personalities stamped all over it." Not to mention a few handprints from three little girls.



Last February, the couple decided to move around a few appliances and brought Seattle architect and structural engineer Suzanne Zahr of Zahra Design Studio on board to assist them. Zahr started off the project by drawing up a few diagrams to visualize the areas of congestion. With the drawings in front of them, it became obvious that the problems in the kitchen would require more than merely moving a dishwasher—it would require moving everything. Construction was completed in a short eight weeks at a cost of \$180,000, with the main goal for Zahr to provide a family-friendly kitchen that could still function as a stylish, adult space.

Using IsGood Woodworks for the custom-made cabinets, and with supervision by contractor Schultz Miller, the project became a design-build effort where the couple's decisiveness played an integral role. "Linda and Cameron knew exactly what they wanted," says Zahr. "They wanted to warm up the colors of the kitchen, make access to appliances more convenient and utilize the beautiful view of Lake Washington."

Zahr began the process by swapping out the old countertops, thin sheets of granite, for thick slabs of sand-textured granite. Quarter-sawn white oak cabinets, equipped with special compartments for things such as cutting boards and plastic container lids, replaced old wood cabinets lightened from exposure to direct sunlight. And a major transformation happened when the granite backsplash separating the family room and kitchen was knocked down to allow in more light and warmth from the west-facing windows. The placement of the stovetop was adjusted to assist the left-handed couple and two of their three daughters, and a large 4-by-8-foot baking counter was added for the girls. Zahr made "homes" for everything in the kitchen, from a state-of-the-art Miele Integrated coffee station for Cameron to special cabinets for the Dean & DeLuca spices that Linda likes to use. To accommodate Linda's petite stature, the countertops were set at a lower height. Zahr even designed cereal-box-specific cabinets to ensure that everything would fit just right. Low-voltage strip lighting, operated with dimmers, borders every cabinet and spotlights the couple's funky '60s-inspired Jill Rosenwald ceramic serving pieces and a favorite clay sculpture entitled *Love Entwined* that they bought in Paris.

Today, the kitchen is almost unrecognizable from its former self. A dramatic evolution from stark and imposing to bright and spacious, the clean lines and warm tones still give the family-functional space a grown-up edge. "If we're not hosting a charity event or inviting a group of 20 kindergartners over for a party, you'll still find all of us in the kitchen," says Linda. "Except now it feels right. The kitchen has our personalities stamped all over it." Not to mention a few handprints from three little girls. +

Janna Chan is a Seattle-based freelance writer.



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

PAGE 31: This funky and family-friendly dining table by Swerve has oversize wheels for mobility and height-adjustable plastic chairs. This page, top to bottom: A built-in Miele coffeemaker makes coffee-on-the-go a reality; a felt-lined silverware drawer is just one example of how every object in the kitchen has a precise home; customized built-in end drawers face the dining room and provide the perfect home for place mats, extra candles and a few toys for the girls. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: **Before:** A 5-foot-tall granite wall once separated the kitchen from the family room. **After:** The granite wall was replaced with a large baking counter, bar seating, hidden storage and an additional walkway that brings the two rooms together. **Before:** The location of the range placed Linda's back to the action, and the center seating made maneuvering cumbersome. **After:** The bar seating was moved outside the main kitchen area so the girls could still watch mom but be out of the way. The range now faces the family room and is placed conveniently for a left-handed person.

FOR COMPLETE DETAILS, SEE FIND IT, PAGE 46.