



**This photo:** Oversize rattan pendant lights from France focus task lighting on this Kitchen's island, where a bar area invites family and guests to sit and linger. **Opposite:** Hand-hammered hardware was chosen for its sturdy, industrial look.



# Light & Easy

Organic finishes and dramatic features play up the Florida sunshine in this vacation-home kitchen.

BY DEBRA LANDWEHR ENGLE | PHOTOS JEAN ALLSOPP  
FIELD EDITOR LYNN NESMITH





When architect Steve Mouzon set out to design a vacation home in Alys Beach, Florida, he realized it was his opportunity to do something he'd always wanted: Create a residence with thick walls and substantial proportions that "would never be mistaken for a clapboard cottage."

Set in a community of whitewashed structures inspired by those in Bermuda and Antigua, the home's kitchen captures natural light from two courtyards. "When the light comes in," Mouzon says, "it glances off those thick-walled buttresses and then diffuses, making for more beautiful light within the room."

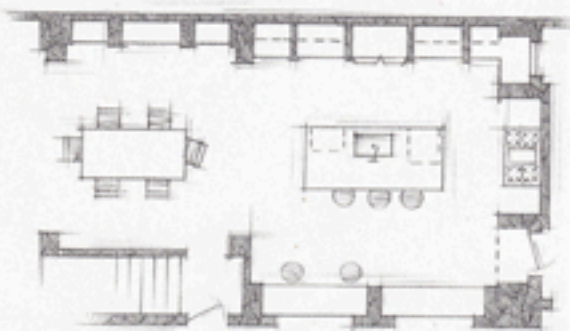
The hefty construction allowed for classic proportions, which Mouzon accentuated with arches over the range and at the intersection of the kitchen and dining area. "This gives a lot more substance to the rooms," he says. "You're not showing nearly as much love to a room with a squared-off Sheetrock ceiling as you are with a vaulted ceiling."

Because the architecture adorns the kitchen, Alys Beach architects Marianne Khoury-Vogt and Erik Vogt, along with interior designer Beth Dillard, kept finishes and furnishings to a minimum. "It was a very conscious decision to keep the palette simple," Khoury-Vogt says.

Again, light was treated as an active element. It bounces off the imperfections in the hand-scraped red gum cabinets and accent walls, Dillard says. And it shows in the hand marks in the Venetian plaster.

"The plaster is steel-troweled, so it's slick with a beautiful sheen," Khoury-Vogt says. "When it captures the light, you can see the movement of the hand that applied the surface."

The finishes, Dillard says, create a yin and yang of warm and cold. On the cool side are the Dominican







A perfect balance of cool and warm, this kitchen relies on organic elements of stone, wood, and plaster to accentuate its elegant proportions.





**Left:** Layers of angles and arches accent the range hood, which is finished with the same Venetian plaster as the walls. "There are rounded plaster corners, so there's little trim," architect Marianne Khoury-Vogt says. "The plaster is what really defines the space." **Below:** Cabinets recess into deep masonry walls. A small niche with a recessed window illuminates a corner. **Opposite:** A vaulted ceiling defines the dining space between the kitchen and living area. The table and light fixture introduce varying wood finishes but stay within the basic elements: wood, stone, and plaster.

shell-stone floor tiles and buffed limestone countertops. And the warmth comes from the reclaimed red gum, which surprised Dillard when the raw wood was delivered. "It looked like it could be burned as trash," she said. But when installers scraped it by hand, the beauty emerged. A light coat of wax protects the wood, making it easy to maintain.

Although there's no pantry, storage is ample. "Wherever we had added depth in the walls, it became an opportunity to capture space for storage and niches," Khoury-Vogt says.

The island gathers essential functions in one spot for family and friends. And the open floor plan allows for easy flow and communication between the kitchen and dining area. "If you're in the kitchen, you're not isolated," Khoury-Vogt says. "You can participate in the life of the house."

The resulting kitchen is light, contemporary, and easy to maintain, thanks to the underlying classic proportions. "It didn't need a lot," Khoury-Vogt says. "Just wood, stone, and plaster. They work beautifully together."

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 118



"Everything about the room seems substantial. It's like a converted wine cellar from 500 years ago."

**Steve Mouzon**  
architect





#### DESIGNER TIPS

## The Vacation-Friendly Kitchen

What makes a kitchen work well when you're on leisure time?

• **A center island.** In contrast to a primary residence, where one person generally does the cooking, a vacation home gives everyone a hand in the meals, says Steve Mouzon, who built this Alys Beach, Florida, home as a potential buyer's getaway. "It's important to have an island kitchen where everyone can gather under warm lights."

• **Easy maintenance.** An example of easy-care materials in this home is the Dominican shell-stone flooring, which was used for the outdoor courtyard as well as the main level of the house. "It makes it easy to sweep up sand and dog hair," interior designer Beth Dillard says.

• **Versatile storage.** To accommodate various vacationers, storage should be ample and flexible, architect Marianne Khoury-Vogt says. "Depending on who is staying in the house, they'll have different uses for it."

• **A ban on clutter.** A vacation kitchen is not the place for doodads, Dillard says. "If something is there, it has a function." This simplicity directs more attention to the outdoors, she says, and it minimizes breakables and dust catchers.