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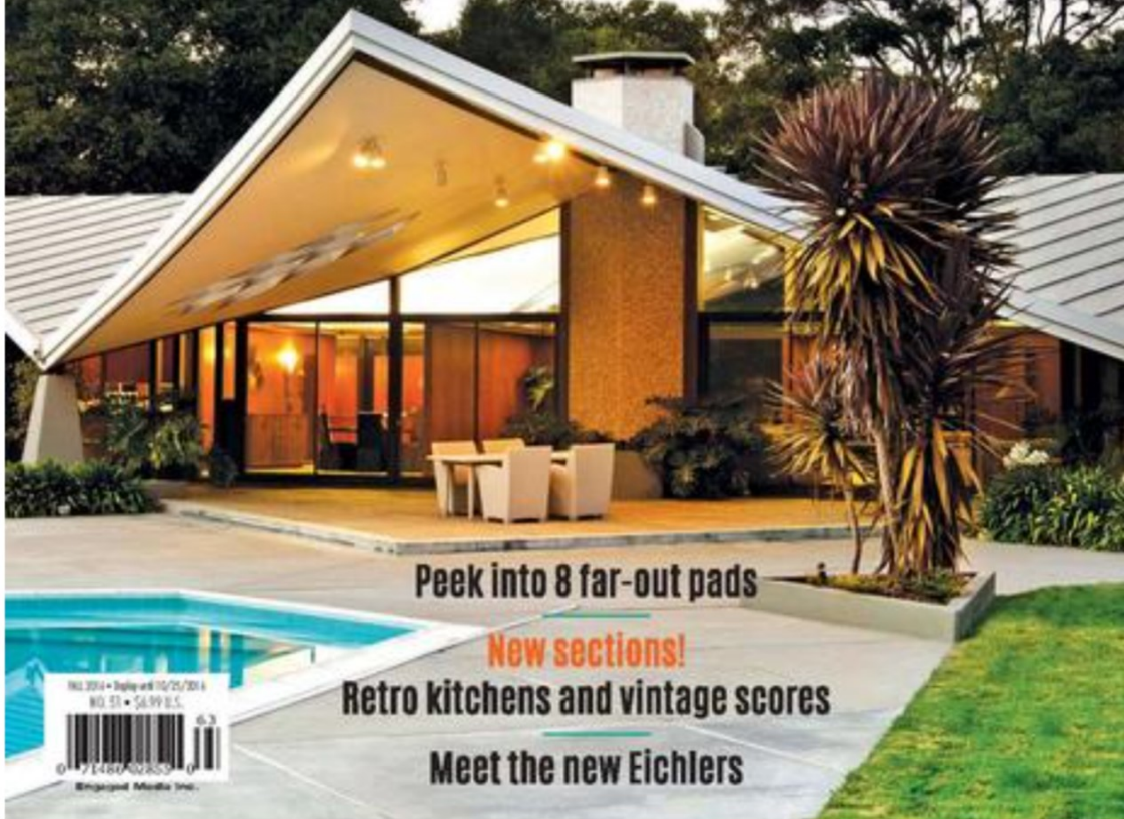
MIDCENTURY MARVELS

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DESIGN MUST-HAVES:

- Lanai windows opening to an outdoor eating area
- Contrasting lighter wood tones and white accents to brighten the redwood ceilings
- Wall shelves with built-in lights illuminating lower shelves replacing hanging cabinets

BY DEFTLY REMOVING A DOORWAY THAT SEPARATED THE KITCHEN FROM THE DINING ROOM, AND SHORTENING THE OTHER KITCHEN WALL, LARA DUTTO OF LARAARCHITECTURE OPENED UP THE INTERIOR OF THIS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOME. THE NATURAL REDWOOD CEILING—WHICH WAS SANDED TO RESTORE ITS ORIGINAL APPEARANCE—NOW UNITES THE SPACES.



Family-Friendly MIDCENTURY

Removing a wall revealed stunning redwood ceilings that are now the show-stopping feature in a bright and cheerful kitchen.

By Catherine Titus Felix • Photography by Paul Dryer

WHEN YOU VISIT THE MILLER FAMILY'S FUN, CLEAN-LINED KITCHEN, it's hard to believe the space was ever any different.

"With two little boys, we needed more space inside and outside," Anna Miller says. Her husband, Form Miller, had initiated their midcentury search. "I'd looked for nine months at maybe 80 houses all over the East Bay," Form says. "From the moment I walked in the front door, I knew this was our kind of home." They put in their bid the same day Anna saw the house, and they lived there for a year before making any changes. They met architect Lara Dutto through their children's school.

UNITING THE HOME

"We got talking and looked at her portfolio," Anna says. "We loved her aesthetic, which is really important. I can have an idea but it's hard for a non-professional to implement."

The kitchen Lara first saw was an enclosed alleyway, cut off from the California sunshine, which pours through the living and dining room's windows. "The space was chopped up," Lara says. "There were walls that went all the way up, creating four distinct rooms." Lara wasn't certain when the full-length walls enclosing the kitchen had been added, but immediately recognized an opportunity. "Once we took the walls down, you realized that the ceiling united the entire home."





WHILE HONORING THE HISTORIC NATURE OF THEIR MIDCENTURY MODERN RANCH HOME, ANNA AND FORM MILLER NEEDED A HOME THAT WORKED FOR THEIR YOUNG FAMILY. ARCHITECT LARA DUTTO INCORPORATED AUTHENTIC DESIGN DETAILS INTO A KITCHEN WITH UP-TO-DATE APPLIANCES AND MATERIALS. THERE IS PLENTY OF STORAGE SPACE IN THE WALK-IN PANTRY, HIDDEN BEHIND A SLEEK SLIDING DOOR THAT DOESN'T INTERRUPT THE FOOTPATH.

REAL HOME 101

TYPE OF HOME: Post-WWII, Midcentury Modern ranch featuring an open floor plan, post-and-beam construction and walls of windows.

ARCHITECT: Possibly Joseph Eichler, an associate or student.

BACKGROUND: Lara Dutto of Laraarchitecture worked with the Miller family to restore and refurbish their classic Northern California home, including a major kitchen renovation.

COLOR SCHEME: White and bright colors accent the home's original natural wood, post-and-beam construction, paneling and redwood ceiling.

INNOVATIVE IDEA: A wall of lanai windows opens from the kitchen to the deck, functioning as a pass-through and serving space for outdoor dining.

SMALL BUDGET, BIG IMPACT

"We had a limited budget," Lara says. "We wanted to do as little to the space as we could—but we also wanted each intervention to have maximum impact. My biggest challenge was to get the house back to its roots without blowing the budget. We used reasonable materials, but made impactful, small changes."

Working with designer Stephanie Murphy of MODified by Design, Lara got the greatest impact from removing the wall between the kitchen and dining room and abbreviating the wall between the kitchen and living room. The redwood ceiling revealed was then sanded to restore its beauty. Ten feet of lanai windows were added behind the sink opening to a breakfast bar on the deck. "These were structural changes," Lara says, "but they were worth it."

Keeping the family's budget in mind, Lara opted not to change the basic layout of the kitchen. "We used standard appliances due to cost considerations," Lara says. "For the Millers, it really wasn't worth an additional \$4,000 for a built-in fridge."