



# KITCHEN FUSION

WRITTEN BY DONNA PIZZI  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP CLAYTON-THOMPSON



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**CHRIS AND CHIKA KOIDA**, both natives of Japan, were well ensconced in their Milwaukie home until fate stepped in and dealt them a different hand.

"We were going to stay in our former house," explains Chika, "but we wanted to put our son Andy in a better school district, so we had to move."

Enter Arlene Lord Ruby of Mosaik Design in Portland, who had already helped the Koidas raise the ticket price on their Milwaukie home by improving its interior design.

"The Koidas asked my partner Erin Davis and me to do a walk through of a hillside house they were planning to buy to see if we could improve its livability," recalls Arlene. "We told them that we could."

Built in 1983, the 2,163 sq. ft. house nestled below the steep rise of a dead end Portland street, clearly needed updating. Its kitchen, tightly sandwiched between the laundry room to the left and a small family room that ended where the current kitchen sink now stands, was oriented toward the hillside against a wall filled with cabinetry that had only one small window for natural light.



Arlene and Erin presented the Koidas with a plan that proposed opening up the warren of small rooms to make space for an expansive kitchen crowned by a grand circular window and two banks of vertical windows with operating awnings to improve air flow on each end of the house. A 600 sq. ft. two-story addition that includes a loft or family room above, and a bonus room below, both of which open onto the back garden and a lush state park beyond, features a new deck above, and a patio below.

"An important feature of our design, which we call a fusion of traditional Japanese and Northwest contemporary style," explains Erin, "is the incorporation of Chika's collection of kimonos and artwork that she brings back from Japan each summer."

**FACING PAGE:** Environmentally responsible materials were selected to create the Koidas' kitchen, including slate, fast-growing bamboo flooring, and low VOC paints. Chika appreciates the easy-to-clean bamboo flooring, since the family dog loves to play here with their son Andy. **ABOVE:** Chika brought back the Geisha painting that hangs over the stainless steel sink from her native Japan. The undulating trim on the counter was created to soften the vertical windows and shoji screens. "We tried to balance out all the lines," explains Erin. **LEFT:** Chris' grandfather bequeathed him this traditional warrior, which will be featured in an arched cove in the entryway, as it is typically done in Japan, when phase two of the Koida remodel begins.



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"Arlene knew I liked clean lines," recalls Chika, "and so they came up with something simple and easy for me to clean that also reflects our lifestyle."

In fact, the Koidas were so pleased with the proposal that they accepted every one of Arlene and Erin's ideas, materials and specifications, which include Japanese shoji screens, carbonized bamboo flooring with a nutmeg stain, custom cherry cabinetry with a black glaze over a nutmeg stain and painted black oak trim. Horizontal cable lighting with low-voltage halogen lights bring the eye down to the cabinetry level, while paper wrapped pendant lighting add curves to the many vertical lines. Kriti slate columns and backsplash bring attention to the loft area, which features a kotatsu pit, or sunken well traditionally placed beneath a kotatsu table for one's feet.

"When we designed the addition," explains Erin, "we needed to raise the loft area to accommodate for the insulation. Since we didn't want to have the kitchen counter be at ankle level in the loft, we did some research and discovered that older style kotatsu tables had a little heated pit under them to shield your feet from the cold, so we added a kotatsu well beneath the kitchen counter that blended the tradition of a kotatsu with the practicality of an American eating bar, and it worked out beautifully."

Arlene designed the sofa for the family room so that its clean, contemporary lines would play up the fusion aspects of their overall design. "It's a cozy L-shaped sectional with a chaise that I upholstered in a green fabric reminiscent of grass cloth, so it won't fade away into the walls ("Crunch" by Devine Paint found at Miller Paint Co.)."

During the remodel, which took only four months to complete, the Koidas lived upstairs, using an electric skillet and



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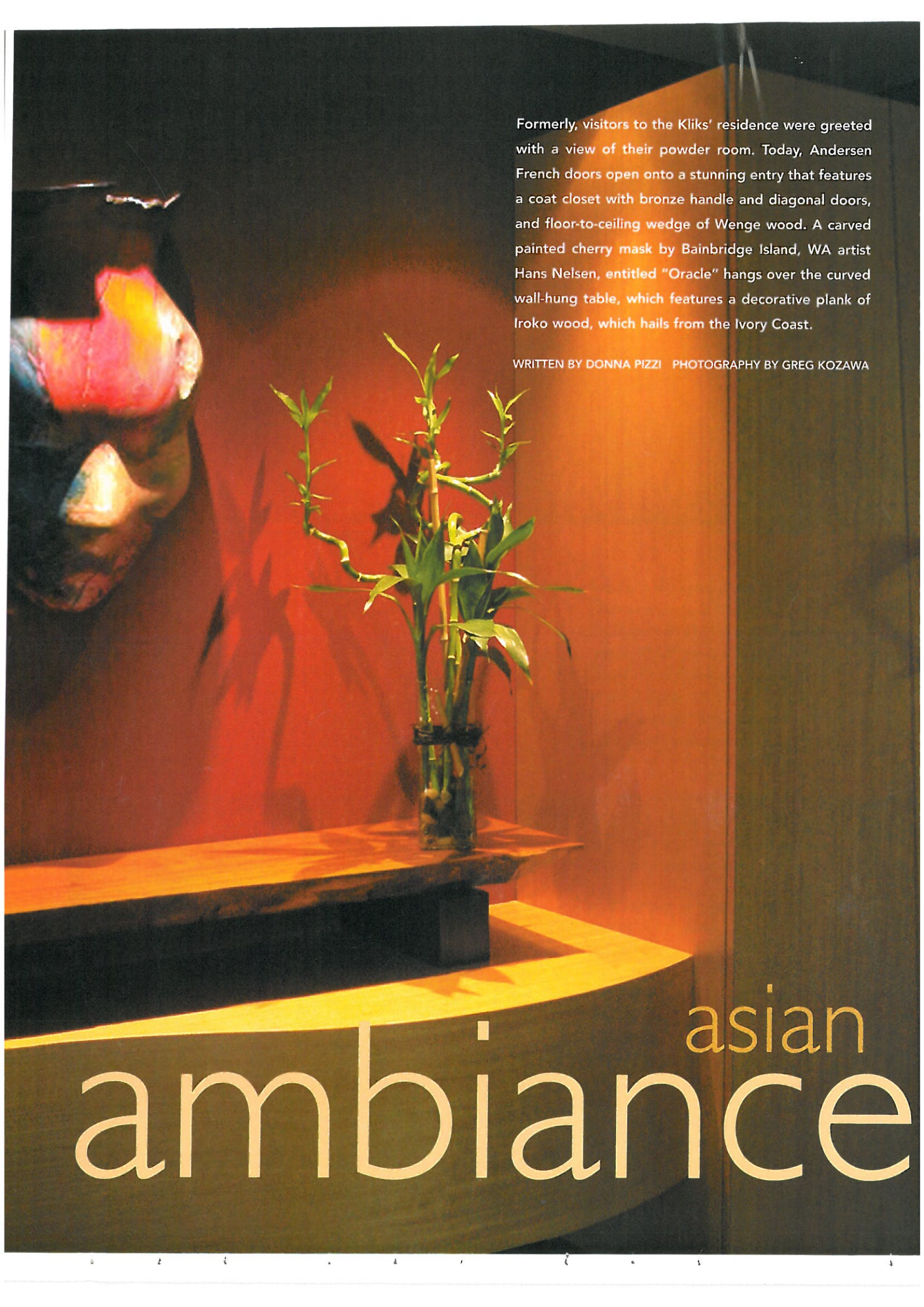
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Formerly, visitors to the Kliks' residence were greeted with a view of their powder room. Today, Andersen French doors open onto a stunning entry that features a coat closet with bronze handle and diagonal doors, and floor-to-ceiling wedge of Wenge wood. A carved painted cherry mask by Bainbridge Island, WA artist Hans Nelsen, entitled "Oracle" hangs over the curved wall-hung table, which features a decorative plank of Iroko wood, which hails from the Ivory Coast.

WRITTEN BY DONNA PIZZI PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG KOZAWA

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**FAMILY ROOM:** Rattan furnishings lead the eye up the steps to the loft addition where a kotatsu well is at left behind the counter. **KIMONO WALL:** Chika can change out her kimonos according to the season, thanks to the bamboo pole suspended on an airline cable. **GEISHA GIRL:** Chris and Chika enjoy decorating their contemporary home with traditional Japanese items, such as this Geisha girl. **POWDER ROOM:** The cabinetry whose single piece of maple is painted paprika red contrasts with the painted black oak cabinet. The counter is honed absolute black granite tile, while the colorful obi that hangs at right was found in Japan.



microwave for their meals. “We had heard a lot of terrible stories about remodels,” admits Chika, and while they eventually had to move into Chris’ family home, they found their worries were unfounded. “They made it pretty simple for us by giving us lots of advice,” she says, “and by giving us a chance to make choices along the way.”

“An important feature of our design, which we call a fusion of traditional Japanese and Northwest contemporary style.”

One of the greatest benefits from the remodel, says Chika, is the pleasant change in their lifestyle. “It is so nice,” she says, “that now we try to entertain more. Before we were just too busy trying to juggle our lives. Now I find I want to stay home more, and cook better meals, as a way to show my love to my family.” ♦

**SOURCES:** *Remodeling, Addition and Kitchen Design:* Mosaik Design; *Low VOC Paints by Devine:* Miller Paint Company; *L-Shaped Sofa:* Castellano’s; *Custom Artwork:* Brian Marki.

