

dwell

Hot Stuff!
How to Find the
Perfect Oven

AT HOME IN THE MODERN WORLD

Best New Kitchen Designs 5 Delicious Options

Style Predictions
for the Next Decade



April/May 2004
\$4.95 U.S. / \$6.95 Canada

www.dwellmag.com

Project: Quinta Ivana
Architect: Erik Gonzalez
Location: Austin, Texas

For Erik and Ivana Gonzalez, the design of their kitchen—and every other room in the house—was truly a family affair.

Home Cooking



Remember *My Three Sons*, the 1960s TV show about a Midwestern aeronautical engineer who watches his family grow up with an ever-present twinkle in his eye?

After learning the story behind Quinta Ivana (at left), it is irresistible to imagine the venerable sitcom recast with builder Raul Gonzalez replacing Fred MacMurray as beaming patriarch. Raul recounts with tenderness how, much to his surprise, he watched his sons—Erik (33), Jair (31), and Alan (27)—follow in his footsteps and enter the building industry as architects.

Did Raul's wife, Mariou, read Vitruvius while pregnant? Were the Gonzalez boys taken on Frank Lloyd Wright pilgrimages as children? One wonders. But Raul (the son, as it happens, of a contractor) has no pat explanation for "His Three Architects." "I never tried to make them become architects," he recalls. "It just happened, one at a time."

"From the time we were born we were involved in architecture and construction," explains Raul's eldest son, Erik. "My father was very clear that if we wanted to sweep streets we'd have his support, but I didn't consider going into any other field."

That early exposure paid off, as is evident in Quinta Ivana, the 3,600-square-foot home Erik shares with his wife, Ivana (pictured opposite), who recently completed her M.A. in accounting. It is a project that Erik—in collaboration with his dad and brothers, of course—did everything on, from design to construction.

Erik also managed to create the home he wanted within the strict confines of the Austin, Texas, subdivision in which it is located. He had stumbled on the lot by accident and, undeterred by its location on the street incongruously named Rue de St. Tropez, he set out to create, he says, "something different, but something my neighbors could live with." ▶

➊ p.154







"The kitchen is such a central part of the house," says Erik. "Culturally, it's where everything happens. Households of every ethnicity share this. I was not scared of centralizing it, exposing it the way I did. It's great for entertaining and everyday cooking, too."

Because the kitchen is so open, Erik designed it in such a way that there's room for everything from cookbooks to wine racks. Even the Viking stove hood (inset) disappears into the counter at the touch of a button. "People ask if we spend a lot of time cleaning, but that's just not the case. There's a place for everything."

Stainless steel appliances, including the Sub-Zero refrigerator, Fisher & Paykel dishwasher, and Viking oven and cooktop, are seamlessly integrated with the natural maple paneling that Erik used here and throughout the house. The

marble used for the countertops is Bianco Carrara. "It's just a very clean palette," he explains.

The distinctive cowhide-and-chrome dining chairs were designed and built by Raul 30 years ago. Erik and his brother Alan, a recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture, designed the glass table. "The form for it came from prefab concrete ties," says Erik. "Everything in here fits together surprisingly well."

Though the Quinta Ivana site was very restrictive (30 feet wide by 80 feet deep), it benefits greatly from a greenbelt area on the southern façade, which lets a tremendous amount of natural light into all three levels. Large, strategically placed glass walls further enhance that illumination, as does the restrained use of recessed lighting by Lightolier. >







In contrast to the grand staircases found in so many of the neighboring houses on Rue de St. Tropez, the foyer of Quinta Ivana is intimate in scale, creating a space where people instantly feel welcomed rather than overwhelmed. The office, guest bedroom (below), and bathroom are housed here on the ground floor. What Erik describes as "a square spiral staircase" leads up to the second floor, essentially an open-plan loft layout that contains the public area of the house.

The main living area is set 26 inches higher than the kitchen. ("That 26-inch ledge is where everyone sits," Erik notes. "I wish I could take credit for designing it for that purpose but I can't.") The furniture on this level—and throughout the house—is minimal yet highly impactful. The curvy, off-white sofa, which forms a perfect conversation pit (opposite), was purchased on eBay (and cost as much to ship as it did to buy).

Graphic cowhides on the guest bed, the dining chairs,

and the living room floor unite the varying levels of the house. That design element—and the cute oil derrick lamp in the guest bedroom—remind you that, yes, you are in Texas. The drawings are by Erik's brother Jair, an architect working in New York.

"I wanted to maximize the feel of the space by not dividing it much, but spaces should be outlined somehow," says Erik. "I tried to achieve that by using different levels that create a vertical flow of energy." ▶





In the third-floor bedroom (below), horizontal wood-framed casement windows by Pella open out to tree-filled views of Lake Austin and Westlake Hills. Comfortably austere, the only furniture here is the bed, two nightstands, and a marble table for books and candles. Erik designed the bed, nightstands, and marble table; the paintings are by Jair.

The master bath (opposite) is a simple rectangle. "Like the kitchen, I designed it so that no

stuff was laying around," Erik said. The surfaces are natural and subdued; a simple palette of tones, colors, and materials unifies the space. Travertine marble was used on the floors, shower, and countertop. The closet and cabinetry are maple. Erik designed the light fixture himself because, he says, "there was nothing I could find that fit the scale of the room." He used cold-rolled steel with exposed wires to give it an industrial feel.

"I wanted a house that met a particular program," the young designer explains, "not necessarily for our present situation but one for future growth. I was so lucky to have so much support from my family. It was truly a team effort."

Raul concurs: "We spent a lot of time analyzing each room and I like each in a different way. I even like the garage!"

"Working with my sons, it keeps me up to date," he continues. "It fulfills my life." ■



