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VINEYARD VIEW KITCHEN IN GLEN ELLEN,
CALIFORNIA, BY AMY A. ALPER, ARCHITECT



Two islands (top) run perpendicular to a dry bar, which appears as an extension of the stair wall (above).

Vineyard View Kitchen

Amy A. Alper, Architect

BY DAVID SOKOL

WHEN the 2017 Nuns Fire consumed a couple's house on the east side of the Sonoma Highway in California wine country, the devastation caused them deep personal sadness, of course, but it also magnified their love of place. Instead of merely reconstructing the circa-1980 cottage in more fire-resistant form, the couple tapped local architect Amy Alper to create a house that would be a full-time residence boasting compelling visual connections to the six-acre site.

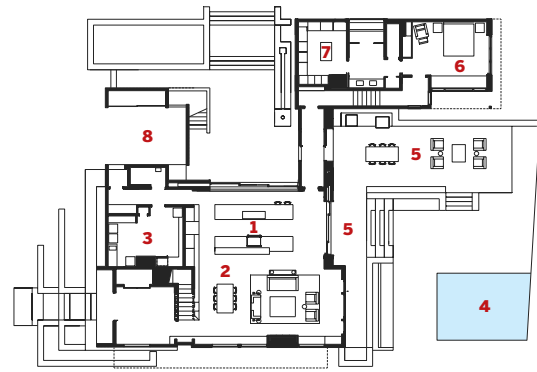
The blaze had spared the pool behind the house, as well as three acres of Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards wrapping its south elevation. Because the design brief included a freestanding guesthouse that would be located to the north, Alper conceived the new house

as a pinwheel in which pool, farmland, and a new north-facing patio would be slotted into the plan. The architect also treated a large kitchen for entertaining as the pinwheel's rotor. Using a pair of islands and minimal overhead storage, she guaranteed views across its interior out to the landscape for which the clients are continually grateful.

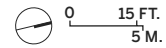
"I talk about this kitchen as a touchpoint," Alper says. "You move in it and you move about it. It composes views, especially to the pool and vineyard, and it directs the people moving through those spaces."

The pair of islands follow an east-west axis, to underscore the easy flow from the new interior to the pool and its surrounding lounge areas. On the cross-axis, a dry bar is partly inset into the building's stairwell volume. Walnut strips embedded within the concrete floor—an alternative to scored control joints—follow the bar's north-south direction and line up with the framing of windows and doors.

The architect explains that the client thought of the outdoors as art, "so we didn't



FLOOR PLAN



- 1 KITCHEN
- 2 LIVING/DINING
- 3 PANTRY/LAUNDRY
- 4 POOL
- 5 PATIO
- 6 BEDROOM
- 7 BATH
- 8 CARPORT

Credits

ARCHITECT:
Amy A. Alper, Architect

ENGINEERS: Rich Burris/
Structural Design Group

GENERAL CONTRACTOR:
Total Concepts

CONSULTANTS: M Design Studio,
Lighting Forms (lighting), RMS
Designs (millwork)

CLIENT: withheld

SIZE: 500 square feet (kitchen);
3,500 square feet (house)

COST: withheld

COMPLETION DATE: March 2022

Sources

COUNTERTOP: Da Vinci Marble

SINK: Julien

FITTINGS: Waterworks

DOORS:
Quantum Windows and Doors

LIGHTING: Hubbardton Forge
(downlights), Tech Entra (task),
Lutron (controls)

The east (above) and north (right), walls open on the patio and courtyard, respectively.

need to provide extensive wall space” to interrupt the long vistas. Alper adds that the scheme’s strong axial quality is an homage to wine country, where “rows of vineyards draw the eye across the fields.”

The project paid further respect to the vineyards in terms of material selections. Alper’s choice of rift white oak for cabinet faces approximates the yellow foliage of grapevines in autumn, as well as the wheat tones that simultaneously appear in local grasses. For countertops, veinous marble slabs “provide a counterpoint to the straight-lined oak, so that the space is more energetic and exuberant.”

What, then, of the occasional charcoal accents—the pigment in the concrete floors, for example? These, too, are homages to the landscape, namely the charring on the trees that survived the Nuns Fire. They are subtle reminders that this house of celebration has sprung from misfortune. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: © ADAM POTTS

