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Real-life remodels / A contest honors projects for the rest of us

A modern kitchen with traditional woodwork, including bead-board panels and turned legs, in a Liberty Hill Victorian. Photo courtesy of Podesta Construction Inc.



The 11th annual Remmie Awards are where dreams meet reality. The awards honor remodeling projects by members of the local chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. Although NARI is made up mostly of contractors, its members also include architects and interior designers. The awards program is unique in that it acknowledges the professionals who build the projects as well as the people who design them. In the entries you can find everything from high-end, big-money remodels to tight-budget renovations that rely more on creativity than cash.

"The contest entries reflect an accurate slice of remodeling in the Bay Area," says architect Andre Rothblatt, chairman of the local NARI chapter. "Unlike some contests, it doesn't just focus on high-end projects that many people can't relate to. It shows a range of budgets and project sizes."

Contest judge Gioi Tran, a national-award-winning kitchen designer with Applegate Tran Interiors, says looking at the entries provides a broad overview of what's important to Bay Area homeowners. "I really saw a diversity of styles. I noticed that no matter what the style, people are paying attention to layout and details. People want a kitchen that's open to the rest of the house. They want a kitchen that has different prep areas and zones. They also want a kitchen that's pretty, but high functioning. They are putting a lot of money into the kitchen, and they expect it to function as a gathering area and a work area."

Rothblatt notes that more entries than ever make use of green, or environmentally friendly, materials. "Although we have a special award for use of green materials, green has clearly gone mainstream," he says. "More builders and designers are talking about their green capabilities."

The winners will be announced at a gala tonight. We will publish their names Saturday in the Home&Garden section. Today, we take a peek at some of the entries and their ideas.

Traditional kitchen with modern functions: A Liberty Hill kitchen remodel

Contractors: Jerry and Matt Podesta, Podesta Construction Inc., San Francisco, (415) 642-1600, www.podestaconstruction.com.

Architect: David S. Gast, David S. Gast Associates, Architects, San Francisco, (415) 885-2946, www.dsga.com.

The owners of this Liberty Hill Victorian wanted to keep the house true to its roots but also desired a kitchen with modern appliances and work areas. With a small addition for space and by mixing traditional fixtures and finishes with new appliances and storage systems, they got to have it both ways.

"Remodeling in San Francisco is definitely very challenging," says Matt Podesta of Podesta Construction. "In this case we had to add modern amenities with the look and charm of a traditional kitchen within tight space constraints."

One small space solution is in the found-cabinet design. Instead of a traditional walk-in pantry, pull-out vertical cabinets were installed along one wall as a pantry unit. "Custom cabinetry and Häfele hardware (one of many storage systems that can be installed within cabinets to make them ultra efficient) make this kitchen function really well," Podesta says.

The island is an example of old style meeting modern function. Its woodwork is traditional, complete with bead-board panels and turned legs. It's made to look more like a piece of furniture than an island. But it's a storage and food prep powerhouse, with two types of countertops, marble and butcher block, for baking and chopping. An additional sink in the island makes it easy for two cooks to work in the kitchen at the same time.

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