

Kailua Cucina

Old-World charm and Tuscan style are at home in a Kailua kitchen.

Article by Merideth Kimble, Photos by Tomas Del Amo

Featured Designer: Chuck Siebenthal, CKD, of Seven Valleys Construction

Issue Date: February 2007

Of romantic vacation destinations, Tuscany is right near the top of the list. Gently rolling hills, lush vineyards and Old-World charm make this central Italian region one that people dream of visiting. Instead of just imagining themselves there, one Kailua couple transformed their kitchen into a Tuscan cucina.

It started with a dining room wall mural of an Italian hillside. "I am inspired by Italy," says homeowner Chris Siebenthal.

To bring turn-of-the-century Tuscany into her Kailua kitchen, Chris had to look no farther than across the dinner table. Her husband, Chuck Siebenthal, heads up Seven Valleys Construction, a general contracting firm specializing in renovation and remodeling of kitchens and baths. Chuck is a certified kitchen designer, while office manager Chris keeps the company running smoothly.



"I had to treat myself like a client. It was harder working for myself and my wife than anyone else," says Chuck Siebenthal (which means "seven valleys" in German).

Fortunately for Chuck, after many drafts, tweaks and changes, he fulfilled his "clients'" wishes.

The first step in creating a Tuscan villa was to increase the kitchen's surface area. "I had no countertop space. Try making cookies with about three square feet of prep room," Chris says. As a result, Chuck pushed out the sink and bar area 12 inches into the dining area. Removing a broom closet/built-in pantry provided another wall for countertop space and room for more cabinetry. Once this basic construction was complete, it was time for the kitchen's renaissance.

In turn-of-the-century Tuscan villas, cabinetry was painted, Chuck explains. So he installed two tones of Belmont cabinetry. Creamy, painted cabinetry hangs above rich, stained lower cabinetry. The style they chose is called Venice. "The cabinets feel like furniture," says Chris. The two-tone effect also makes the kitchen feel larger, she adds.



Throughout his construction career, Chuck says he has worked with more than 20 cabinetry lines. Belmont is his favorite. The company is known for its endless options, including three drawer styles and 200 door choices to fit every kitchen's needs.

One hundred years ago, marble was the natural choice for Italian kitchens. The once-common material is now considered a luxury. In an attempt to keep within their budget, Chris and Chuck considered a solid-surface countertop that would mimic the stone. Marble ultimately won. "The solid surface just didn't look like Tuscany," Chris says. Chuck added ceramic tile floors and backsplashes in a repeating geometric pattern, to continue the Old-World look.

Chris requested that no stainless steel be visible, as the modern material would look out of place. Chuck obliged. He neatly tucked the microwave into the pantry, and covered the steel hood with bead board.

The one exception to the no-stainless rule was the sink. It had to be large enough to bathe the grandkids, and the best option was a shiny, stainless steel basin. But, what could be more Italian than putting family first? "They have a blast in there," Chris says.

WHERE TO GET IT

Designer: Chuck Siebenthal, of Seven Valleys Construction

Cabinetry: Venice-style Belmont cabinetry, from Pacific Crest Industries

Counters: Thalia Brown marble, from Stoneworld

Dishwasher: Bosche, from Servco Home and Appliance Showroom

Oven: G.E., from Servco Home and Appliance Showroom

Sink: Orca, by Franke, from Servco Home and Appliance Showroom

Tile: Ceramic tile, from Bella Pietra, A Natural Stone Design Center

Vent: Broan, from Servco Home and Appliance Showroom