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BLUE



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MARISA DOMINO AND ALBERTO SCOTTI

hated the kitchen sink in their home located on a heavily wooded gravel drive off of Old Greensboro Road. So, like many people, they decided to change it.

Also like many people who set out to change something in their home, the seemingly simple project snowballed into something bigger: a full-blown kitchen renovation. But here is where Marisa and Alberto aren't like many people. This married couple actually agreed on exactly what they wanted their kitchen to look



Left The kitchen is a natural gathering spot for Alberto and Marisa, who love to cook, and their two sons, Zeno, 11, and Paolo, 9.

Above A snapshot of the kitchen sink before Carrboro architect Sophie Piesse stepped in to update the space.

THE HOME OF MARISA DOMINO AND ALBERTO SCOTTI BLENDS BEAUTIFULLY INTO ITS NATURAL SETTING. BUT THE INSIDE HOLDS A BOLD SURPRISE.

BY ELEANOR-SCOTT DAVIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIANA BROUGH



Above Instead of a mudroom, Sophie designed a nook with cubbies and hooks just off of the garage. She also included a computer desk in the kitchen for ultimate convenience.

Right Hill Country Woodworks built the extension that transformed Marisa and Alberto's first dining table – which seated just the two of them – into one large enough to host 10.



like. And their taste is anything but traditional.

ROOM WITH A VIEW

When the couple bought the 3,200-square-foot home with four bedrooms and three-and-a-half bathrooms in 2005, the circa-1980 kitchen had never been renovated. It was galley-style, complete with a wood-paneled ceiling. "We both love cooking," Marisa says, "and felt like the galley kitchen obstructed our view of both the outside and our then-toddlers." The couples' sons, **Zeno** and **Paolo**, now 11 and 9, no longer need to be watched so closely, but there is no doubt that the new open kitchen makes the home much more livable for the whole family.

To transform their dated space into their shared, contemporary vision, the couple enlisted the help of Carrboro architect **Sophie Piesse**. The cobalt-blue, custom wooden cabinetry was painted using high-gloss automotive paint. Marisa and Alberto actually purchased automotive touch-up paint and then painted boards to help them choose just the right color.

But it's not just the color that makes these cabinets unique. To minimize counter space, which could easily become cluttered and fight with the modern sleekness of the kitchen, Sophie designed the kitchen as a series of closets, each serving a specific purpose. A coffee closet holds the coffee maker, supplies and mugs so that everything is at your fingertips but can be shut off from view when not in use. The same goes for other often-used appliances. Even the pantry is hidden in the wall of cabinetry, with pullout

drawers of various sizes. Frosted glass doors on the top cabinets offer visual balance to the saturated color.

When it came to the countertops, black quartz was chosen for its durability. Italian company Futuro made the cylindrical hood that hangs above the gas stovetop.

For Alberto, who is from Milan, this was an easy choice. Extending from the large island, a small round table is ideal for casual meals. While the kitchen serves as the natural gathering place for the family, its openness also enhances the spaces extending off of it. ▶

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CABIN IN THE WOODS

The main dining area is open to the kitchen. The 10-person dining table was built around Marisa and Alberto's first dining table, which was bought by her brother and was large enough just for the couple. Artist Ted DeGrazia, a native of Marisa's hometown of Tucson, painted it.

Hill Country Woodworks, located just about a mile from the home, built the table extension. "It's nice to have something that is from home and from here," says Marisa. The chairs are Amish-made. A pattern in the hardwood floor anchors the dining area. "It's like an area rug made out of wood," says Marisa. "But much easier to clean," adds Alberto.

When the boys – who both attend **McDougle Elementary** – were younger, the small room off the kitchen and dining area was the perfect playroom. Formerly a screened-in porch, the room was closed in by a previous owner. It boasts a beautiful vaulted ceiling.

Now that the boys are older, they spend more time in the family's music room, which also extends off of the kitchen. Each family member is very musical. The room contains a harpsichord, a 1921 German-made Steinway grand piano (which was converted from a player piano), violins, a banjo, a guitar and a cello.

Alberto often spends summer weekends working on his remote control airplanes, while the boys stay cool in the pool.

Stairs off the kitchen lead to the boys' bedrooms, a book-lined family room and a hobby room for Alberto, where he works on his remote control airplanes. Outside offers just as much for the family to enjoy and, with its swimming pool and wooded setting, provides the perfect place

for little boys to play and explore. The family recently added the pool house with a changing room, designed and built by contractor **Trip Renn**. A two-story fig tree sits just outside the pool gate, offering the perfect mid-swim snack.

The couple moved to Chapel Hill in



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Both Alberto and Marisa studied music in college. A music room extending off of the kitchen serves as a creative space for them to play together and for their sons to practice violin.

1999. "We were looking for a university that had both our fields," says Marisa. "And that wasn't easy," adds Alberto. Marisa, a health economist, is a professor in the school of public health. Alberto, an oceanographer, is an associate professor in the department of marine sciences. The couple met while they were both graduate students at Johns Hopkins University.

While the university is what brought them to the area, it is perhaps their current home that will keep them here. Alberto explains what he likes most about Chapel Hill: "It's an urban setting without the hassle." And while the surrounding area has all the conveniences you could want, the family's neighborhood is anything but urban. Their gravel road has only nine houses, many of which are still inhabited by their original owners. "Our neighbors have a horse and a donkey," Marisa says. "But we only have a 10-minute commute to campus." **CHM**

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