

A Kitchen Opens Wide to the Outdoors

Walls fold away at one corner to let this room mingle with a hillside meadow

BY GEOFFREY PRENTISS

We hunted for years on San Juan Island in Washington's Puget Sound for the right piece of property where my cousin Shaun and her husband, Harold, could build. They wanted a place for a vacation home that combined potentially contrary qualities; something that felt intimate and expansive at the same time. We finally found a south-facing mountain ridge in the center of the island that offered sensational views in multiple directions and sun all day long (a requisite for happy, healthy Northwest living). The grassy ridge, largely cleared of upstart fir trees, is slowly returning to an indigenous Garry-oak forest noted for remarkable displays of wildflowers.

As we explored this magical hillside, evaluating potential building sites, we discovered several that were perfect, each with different attributes. This led to our eventual decision to break the house into separate parts: a guesthouse near the parking area, a pavilion for cooking and socializing about 100 yards to the west, and Shaun and Harold's studio/suite another 100 yards down a gravel path. Each building is shaped to best appreciate its site, and moving from one to the next is a walk in the park, literally.

Focus on outdoor living

Shaun and Harold love to spend time outside, so an outdoor room was always an integral part of the plan. With a parking area to the east, it made sense to put the outdoor space along the west side of the pavilion, partly screened from approaching visitors.

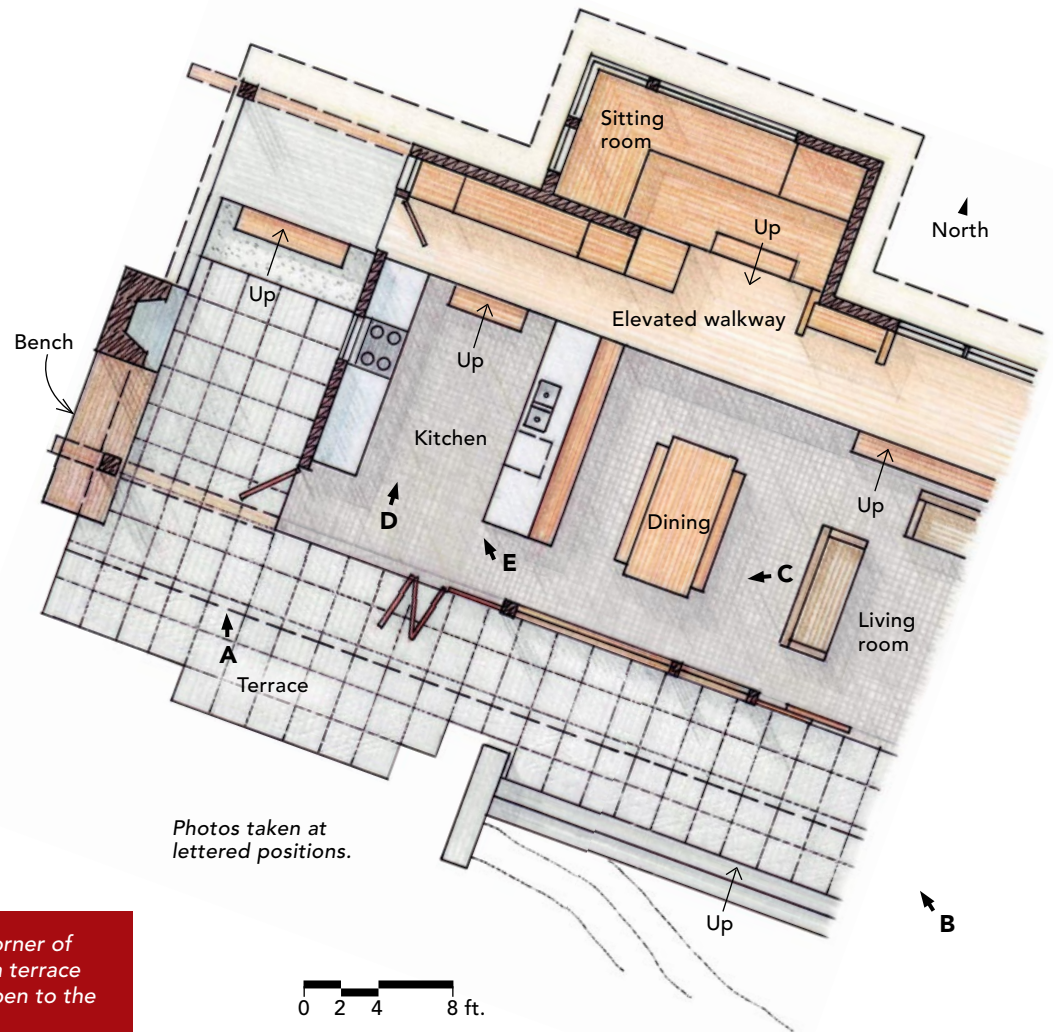
Even if the day is hot, summers in the Northwest usually have cool evenings. An outdoor fireplace allows the homeowners and their guests to continue enjoying the colors of the sunset and the sounds of the evening while sipping a martini, reading a book, or visiting with friends. The pavilion's outdoor fireplace is steps away from the kitchen, under a broad roof overhang. Even when it's cool and rainy, the fireplace keeps this part of the outdoor room comfortable. The concrete pavers extend south, beyond the roofline, where the room is open to the sky. Dry-stacked stone walls at the edge of the





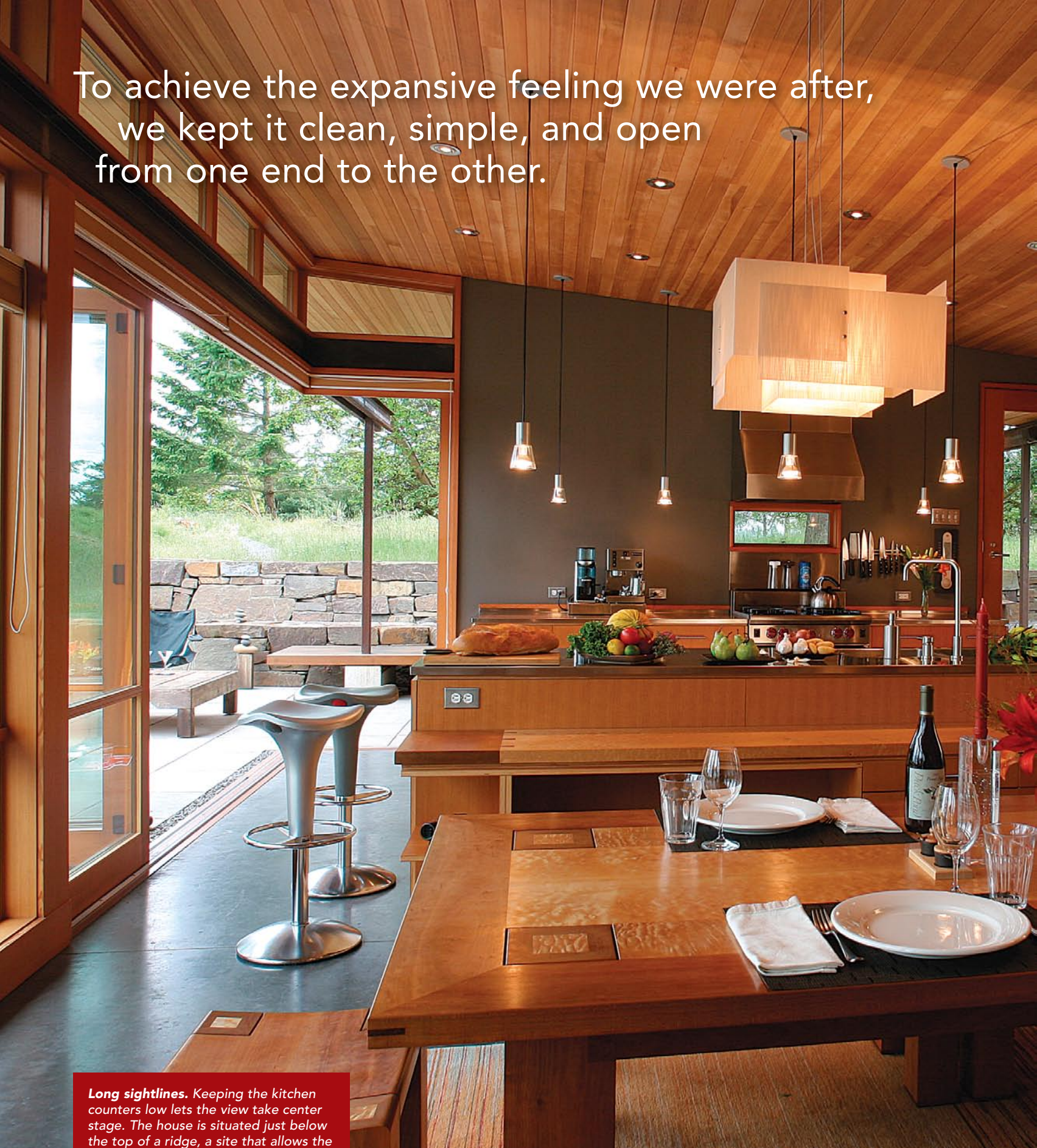
AT THE HEAD OF THE MEADOW

The kitchen pavilion's tall windows face south, taking in the sun's warmth and banking it in the concrete floor. The windows are flanked at each end by cast-concrete fireplaces—one inside, and the other (to the far left) adjacent to an outdoor room next to the kitchen. Photo above taken at B on floor plan.



A recipe for outdoor living. The southwest corner of the house folds away, opening the kitchen to a terrace that is partly sheltered by a roof, and partly open to the sky. Photo taken at A on floor plan.

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Long sightlines. Keeping the kitchen counters low lets the view take center stage. The house is situated just below the top of a ridge, a site that allows the house to settle into the sheltering landscape. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



More storage, two steps up. A slightly elevated walkway runs the length of the house, overlooking the spaces it serves. The north-side cabinets house a pantry, a desk, and a refrigerator. Photo taken at D on floor plan.



pavers mark the boundary between meadow and house.

We wanted the kitchen to open right into this outdoor living room. To that end, the doors at the corner of the south wall fold back, accordion style, creating a 9-ft.-wide opening (www.quantumwindows.com). The west-wall door has custom hinges that allow it to swing back completely flat against the wall, eliminating the corner.

Between indoor and outdoor dining, the kitchen

The pavilion is essentially one long, shed-roofed space. To achieve the expansive feeling we were after, we kept it clean, simple, and open from one end to the other. The kitchen is galley style, with no upper cabinets or shelves. All the counters are stainless steel without backsplashes, which enhances the sense that these are pieces of furniture rather than kitchen cabinets.

Dividing the kitchen from the dining area is a freestanding row of cabinets that includes a buffet counter on the table side. Limiting this counter to 36 in. tall allows the view from the indoor dining table to extend beyond the kitchen and past the terrace.

Almost all cooking utensils and dishes are stored in the lower cabinet drawers. A pantry, a refrigerator, and a little desk area are in a row of built-in cabinets two steps up from the cooking area. This elevated hallway, or spine, runs the length of the pavilion to the front door. It is analogous to the Japanese raised hall called a *genkan*, which separates the entry from the private spaces of a house. It's a subtle way of giving each space its own presence, and letting your guests know that they are in the heart of the house. □

Geoffrey Prentiss is an architect based in Seattle. Photos by Charles Miller.



Wide aisle, galley style. This commodious kitchen is big enough to accommodate guests helping out or sitting on stools watching the cook get it done. Photo taken at E on floor plan.