

HOME & DESIGN



SOFTEN the surroundings in unexpected ways. Kazo West pillow, Zak+Fox, \$305.



MAKE an upholstered shade a focal point, \$2,150 from Hollywood at Home.



ADD COLOR to a kitchen with acrylic textiles. Shown here: Perennials Fabrics.



CLASSIC 1930s European design is reinterpreted in Elvers Side Chair, \$225.



BOAT HOUSE stripes made of outdoor fabrics clean up beautifully.



VINTAGE floor coverings add visual interest and a feeling of warmth in what can otherwise be a sea of hard surfaces and appliances.

The homey, comfy kitchen

By Carren Jao >>> The kitchen is the heart of the home. Every day, family members gravitate to this space, scrounging for a bite to eat while catching up on one another's lives. At parties, friends inevitably congregate here as hosts fuss around the stove-top. While food and drink flow, so does the conversation.

No wonder more homeowners are looking to add comfort to this space with a few simple ideas, inspired by their living rooms.

"People spend so much time in their kitchen," said Los Angeles-based interior designer Frances Merrill of Beach Design. "We're renovating a kitchen right now and we're making room for a sofa."

Apart from a sofa, built-in banquette or island seating also keeps that cozy atmosphere. Think lightweight and portable.

"People make the mistake of putting heavy stools with arms, but it's great to have the ability to move tables and chairs in and out according to your needs," said Santa Monica-based interior designer Alison Kandier.

A built-in bookshelf could also warm a space by making room for your treasured books, accessories and mementos, adds Los Angeles designer Leslie Hunt.

Such big gestures aren't the only way to add comfort to a kitchen. Tami Ramsay and Krista Nye Nicholas, who run the interior design firm Cloth & Kind from Athens, Ga., and Ann Arbor, Mich., respectively, say the secret to a more welcoming kitchen is simply to soften its hard edges.

"Introduce a small vintage rug in the kitchen and use that to anchor small chairs to create a space that wasn't there," said Nicholas. "Add table lamps to a counter-



ANTIQUE RUGS, such as this circa 1920 Chinese floor covering, can anchor a small seating area.

top," said Ramsay. Introduce fabric on your lampshades to add color and additional texture.

Worried about stains?

Kandier suggests researching outdoor fabrics such as Perennials or Sunbrella, which have come a long way since their introduction to the market.

"I've done complete houses out-

door fabrics," said Kandier. "Though they're basically plastic, they feel like cotton. These fabrics don't fade or shrink. After a party, you can throw them in the machine and they clean up beautifully."

But don't spend time worrying about keeping counters clear of clutter and crumbs, or scratches and the inevitable stains.

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A few imperfections add character and patina.

"You walk into some kitchens and it just feels so antiseptic," said Ramsay. "It's not because of its hard surfaces, it's just that people don't cook there. Kitchens that are cooked in feel more lived in."

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