



*Nancy and Kevin Duffy's new Bernie Baker-designed home in West Seattle seems to float above its site, despite the visual weight of steeply peaked roofs and a copper-clad chimney. Both interior and exterior metalwork is by Steve Johnson of Paracelsus in Port Townsend.*

# A Marriage of Ideas

DIFFERING TASTES ARE  
ACCOMMODATED IN ONE  
'PROGRESSIVE' HOME

**S**O MUCH MORE than design goes into creating a house. Residential architects are called upon to muster skills in construction management, interior design, perhaps a little green consulting and . . . marriage counseling. How to mediate between a husband and wife with differing tastes, yet end up with a coherent design?

In the case of the Duffy house in West Seattle, architect Bernie Baker's challenge was to design the warm, traditional home of Nancy Duffy's dreams while satisfying her husband Kevin's enthusiasm for modern design.

Right off, Baker asked each Duffy to write him a letter detailing what they hoped for in their new house. "I wanted to see how in tune they were," says Baker, which turned out to be not very.

Nancy wanted an inviting, casual house with lots of windows. When Baker asked her to find photos of houses she admired, Nancy chose cottages with steep roofs. In contrast, Kevin is a self-described "contemporary fan" who praises all the metal touches Baker incorporated into the house. Both agreed that the kitchen was key, and that they needed a dining room sufficiently large for entertaining Kevin's family. He's one of eight children. "We often have 25 people here at a time," Nancy says.

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*The kitchen and dining room are the heart of the house where the Duffys entertain family and friends. The staircase is a sculptural element central to both the design and navigation of the home. "When all the light pours in, the glass on the stairs and breakfast bar gleam blue like the Juneau glacier," enthuses Kevin Duffy, who moved back to Seattle after years in Alaska.*

# Northwest Living



The kitchen runs the width of the house, with a lighted metal pot rack, black honed-granite countertops and glass demi-lune breakfast bar. A rail-mounted library ladder slides back and forth to reach the kitchen's high cabinets. Several of the windows over the sink are frosted for privacy.

So how did Baker pull it off? He listened closely to his clients, and came up with a dramatic, open-plan house rich in warm woods, copper and glass. The rooflines are steep enough to make any cottage-lover happy. The palette, chosen with help from interior designer Dixie Stark, perfectly suits Nancy's red hair and brown eyes.

Kevin bought the unprepossessing

1940s house 15 years ago, renting it out while he lived in Juneau, which is where he met Nancy.

When they moved back to Seattle, the couple lived in the little house for a year and a half. "The kitchen was like being in jail," says Nancy of the dark, cramped space. She discovered Baker when she saw a dining room he'd designed in "The Not So Big House"



The master bedroom has dormers, built-in storage and a little balcony off the back. Just outside the bedroom door is a sitting room.



The huge volume of space is warmed up with wooden floors, deep, cozy chairs and a fireplace clad in rusted steel panels that look soft as suede. The two-story-high bank of windows looks west to Puget Sound.




by Sarah Susanka. "I looked at that photo every day," says Nancy, who was taken with the room's floor-to-ceiling windows and elegant informality. When the couple called Baker, they were hoping to remodel. But the cracked and leaky foundation convinced Baker the house wasn't worth remodeling.

There's no regret now over their choice to take a leap, tear down the old house and start from scratch. But partway through the process, they got cold feet. Baker brought over the model he'd just completed, and seeing their new house in 3-D did it. "Nancy caved," says Kevin with a laugh. The project was back on.

The completed house is 2,400 square feet, although the configuration of space — more than half the house is great room — makes it live

much larger. Built by Shane Bennett of Landmark Construction, there are custom touches throughout, and room for a vast trestle dining table that comfortably seats 14. At the back, across a courtyard, is a carriage house with garage on the ground level, guest suite on top.

So how does Baker describe the style he came up with to please dueling aesthetics? "I call my work *progressive*," he says. "It has a classical beginning, with respect for earlier architecture. Yet it's still a modern house; it's just not a box."

He pauses, "Well, it's a bit church-like. Maybe we should call it 'Bernie-Goth.'" 

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