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## inside & out

A Corona del  
Mar kitchen is  
architect Craig  
Schultz' crowning  
glory, p. 102

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# material

For an energetic couple,  
architect Craig Schultz created  
a serene machine for living.

BY SARAH LYNCH PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ELLIS  
STYLING BY SUNDAY HENDRICKSON





# world

Space and light and order. Those are the things that men need just as much as they need bread or a place to sleep," Le Corbusier famously said.

Architect Craig Schultz—clearly a fan of Corbu—kept this simple declaration in mind while designing Jeff and Diana Brown's home in Corona del Mar, an enclave of Newport Beach. The couple, who both work in private equity, wanted to build their dream house, but their list of dreams was long and sometimes contradictory. After four years of planning and another four of building, the Brown residence is an orderly compilation of the clients' requests and the architect's solutions.

"I never wanted a contemporary home," says Diana. "Jeff's a minimalist and I'm not. He kept using the word *industrial* and I kept saying *rustic*. But eventually we agreed on the materials. And we love to entertain so we both wanted an open floor plan with cozy private areas for each of us."

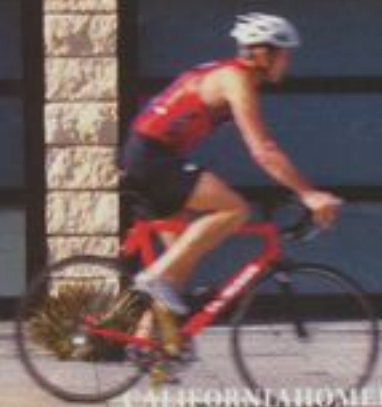
Jeff's list: "I wanted to be able to sit outside all year long. We wanted four big rooms, including a wine cellar and a gym. Of course, we had a lot of little requests, too."

From the outside, the house looks like a strong modernist box made of stone, steel, concrete and wood. Inside, the space is larger and warmer than expected. The rooms are grand yet inviting, embracing you as they direct you through glass sliders out to bright stone patios. There are dark passageways and wood-paneled private quarters. There is a subterranean wine cellar with a cavernous tasting room. There are nine fireplaces (six indoors and three outdoors). The dining table sits on an automatic rotating circular steel plate and a 3D television rises on command from the footboard of the bed.

When Corbu suggested that "a house is a machine for living in," he undoubtedly meant a simpler lifestyle than the Browns'. "Jeff jumps into everything he does, full speed ahead," says Diana of her husband of 10 years. To name two examples that affected the program of their house, she cites Jeff's triathlon training, which led to an Ironman race (and a top-of-the-line home gym) and a new winemaking hobby, which has resulted in 1,000 barrels of their 1997 Goose cabernet (now aging in their temperature-controlled wine room). For Diana's own diversions, cooking classes around the world and a demonstration at the local Purcell Murray led to a 72-inch La Cornue range with matching rotisserie.

As varied as the requests were, Schultz, along with contractor Craig Fisher, managed to work in the needs of the couple. It's clear that the selection of an architect-and-contractor team was the most important piece of the puzzle, and in this case it was kismet. Jeff has lived in Corona del Mar for 24 years and owns various properties in the neighborhood.

Ironman and all-around overachiever Jeff Brown heads out of the driveway of his just-finished house for a ride up the coast. The stone, concrete and wood seen on the exterior are the same materials repeated throughout the interior.





"I wanted to be able to sit outside all year long. We wanted four big rooms, including a wine cellar and a gym."

Two islands make the kitchen a study in symmetry (below) and a workhorse for parties. The steel island was inspired by the French range, and has pocket doors to close off the back half. The wooden island has custom steel hardware.



So when it came time for he and Diana to start fresh, they decided to renovate a 1960s ranch house with a high roofline (which they ended up lowering by a full foot). They drove around the neighborhood, making note of the renovations they liked. When they discovered many were by the same firm, Laidlaw Schultz Architects, it turned out they were also a tenant of one Brown's commercial properties.

"He's not just my client, he's my landlord," says Schultz, who is the laidback antithesis to Jeff's frenetic energy. "So it's good that it's been a positive collaboration." The selection of materials, for instance, was entirely democratic. They used board-formed concrete for the foundation, leaving it exposed on the walls of the wine cellar, gym, master bedroom and kitchen. Texas shellstone, a type of limestone, was cut into blocks for the rest of the interior walls. Mozambique wood is





used for much of the paneling and casework and cold-rolled steel was chosen for the door frames and staircase. Tying it all together, floors throughout are end-grain mesquite, left uneven and lightly sanded per Jeff's request. "No one believed we should leave it that way," says Jeff. "But it looked so cool."

Creating a floorplan that would work for everyone—including Jeff's teenage son, Parker, who spends half his time with his dad—meant adding a third level. The original two-story house was demolished and 25 feet were excavated for a subterranean level, which contains the wine rooms, a gym

and Parker's room. The ground level holds the master suite, complete with his and her bathrooms, a dressing room and a private patio with a spa. To get to the top floor, the Browns use either a stairway at the front of the house that leads directly to the front door, or one from the lower level patio. The great room and a guest suite-office make up the L-shaped top floor: The long part of the L is the living, dining and kitchen area; the short leg of the L is a divided cube with two full baths and enough pocket doors to create either sybaritic guest quarters or two separate rooms for work and sleep.



A broad overhang is fitted with heat lamps so that Jeff gets his wish to sit outside year-round. A strip of succulents creates a border for the top level of the patio. The staircase leads down to the master suite, where both bedroom and bath are open to the lower patio.



In a signature stroke, architect Craig Schultz added openings in the overhang that are based on the Fibonacci sequence. The ceiling in the great room is made of reclaimed wood with steel trusses for an industrial, rustic look.







ABOVE: The rear wall of the house slides away entirely for an open-air great room. The rotating dining table is located in the far corner. BELOW: Every detail of the master suite was customized including the bed, which contains storage for all the couple's AV needs and steps for the dog.

The great room offers the same overachieving functionality. A tidy built-in bar area in one corner has a switch that operates the dining carousel, which rotates at varying speeds so that the views of the ocean and skyline can be enjoyed by every guest at the table. But nowhere does form meet function more than in the kitchen, where there are two islands. The first, a 12-inch-thick butcher block-topped prep-island, holds a sink and dishwasher as well as storage and a breakfast bar. A second island, framed in cold-rolled steel, is centered around the La Cornue range. One side is for gourmet cooking of every type and style, and the other side works like an old-fashioned service kitchen—a second sink, dishwasher and compact workstation can be closed off with sliding steel doors. Solid wood drawers and cabinets were given custom steel pulls with finger holes positioned for easy reach.







"Craig [Schultz] is the ultimate detail guy," says Jeff, running his hand across the steel kitchen island. "He took great pains to line up everything, from the blocks of stone to the forms for the concrete to the distance between skylights."

The result of Schultz' fastidiousness is a sense of mental recalibration in the presence of such orderly repetition—three clusters of kitchen pendants, three square skylights and three black rectangular voids to visually marry the fireplace with the flatscreen TV. There are grand gestures and bold materials but the space has human proportions, the light is gently manipulated and everything was built to be highly functional as well as beautiful. Space, light, order: achieved. Corbu would be proud. ■

"Craig took great pains to line up everything, from the blocks of stone...to the distance between skylights."

The wine cellar is temperature controlled for the bottles and barrels of Brown's private-label wine. ABOVE: The office-guest suite opens to the entry patio. "This house was my greatest challenge yet," says the contractor. "All the stone had to line up exactly."







The tasting room, adjacent to the wine cellar, is an impressive space for entertaining. It's also a snapshot of the materials used throughout: Accessed down a steel staircase, it has a board-formed concrete wall, a Texas shellstone wall and end-grain mesquite floors.