





Here comes the sun

Bright yellow handmade tiles enhance the inviting, cheerful look of this kitchen in a contemporary Spanish colonial-style house in Mexico

When in Rome – or in this case, Mexico – it pays to follow the local traditions, and this can even be applied to kitchen design and construction.

The kitchen in this house, which was designed by architect David Howell, reflects the vernacular of the region. Like the house itself, every part of it was built by hand, by a local workforce.

“Even the 2in x 2in bright yellow tiles were handmade and hand glazed,” Howell says. “The San Miguel area is renowned for colorful tiles, and although

the house has a contemporary Spanish Colonial rather than Mexican architecture, we wanted to recognize this link – the kitchen is like a sunflower.”

The tiles line the walls and shelving, and clad the sides and top of the island. They also wrap a pizza oven on one side of the kitchen.

In contrast to the visual warmth of the

These pages: Wide openings ensure this kitchen is an integral part of the hacienda-style house, which is on the outskirts of San Miguel in Mexico.

tiles, the main work cabinetry features doors in mesquite hardwood – another local material – set in patinated concrete cabinets with concrete countertops. The integrated sink was also formed in situ.

Another key handcrafted feature of the kitchen is the traditional bóveda vaulted brick ceiling. Similar ceilings feature elsewhere in the house, including the alfresco-style dining area. This is positioned between two wings of the house and is open to an internal courtyard and the wider desert landscape.



Architect: David Howell, Matt Wilkie, David Howell Design, Inc (New York); with owner John Houshmand
Interior designer: Steffani Aarons
Doors and windows: Steel
Flooring: Terra cotta tiles
Lighting: Custom by David Howell Design; Artes de Mexico
Kitchen cabinetry: Mesquite wood
Countertops: Patinated concrete
Island and wall cladding: Yellow ceramic tiles

*Story by Colleen Hawkes
 Photography by David Joseph*

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Left: The island and the walls are wrapped in bright yellow glazed tiles, which were sourced locally. The main cabinetry features patinated concrete that was poured in situ, and mesquite hardwood doors.

Above: Hand-built bóveda vaulted brick ceilings are a feature of both the kitchen and dining area, which is positioned on one of the main axes within the house. The dining area looks into an internal courtyard on one side and the wider landscape on the other.