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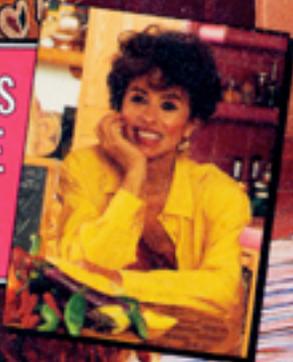
THE SPIRIT OF THE FRONTIER HOME

OCTOBER 1994

## DESIGN'S NEW FRONTIER

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RITA MORENO'S  
SALSA-STYLE  
KITCHEN



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10  
DISPLAY UNTIL NOVEMBER 1



# In the Kitchen with Rita!

While visiting Pancho Villa's Mexican home in the late '80s, Rita Moreno had no idea she'd come home with ideas for remodeling her Pacific Palisades kitchen.

"It had a floor I was crazy about," says the Oscar, Tony, Grammy, and two-time Emmy winner, a regular on "The Cosby Mysteries," premiering this fall on NBC. "You know, the kind with all the octagonal tiles—the tiny ones. The center of the floor was all white, with a black- and clay-color octagonal border."

Rita described the kitchen to Los Angeles designer Mark Enos, who came up with a plan for a contemporary room with traditional Mexican accents. Rita and her husband, Dr. Leonard Gordon, both loved the final design.

Rita helped plan the room. "I'm a clipping maven. My husband goes crazy. He's always hearing me go . . ." she imitates the sound of ripping pages and mugs her husband's response: "Can you do that in another room, please?"

The collected photos helped Rita illustrate the feeling she wanted to achieve. "I showed Mark dozens of clippings—all very often divergent designs. I would show him a big clipping with the tiniest detail in the corner and say, 'I like that.'"

Rita Moreno's California kitchen, like the actress herself, is a welcoming whirlwind of brilliant colors and lively congeniality.



Rita Moreno, with sidekick Leland the pig (right), loves to cook ethnic dishes in her hot-pink kitchen. She wanted her kitchen island (above) to look like a piece of fine inlaid furniture. "When furniture starts looking functional, it stops being personal," says Rita.





ARREGOLON SALAD  
w/ ... + walnuts  
scallops w/  
... butter  
Poached Peas w/  
... sauce  
... Class



## In the Kitchen with Rita!

**A** two-page magazine spread on Mexican designer Luis Barragan's hot-pink rooms was the inspiration for the pink tile that surrounds the stove. "It's an impossible color to find," says Rita, who scoured Los Angeles with Mark before finding the last batch of it at design store La France. "I call it Mexican pink because of all the blue in it," Rita says.

Leonard says Rita's perfectionism and the search for her longed-for tiles caused the project to drag on. "We were washing dishes in the bathroom sink for a year," says the former cardiologist, now a lighting designer. "I suggested a different tile, but when Rita gets an idea in her head, there's no changing it."

Rita laughs. "Yes, the budget just went into the dumper on this kitchen," she says. But the sacrifice was worth it. Often on the road lecturing or performing, Rita says she can't wait to get back to her kitchen. "At night, I dim the overhead lights and put on all the tracer lights that run beneath the counters. It's truly such a convivial place. It almost has arms. You can actually feel the embrace as you walk in."

Leland, the culinary pig perched on the island, has a similar effect on Rita. She first encountered the almost-huggable figure at a bed and breakfast in Leland, Michigan. "I don't normally like such things, but he just charmed me," says Rita, chucking the pig on the chin.

Everything in Rita's kitchen has a practical purpose—even Leland. He doubles as a maitre d' on party nights—his blackboard announces the specialties of the house.



**Mark Enos lined palm-leaf baskets and suspended them from wooden frames (left). At Rita's direction, the kitchen table (top) has a pinkish cast and is bulletproofed against stains. Rita spends days decorating for guests, moving pieces around until she's happy with the arrangement—the tango-rabbit teapot, a gift from daughter Fernanda, always takes center stage in her teapot collection (above).**

## In the Kitchen with Rita!



Rita installed a plate rack in a walkway between the laundry and kitchen (above). Tin refrigerator doors were dipped in acid for a pewter look (right). "I think it's wonderful," Rita describes her kitchen, "because it still has the (Pancho Villa) flavor, but it's contemporary."



Even with Mark and Rita at the helm, the remodeling process had its share of design dilemmas. Fearing the kitchen skylight would make the room too hot, Rita wanted it covered with louvered shades; the shade mechanism was so heavy, the carpenter built an elevator to install it.

The punched tin on the drawers and refrigerator came with its own set of problems. Rita didn't like the tin facing when it arrived, so Mark bathed it in an acid to give it a pewter look.

But the countertop tile worked as planned. Before installing the Cluny tile, Rita tested its sealed surface. "I had a sample of the stone here," says Rita, "and for about two weeks I had red wine, vinegar, lemon juice, and olive oil on it. It just sat there looking disgusting, but it never gave me any trouble."

The curved and open shelving throughout the kitchen worked out just as well. The shelves provide the perfect nesting place for Rita's collections. Daughter Fernanda, a self-taught artist and photographer who often dances on tour with Rita in her "America" number from *West Side Story*, gave her mom a tangoing-rabbit teapot. "I used to tango Fernanda all around the house, from the time she was a little girl," laughs Rita. "So when she saw this, she had to buy it. I just love it!"

It's been four years since the kitchen was complete and Rita says she's more in love with it now than she was then. "If I could move my bed in here, I would," she says with a grin.

Production and Text: Donna Pizzi  
Photography: Philip Thompson  
Resource Guide: Page 62

