



## BACK TO THE FUTURE

When Ralph Rapson designed the 1966 Idea House (known as the Red Cedar House), in what was then the Jonathan community of Chaska, the modernist architect wanted to showcase the use of affordable materials and techniques. Today, 53 years later, this model home's design, complete with a recently updated kitchen, has endured and evolved with the family who has lived there for nearly five decades.

The current owners, who bought the house in 1972, first remodeled their kitchen about 20 years ago. Now, as retired empty nesters, the homeowners needed more accessible storage and wanted to update the look. Kitchen designer Kate Roos worked with the owners to maintain the spirit of Rapson's original design. "I wanted to pay homage to the architect and the style of the home," she says. "We



The homeowners didn't want to change the footprint of their galley kitchen, which has a shared open eat-in and living area (top), but they wanted an updated look. They also wanted more storage without compromising the architectural integrity of the iconic house. Kitchen designer Kate Roos designed the wall of cabinetry (above) that holds a media-and-message center with open shelves to display the homeowners' pottery collection.

were able to do things that made the space more personal for them but still fit the home.” New frameless cherry cabinets, Corian counters, and under-the-hood features—a pull-down vent hood, roll-out storage for pots and pans and a below-the-island microwave drawer—gave the space a cleaner look while packing in plenty of new function. On the wall opposite the kitchen, Roos designed cabinets that house a turntable and media components, a command center, and a pantry. Open shelves display the homeowners’ pottery collection.

Architect Toby Rapson, Ralph Rapson’s son, says he toured the house when he was a boy. “The Idea House was a program based on Scandinavian design ideas,” Toby says. “[Rapson] was experimenting with affordable materials and techniques.”

The home received lots of press at the time, including a story in *Better Homes and Gardens* in 1969. “It’s a great family house, and we’ve really used it, hosting large family gatherings,” the owner says. “And now we have a kitchen that will make it easier for us to stay even longer.”



Architect Ralph Rapson designed the home in 1966 as part of the New Town development in Chaska. Most of the original details remain, including the galley design, red cedar ceilings, and clerestory windows (above).



The living room (above) and dining room are separated with a two-way brick fireplace with twin chimneys. “The stacks are separated to increase the sense of space,” Rapson said in a 1968 *Star Tribune* story about the house.



Typical of many Rapson-designed homes, the exterior featured a small courtyard and a "gracious entry area," says architect Toby Rapson, Ralph Rapson's son. "He liked to blur the boundaries between interior and exterior."

Upon entering the front door, guests arrive in the dining room (above) that has views of the shaded backyard. Clerestory windows high along the walls stream in natural light. The front exterior features a light scoop (below) that's visible above the courtyard.



"[Ralph Rapson] was experimenting with affordable techniques, like the standard gable truss that he flipped over to allow for a vaulted red cedar ceiling in the kitchen, living, and dining rooms."

—Toby Rapson



The back of the house takes in views of the woods and a marsh beyond with walls of windows and an upstairs deck that spans the width of the home. The inverted truss is one of the house's unique features and makes the roof appear as if it's upside down.



When the Ralph Rapson house, with its original kitchen, was featured in the April 1969 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*, the publicity and floorplans within that story lured visitors from around the world and continues to today.



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