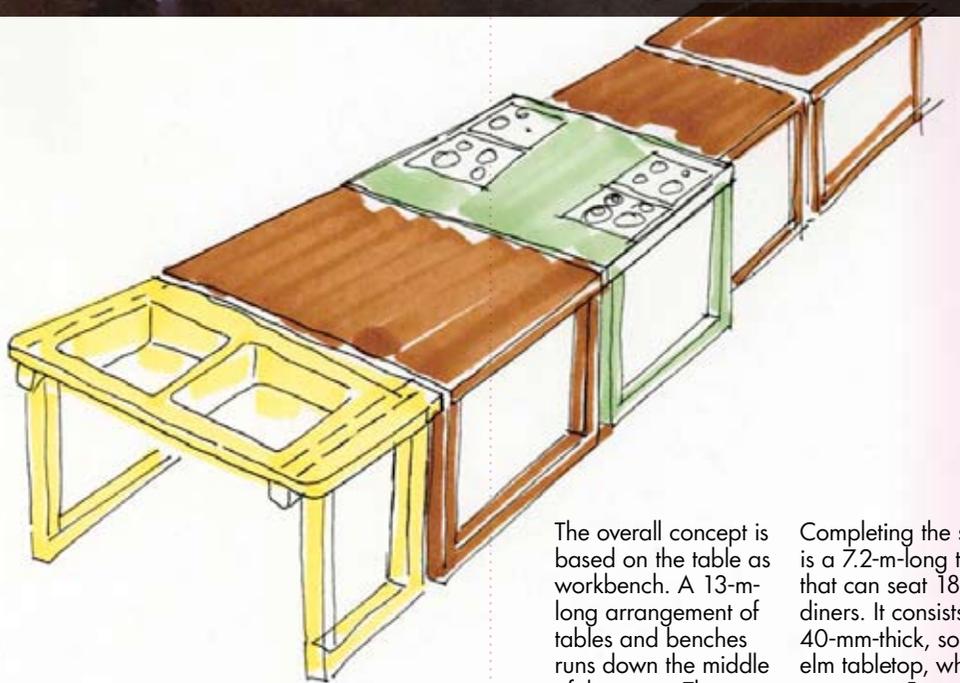




Culinary Catwalk

Get a sense of what Swiss designer Jörg Boner is up to in Aarau, where he's just completed Cookuk2, a place that revolves around food.

Words Andrea Eschbach
Photos Milo Keller



The overall concept is based on the table as workbench. A 13-m-long arrangement of tables and benches runs down the middle of the room. The functional layout starts with two sink and cooker units, reminiscent of a field kitchen, which are followed by two smaller tables for food preparation and presentation.

Completing the scene is a 7.2-m-long table that can seat 18 diners. It consists of a 40-mm-thick, solid-elm tabletop, which rests on a 5-mm-thick base of sheet steel that is powder-coated in pink. A steel beam supports the table.



In the foyer of an office building in Aarau, Switzerland, one door bears the name Cookuk: six letters that spell out a recipe for success. Here, in a former factory complex, canteen, cookery classes and catering have merged to create a winning formula for more than a decade. Three years ago, the cookery school and related facilities – meeting place, restaurant and function room – were refurbished by Zürich-based designer Jörg Boner, in collaboration with Karin Wälchli and Guido Reichlin of Chalet 5 (see *Frame* 36, page 105). Their witty, tongue-in-cheek blend – of old and new, of raw concrete and bright colours, of ornament and high-gloss finishes – caused something of a sensation, which soon demanded a sequel to satisfy the appetite of the population of Aarau for good food and innovative design. Consequently, in August 2006 the vacant warehouse next door opened its doors, inviting the public to make use of a cleverly converted interior: Cookuk2. Promising even more culinary delights, Cookuk2 is a bit of eye candy in itself. Prepared under the architectural guidance of Martin Stierli, the ingredients – including concept and design – were carefully selected by Jörg Boner. The 38-year-old Boner relishes a wide range of flavours and seasonings: this is, after all, the designer responsible for award-winning furniture and lighting for such clients as ClassiCon, Fontana Arte, Wogg, Team by Wellis and Nils

Holger Moormann. Since launching his design agency in 1999, Boner has worked as art director for the Nanoo by Faserplast label, and he teaches product design at the ECAL in Lausanne. What he savours above all else, however, is the relationship between product and space, as recently evidenced in his purpose-designed room for Neue Räume 05, the Zürich design fair.

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It took him about six months to complete the concept for Cookuk2. But this was not interior design in the conventional sense, by any means. Boner designed two lamps, five tables and a bench especially for this project. The aim was to combine contemporary aesthetics with the functional requirements of preparing food, cooking and dining. Whereas the first Cookuk is striking in the sheer opulence of its finishes, the concept of Cookuk2 is more pared down. 'What we were interested in here was the unassuming, self-evident aspect,'

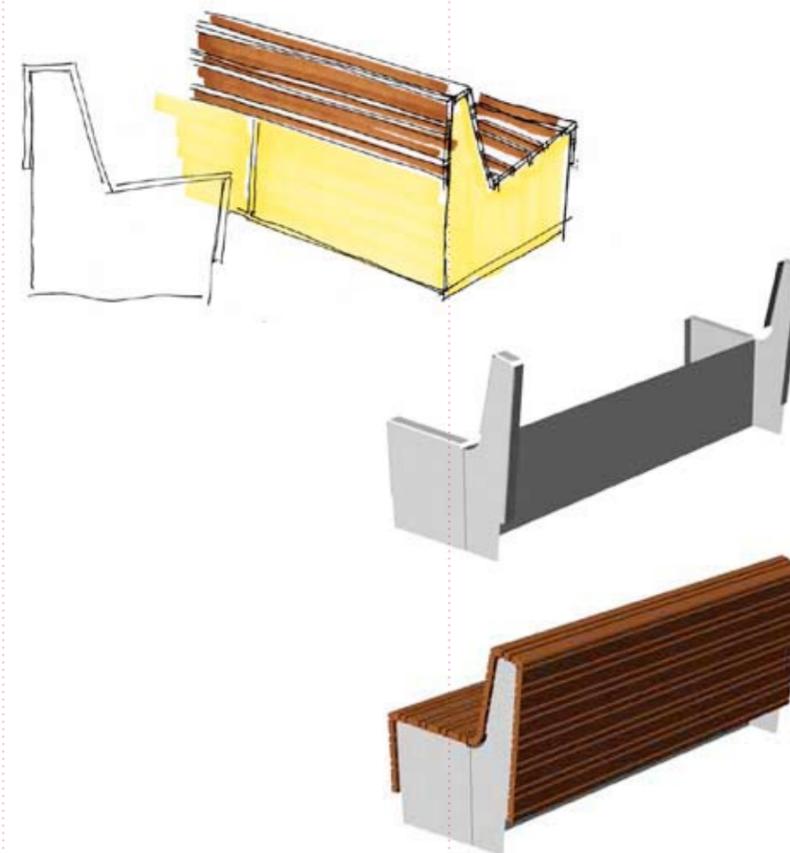
The lighting design is tailored to the shape of the room. Aubergine T bulbs are integrated into cooker hoods suspended over the kitchen islands. Above the dining table, five white dimmer lamps, designed by Boner in collaboration with Christian Deuber, immerse the diners in subtle light. The design is as effective as it is simple: each lamp features cotton fabric stretched around five chromed-steel bands, holding them in place to form a domed lampshade. Halogen 150W bulbs create a warm light that can be dimmed or brightened to alter the atmosphere of the room. When the lamps are switched on, the arching metal bands are visible through the fabric and cast star-like patterns across the ceiling. 'Cutlery and glasses should shine and sparkle,' says Boner, 'but the rest of the room should be dark.'



explains Boner, who took advantage of the long, narrow space to create a culinary catwalk. 'We also wanted the process of a cookery course to be legible in the furnishings. Preparing and cooking food are followed by presenting the dishes and, finally, enjoying the pleasure of eating.'

One source of inspiration was Achille Castiglioni's legendary 1960 design for the Splügen Bräu restaurant in Milan. Boner can easily imagine his own lamps for Cookuk2 going into mass production, just as the Italian master's ceiling lamps for Splügen Bräu were subsequently produced by Flos. 'We're already working on variations,' he says.

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www.joergboner.ch
www.cookuk.ch



It is not just the lighting at Cookuk2 that creates the impression of a room within a room. Tables and benches reinforce the effect. Although chairs had been considered initially, Boner soon abandoned the idea in favour of three benches on each side of the long table, a practical solution that encloses the space and adds a rhythmic structure to the dining area. Each bench seats three, and the cleverly calculated alignment ensures that the distance between diners remains the same and gives everyone plenty of

legroom. The seating combines a sheet-steel base with solid-elm slats in varying widths. The 3-mm-thick sheet steel is powder-coated in a sandy shade. Wood slats at the back of the bench reach two-thirds of the way to the floor. One particularly nice detail is the curved area between seat and backrest. 'Getting the proportions right was tricky,' says Boner, who mentions the simple tables and benches in the old-fashioned first-class compartments of Swiss trains as a source of inspiration.