A Hard-Working, Compact Kitchen

Whether it's dinner for 12 or a seasonal canning project, this small kitchen is geared for more than one person working at a time

BY FRANK W. RIEPE





As an architect, I'm always flattered and pleased when friends invite me to work on their houses, but I feel an extra measure of concern to get it just right. When the job is replacing the kitchen while they are living in the house, the concern is even greater.

My friends' kitchen was a liability. It was a fairly modern L-shaped galley kitchen, but it was too cramped and cut off from the rest of the house. They wanted to make the kitchen the core of their busy home; they wanted a place where they could entertain and work, and where family, friends and pets all could interact comfortably (photo above, taken at A on floor plan).

Borrowing a sense of space

What they needed was space, but there was no way to add a single square foot to this part of the house. So we decided to take out a wall and a small china closet that separated the kitchen from the dining room to increase the sense of space but not increase the footprint of the room (floor plan, p. 75).

To separate the rooms, I designed a bar-height Honduras-mahogany counter in the dining room where the wall once stood. The counter creates an intimate spot where guests can sit while still affording people in the kitchen a view of the main living areas of the house.

Balancing the light

Because the main wall of the kitchen faces west, we needed to control the natural light. The late-afternoon sun burning into the original kitchen was overheating the space and hampering the view while my friends were preparing dinner.

The solution required a redesign of the window configuration, but I didn't want to lose any natural light. In fact, I hoped to improve it. Framing in a steel angle above the window bank allowed us to install counter-to-ceiling casement windows, which are slightly narrower than the old windows but substantially taller. We boxed the windows in an aluminum frame and bumped them out a few inches. Be-



Cooking light. *In this kitchen, the windows and glass-block backsplash provide a visual link from the stove to the gardens beyond. A Honduras-mahogany bar replaces a wall between the kitchen and dining room, annexing what was marginal space into an intimate spot for a light meal as well as visually linking the kitchen with the rest of the house. Photo above taken at B on floor plan. Just a slight bump-out of the windows is enough to create an overhang that reduces the reach of the afternoon sun. Photo left taken at C on floor plan.*

tween the casement windows and behind the range, we installed a panel of 8-in. by 8-in. Pittsburgh Corning glass blocks (800-624-2120; www.pittsburghcorning.com). The glass-block panel defines the backsplash area behind the stove. The blocks were set in silicone caulk, which gave us sanitary joints that are easy to clean. The joints are half the width of a standard mortar installation, so extra care was required for accurate joint alignment (photos pp. 72-73). Projected casements and a panel of glass blocks provided just enough baffling of the afternoon sun.

A range with a view

My friends are serious cooks and organic gardeners, so the placement and the selection of the range were important. I positioned the range in front of the glass-block panel, creating a bright focal point for the kitchen.

They wanted a small range, but it had to have a large electric oven and four powerful gas burners. We settled on a dual-fuel model by Dacor (800-793-0093; www.dacor.com).

We needed to vent the range but not obstruct the light filtering through the glass-block wall. Downdrafting exhaust systems are not recommended for such a powerful gas range, so I began searching for a strong, quiet, low-profile hood that could be ducted through the ceiling. Online, I found Trepol (www.trepol.dk), a manufacturer in Denmark. Their model 28, wired for American current with a custom-length stainless-steel shaft and a hood shell in white Corian (a novel material for an exhaust hood), blends nicely with the other kitchen elements.

Space-saving strategies

To free space in the kitchen, we rearranged many of the appliances. A prep sink went into one corner so that two people could work together. We shifted the refrigerator into another corner, which freed some much-needed floor space. In its place, we built floor-to-ceiling cabinets flanked with a microwave-oven workstation (photo above right). The Kashmir granite countertop blends well with the multiple tones of wood and is the perfect place for sorting mail or resting a cookbook for quick reference. The microwave oven is oriented to mimic the height of a conventional oven and doesn't take up valuable counter space. To the left, the counter angles back, and the space below is perfect for storing all sorts of flat cooking pans and trays (bottom photo, facing page). And tucked alongside the microwave workstation is a pet-feeding cubby that keeps the bowls of food and water out of the way (photo bottom right).

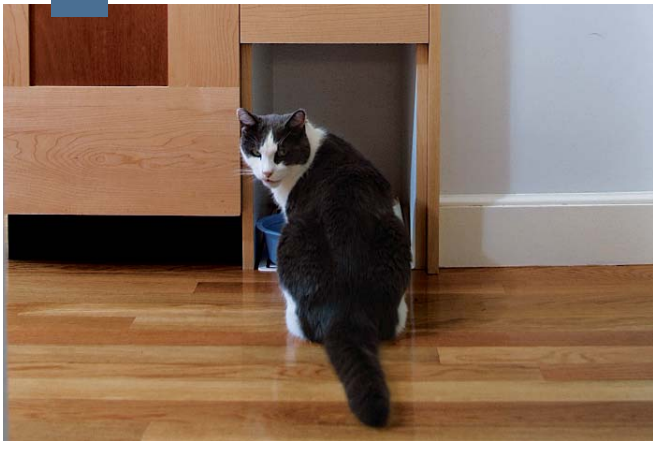
I designed the frameless cabinets to blend traditional and modern elements. The traditional maple rail-and-stile construction is done with wide proportions. The Honduras-mahogany panels, a striking contrast to the maple, give a sleek, contemporary look to a sturdy cabinet.

A consistent element in this house is the wood floor, which is why my friends chose oak for the kitchen floor, finished with high-gloss polyurethane. Along with being attractive and durable, this final element anchors the kitchen to the rest of the house. □



1 *Versatile microwave workspace has tall cabinets, shelves, deep drawers and a well-lit countertop.*

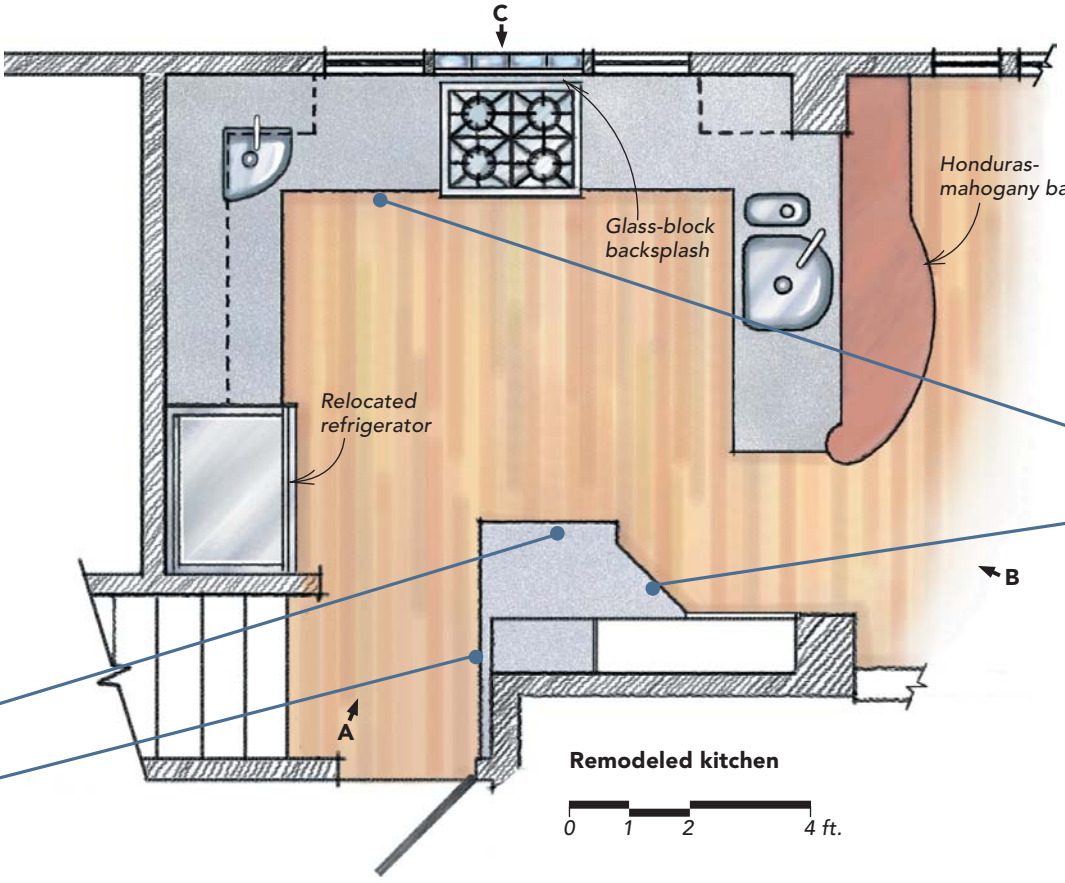
2 *A cat cubby tucked beside the microwave workstation keeps pet bowls from being underfoot.*



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Photos by Roe A. Osborn.

A SIZABLE IMPROVEMENT TO A SMALL KITCHEN

Every available square inch in this kitchen remodel had to be put to good use. **1** A microwave bump-out creates a nonintrusive peninsula with excellent storage space. **2** A cubby that's a special fit for a feline uses space that might otherwise be wasted. **3** Drawers hidden behind lower cabinet doors make storage and retrieval orderly. **4** An angled cabinet is a great way to store all sizes of baking pans, cutting boards and cookie sheets.

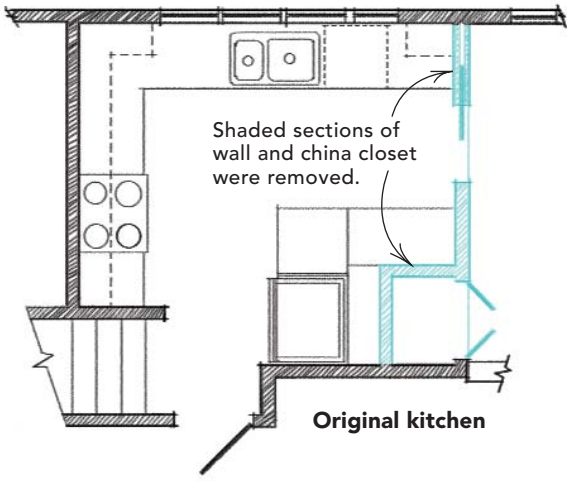




3 ***Drawers behind doors are a simple solution for easier storage.***

4 ***Angled cabinet storage is just right for flat pans and trays.***





Making the most of an existing footprint

With no room to expand, the author freed workspace by rearranging the appliances. To gain space and give the kitchen a more open feel, a wall between the kitchen and the dining room as well as a small china closet were removed.

Drawings: Paul Perreault

continued

Reader Response

Credit where it's due

My article "A Hard-Working, Compact Kitchen" in the December/January issue looks terrific (*FHB* #152, pp. 72-75), but somewhere in editing, the builder's name was dropped. I want your readers to know that Chuck Green of Four Corners Construction in Ashland, Mass., was the general contractor for this project, which also included the simultaneous remodeling of two bathrooms and the master bedroom upstairs. Thanks to Chuck and his crew, the whole project was built to the same high standards shown in the kitchen article.

—Frank W. Riepe, Sudbury, MA