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Fall 2008
Display until November
Volume 11, Number 3



Fun stools provide a place for the kids to eat breakfast and hit the books. "Everyone congregates here," homeowner Jeannie Beddard says. "It's a wonderful space for both cooking and gathering."





the right mix

Eclectic elements make a timeless kitchen.

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"THE KITCHEN WAS NOT AT ALL WHAT WE WANTED FOR OUR FAMILY," Jeannie Beddard says of the original galley in her Alexandria, Virginia, home. Linoleum floors, laminate countertops, and dated appliances were the least of its problems. "The house belonged to people who didn't cook," she says. "The kitchen was dark, closed-in, and small. It even had a stacked washer and dryer—more like a laundry room than a kitchen."

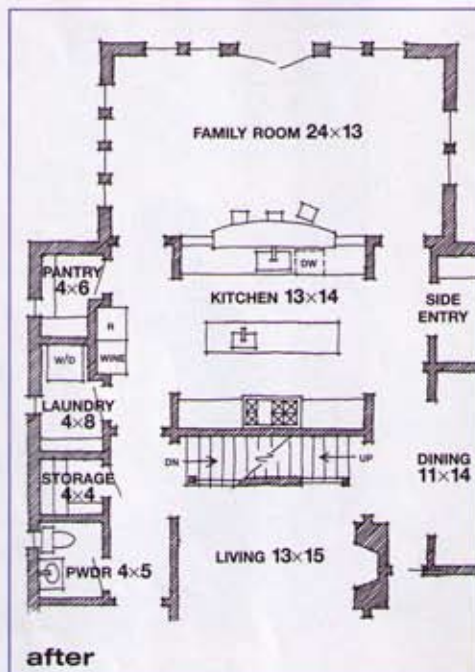
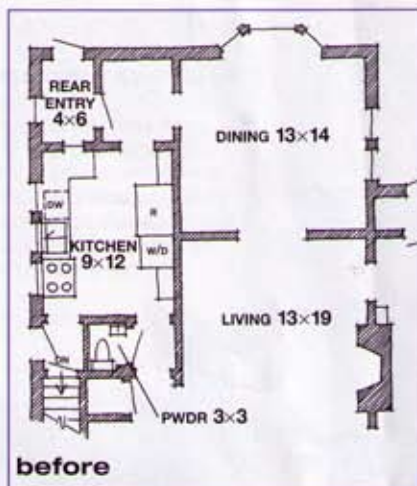
When Jeannie and her husband, Smith Brittingham, renovated their home, they presented different wish lists to their project architect, Charles Warren of Moore Architects. "Smith's a gourmet cook," Jeannie says. "His interest was in high-end appliances and an easy-to-manuever layout. I wanted an open, inviting space for the kids as well as for gatherings with family and friends." The new layout satisfied them both.

The kitchen moved from the back to the center of the home, adjacent to the family room. "Initially, I was concerned about the kitchen floating

TOP LEFT: The mix of textures includes reclaimed oak (island countertop), copper (range hood), and slate (range backsplash).

ABOVE LEFT: A pot-filler faucet (above range) makes it easy to boil large amounts of water. Additional faucets add convenience for food prep and cleanup.

LEFT: The openness of the kitchen lets natural light flood into the room.



HOW TO CREATE A TIMELESS KITCHEN

- MIX STYLES AND MATERIALS:** Different forms and finishes suggest the kitchen has grown over time.
- DEFINE THE FOOTPRINT:** "If we'd done wood floors like elsewhere," homeowner Jeannie Beddard says, "the kitchen would have had too much wood." Instead, slate tiles establish the kitchen's identity.
- SHOW CONTINUITY:** Multicolor slate tiles on the range backsplash also serve as the living room fireplace surround. Repetition creates harmony.
- USE ANTIQUES:** Nothing gives a forever feel to a new kitchen more easily than antique elements, such as the island countertop of reclaimed barn wood.
- CONSIDER IMPERFECT MATERIALS:** "The soapstone has an organic feel, with a randomness of pattern," Jeannie says. "We didn't want a polished granite look." Less-than-perfect materials add character.
- DISGUISE APPLIANCES:** Cladding a large appliance can make it look like heirloom furniture. This home's refrigerator and freezer unit is covered in painted, distressed maple.
- RECALL OLD ELEMENTS:** Wall moldings, inspired by those in the old kitchen, help retain some of the room's original character.
- WORK IN LOCAL MATERIALS:** Virginia-quarried soapstone gives the kitchen a meaningful context.

in the middle of the house," Jeannie says, "but the open plan allowed easy access to all areas on the main floor, especially the front hall, dining room, and family room." The kitchen now has great flow, serving as the hub for social events. Windows and French doors in the family room provide the kitchen with ample natural light. Tall stools pull up to the breakfast bar, which doubles as a spot for Rusty, 13, and Natalie, 10, to do homework.

The homeowners updated the kitchen's look, as well. "Smith and I agreed that the look and feel of the kitchen had to work with the whole house," Jeannie says. Inspiration came from outside, where the renovated exterior facade combines painted stucco, faux slate, and locally mined stone to put a fresh face on an older home in a traditional neighborhood. "I abandoned the idea of white cabinets and wood floors," Jeannie says. "I wanted to mix materials—and styles—to create a warmer, more organic space, like the rest of the house. The kitchen had to be eclectic, not one style or another, something that couldn't quite be placed or dated."

Creating the timeless quality that Jeannie sought involved three major steps. First, she chose two different cabinetry forms. One is light alder in a modern Shaker style; the other is maple, more traditional in form, and with a distressed black finish. The

latter covers the island base and fronts the refrigerator and freezer unit visible from the front hall. "People walk in and think it's a piece of antique furniture," Jeannie says.

The second decision was material for the breakfast bar and countertops that would blend with the island's reclaimed oak top. "Granite looked too perfect," she says. "But we fell in love with soapstone. It gets scratches and nicks, but they add character."

The range hood presented the third key element. Though the kitchen beautifully balances cool stone and steel with warm wood, Jeannie thought a steel hood was too predictable. "We found a picture of a hood made to look like copper, and a local metal shop fabricated our hood in real copper," she says. Spare contemporary hanging lights above the island balance the visual heaviness of the classic full range hood. The fixtures also complement the airiness of antique seeded glass on cabinets above the breakfast bar.

"I prefer when things are mixed. The new and old, traditional and modern, rustic and industrial—they have a harmony to them," Jeannie says. "People and kids feel more comfortable in a space like that. It has a timeless quality." ■

Architect: Charles Warren, Moore Architects, PC
For more information, see Resources on page 118.