

A COOK'S *Kitchen*



BACK OF HOUSE TAKES CENTER STAGE

Chris Tierney loves to cook. So when she had the opportunity to renovate her 1960s summer home in Kennebunk, Maine, she knew exactly what she wanted. No longer would the kitchen be a small room relegated to the back of the house. The kitchen—and the cook—would take center stage.

“This was my opportunity to create the kitchen that I wanted,” said Chris. “I like to entertain. I didn’t want to be off in a small kitchen like the old house. I wanted to be able to be with everyone as I cooked.” While the open concept was important, it was also important that this be a true cook’s kitchen.

“I love the galley kitchen at my home in Vermont because I have everything right at hand,” explained Chris. The traditional galley kitchen, with its single-corridor layout and two rows of cabinets at opposite walls, is the most efficient and simple of domestic kitchen design.

“I used to participate in an amateur cooking program,” laughed Chris. “I was on a show called Across the Fence. We would cook in our kitchen, bring the dishes in and then talk about them. The

taping was on Monday at 12:30 in the afternoon. I would be in my kitchen and I’d have to whip up four things to bring in and show. I did that for about four years. It was fun, and it became very important to me to have all the ingredients at hand.”

With the advice of her friend, Maureen George, Chris started to assemble a team to renovate her summer home to create a retreat for her entire family to enjoy. In addition to Maureen George Designs, the team included Graham Architects and Bowley Builders.

The first step was to finalize the floor plan. Since the 1950s, the work triangle has been used as a measure of the efficiency of a kitchen. Developed by the University of Illinois Small Homes Council, the work triangle is an imaginary line drawn from the center of the sink to the center of the range to the center of the refrigerator and then back to the sink. The more balanced the triangle, the more efficient the kitchen.

“We went through a number of different plans about how we were going to do the kitchen,” said

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Above: Everything Chris Tierney needs for cooking and entertaining is close at hand in her efficient Kennebunk kitchen. | Facing page: After coming across a handmade ceramic fish tile, Chris knew she had found the focal point for her kitchen and a design theme for the entire house. | Flowers provided by Flowersbythesea.net

George. “It was really designed for Chris to be in her kitchen cooking but still involved in everything else that is going on. That was a really important part of the design element.” It was also important that the kitchen be designed for Chris’s cooking style. “We knew it was going to be an open kitchen and knew it would be for someone working alone in the kitchen.”

But combining the open concept, ocean view and a galley design to take advantage of the work triangle concept was not easy. “When we were redesigning the home, we knew that the zoning laws were going to impose a lot of restrictions,” said architect David Graham. In fact, if Chris’s vision for the kitchen was going to be realized, the entire foundation would need to be altered and the house set at an angle to take advantage of the ocean view.

The resulting kitchen floor plan resembles the top half of an octagon. The back wall features a row of cabinets and a large stovetop. To the right of the stovetop, on an angled wall, is the large side-by-side refrigerator. The sink is set into a peninsula directly across from the stovetop, thus completing the work triangle. To compensate for the loss of above-counter storage over the peninsula, a large pantry was added at the end of the corridor.





Fusing a traditional galley design with an open concept allows Chris to enjoy the best of both worlds: an efficient kitchen and the company of friends and family. Look for Chris's kitchen on the Coastal Kitchen Tour benefiting the Senior Center at Lower Village, Kennebunk, in October of 2010.

Although highly functional and efficient, the kitchen is also quite handsome, thanks to a blend of natural materials and a warm, earthy color scheme. "Before the house was renovated, I came across a great fish tile," said Chris. "I wanted that to be the focal point of the kitchen." But the tile didn't have quite the right tone. So Chris went directly to the source. "I drove out to Antiquity Tile in Hampden, Maine, and met with some folks there. They actually made the tile to my specifications."

That one piece set the tone for the entire kitchen. Outlets on the backsplash are faux finished, creating a seamless appearance that provides a nice background for the decorative tile. Custom cabinets, including the large pantry, are painted antique cream, echoing the frame surrounding the tile. The large, side-by-side refrigerator is hidden behind custom wooden panels, a decorative feature that keeps the space from being overwhelmed by the large appliance.

On the other side of the kitchen, the peninsula features a birch facade topped with a warm, beige granite. A raised counter overlooking the kitchen seats four, providing a front row seat for visitors and young kitchen assistants. "When we have the grandchildren, they can sit at the counter and help," smiled Chris. "It's just terrific."

But there is another, more practical benefit to a raised counter. "It might not be a design that is real popular," admitted Chris, "but I like having the eating area of the counter raised above the sink and the working counter. I must say, when I cook I have all kinds of stuff going on. With the raised counter, if you're sitting in the living room, you can't see the dishes in the sink that I haven't gotten to yet!" ■

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