

WRITER MEG FOX PHOTOGRAPHER PETER RYMWID DESIGNER MARLENE WANGENHEIM, ALLIED MEMBER ASID, AKBD, CAPS

Past Present

Time-honored touches inspire a space-savvy kitchen that's redesigned for comfort, style and efficiency

RE-CREATING THE SIMPLE, CLASSIC STYLING of a bygone era, equipped with state-of-the-art amenities and several food prep areas, was the inspiration behind designer Marlene Wangenheim's remodel of her own Morristown kitchen. She would create the space "from the memories of a childhood spent in Grandmother and Great Aunt Rosie's kitchens," where cabinets were layered in paint, baked goods were laid out on white enamel countertops, and the good china came out on special occasions, she says.

Wangenheim's original kitchen, a 1970s relic located in



KITCHEN CHARISMA

We showcase seven renovations that add spice to formerly bland spaces >>>



before

PHOTO BY JOHN MARELLI

a freestanding home within a townhouse development, could not be expanded because of strict homeowner association rules. Fortunately the association committee approved her request to remove or relocate a few windows and doors so she could rearrange the layout for greater efficiency and flow. Eliminating barriers such as a wall that formerly divided the kitchen from the breakfast room also helped to expand the space visually without adding additional square footage.

GOING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

The renovated kitchen honors the past, but reflects the here and now with such features as professional-grade appliances, a new sound system and radiant heat flooring. “A total integration of appliances produces a clean, uncluttered yet modernly convenient working kitchen,” says Wangenheim, principal

of Interiors by Design LLC in Morristown.

Bracket feet and other custom features give cabinetry a furniture-quality feel. “A simple cove detail was repeated in the custom hood, the crown moldings and the countertop edge to create a sense of rhythm” in the space, says Wangenheim, an associate kitchen and bath designer, certified aging in place specialist and allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers.

For the cabinetry’s painted finish, “I wanted something muted and serene ... something different,” the designer notes. The result is semicustom cabinets in a putty-green tone with a taupe glaze, which complements the classic Calacutta marble backsplash. “You don’t see green cabinetry in a kitchen very often,” she says, but in this case it harmonizes with the yellow painted cabinetry in the adjoining pantry/communications room, which she installed three years prior.

The original pantry doorway was opened up and the pantry’s yellow painted cabinetry was reconfigured to accommodate a communications center (opposite) and a new bathroom entry (behind the wall with glass-door upper cabinets in the photo above left). The mother-of-pearl brick mosaic backsplash echoes the niche above the range, which holds cooking oils.

Opening Spread: Rooted in simple classic design, the updated kitchen has furniture-style cabinets, a marble backsplash and natural white quartz countertops, a nostalgic reference to white enamel countertops popular in the 1940s. Closing up the doorway to the bathroom created wall space for the refrigerator, adjacent refrigerator drawers, built-in microwave and more. Free-floating shelves keep vintage chinaware and contemporary serving pieces within easy reach. A new single window—centered on the back wall—is now a symmetrical focal point dressed with simple lace café curtains and toile valances. Framed black-and-white photos of the family matriarchs sit atop the three-drawer base unit, which took the place of the original sink. Because the countertop was cut specific to this elevated cabinet, designer Marlene Wangenheim avoided the seam that would have resulted from one long stretch of countertop. Two small cabinets conveniently store cookbooks on top, vitamins and such below. The “before” photos show builder-grade oak veneer cabinets, Formica countertops and dated appliances that plagued the original 1970s-era kitchen. The doorway (one of two) leading to a bathroom created a lack of privacy. The double windows above the sink were not centered along the back wall and one was inoperable.



For the countertop, Wangenheim selected natural white quartz with a custom flat bull-nose edge, a look reminiscent of white enamel countertops popular in the 1940s and earlier, she says.

KEEPING IT REAL

Free-floating shelves display vintage china and keep

contemporary serving pieces within easy reach. "I'm a big fan of the Food Network," Wangenheim says. Kitchens on the network usually have open shelves so no time is wasted looking for cooking supplies or ingredients. "My shelves are not just for display, they are there because I use them," she says.

Wangenheim, an avid cook, appreciates her six-

burner professional-style range, which comes in handy especially during the holidays when the cooking crunch is on. Two refrigerator drawers in a separate beverage/coffee station free up space in the main refrigerator on a daily basis, and corner base cabinets live up to their full potential with heavy-duty rollout shelves for easy access to large pots and baking dish-



before

PHOTO BY JOHN MARELLI

es. There's also a base rollout spice drawer that "allows the Emeril in us to see all condiments with a simple glide," she says.

DEVOTED DESIGN

A crystal chandelier with a silk shade and matching sconces bring an air of elegance to the space along with cream-and-green toile valances and coordinating drapery. But it's the simple blow-in-the-breeze lace café curtains that may make Wangenheim feel most at home. "Everyone had lace café curtains back then," she says of the kitchens she grew up in. Framed black-and-white photos of those strong family matriarchs — mother, grandmother and great aunt — are always nearby. "Everyone was a phenomenal cook or seamstress," she adds. "They've had a strong influence in my life."

Taking down the wall between the kitchen and breakfast room and eliminating an entry door dramatically opens the space and enables the cook to interact with guests in the dining area. A window was added above the sink, and drafty French doors were replaced with energy-efficient models. Herringbone-patterned 12-by-24-inch porcelain tile — installed over a new radiant heat flooring system — creates the illusion of a more expansive space, Wangenheim says.

SOURCES design, Marlene Wangenheim of Interiors By Design LLC in Morristown; contractor, Tomasz Kierepka of New Castle Construction LLC in Fairfield; cabinetry, designed by Interiors By Design and fabricated by Sean Benetin of Millwork & More LLC in Columbia; porcelain tile floor, Calacutta marble backsplash and mother-of-pearl brick mosaic tile (in niche above range and on backsplash in communications center), Apex Tile Gallery in Parsippany; white quartz countertop, All Granite & Marble Corp. in Ridgefield Park; appliances, (Liebherr French-door refrigerator and 36-inch six-burner Thermador Pro-Series range), Reno's Appliance in Fairfield; brushed nickel hardware, Hardware Designs Inc. in Fairfield; crystal chandelier and sconces, West Essex Lighting Studio in West Caldwell; wall paint, Monroe Bisque by Benjamin Moore.