



A New Direction

A sunroom addition sets the stage for a more functional kitchen

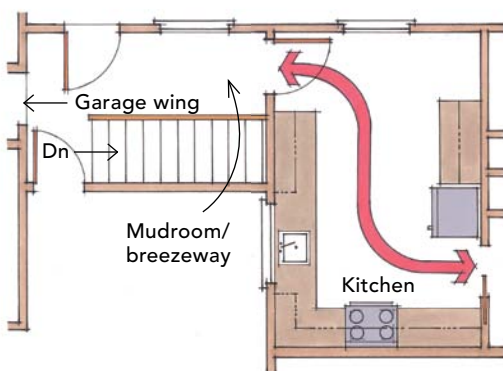
BY CATE COMERFORD

The 1939 bungalow I'd purchased in Port Townsend, Wash., had a lot going for it, including great views of Admiralty Inlet and Puget Sound. Its kitchen, however, was another story. Situated between the living room and a mudroom linking the main house to a garage wing, the kitchen served as the pathway between those two structures and to the basement, the backyard, and the side yard. Getting to any of these places meant walking diagonally through the kitchen, which had come to feel like a hallway with some appliances arranged along it. I needed to change this traffic pattern, provide an uninterrupted space for two cooks, and arrange the appliances more efficiently.

Port Townsend is located in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, so despite being in the Pacific Northwest, we get a surprising amount of sunny days. Adding a sunroom that faced south—overlooking the vegetable garden and offering a peekaboo view of Mount Rainier—not only made good design sense, but it became the basis of a plan that would address my kitchen's traffic woes. I would line up the door into the new sunroom with the existing pocket door

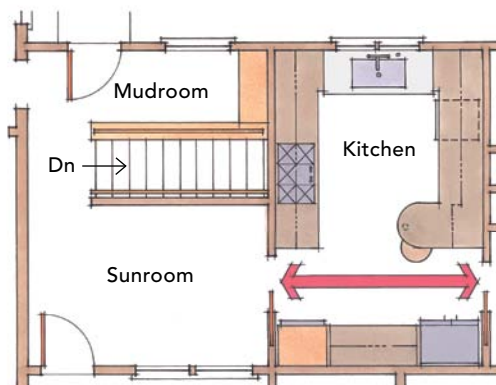


Walk this way.
The doorway connecting the kitchen and the new sunroom repurposes the old swinging door from the mudroom as a sliding barn door.



0 2 4 8 ft.

Before



After

BRIGHT IDEA

With doors at opposite corners, the kitchen originally served as a pass-through between the main house and a breezeway leading to a separate garage wing. By adding a 100-sq.-ft. sunroom to the south side of the breezeway, Cate was able to move the doorway so that it lined up with the door from the living room. This shifts traffic to one side of the kitchen, making room for an uninterrupted U-shaped work area.

NEW LAYOUT LEADS TO NEW LOOK FOR TWO ROOMS

Relocating the door leading to the garage wing not only eliminated diagonal traffic through the kitchen but enabled the creation of a self-contained mudroom. Its brick floor—repeated in the adjacent sunroom addition—contrasts nicely with the oak floor in the kitchen. Access to the backyard and to the garage wing is now through the sunroom.



From hall to mudroom. A storage cabinet stands in the location of the kitchen's original entrance. A stair to the right leads to the basement.



leading from the kitchen to the living room. Traffic between the house and the garage wing could now move straight across one end of the 10-ft.-wide kitchen without interfering with the work taking place there.

Out of chaos, a unified workspace

Relocating the mudroom/breezeway door to the new sunroom allowed the creation of an efficient, U-shaped work area that local

cabinetmaker Fred Kimball was able to outfit with cabinets following my design. The kitchen's original cabinets were plywood, built in place, and offered little to salvage beyond a wonderful old pull-out cutting board that I had reinstalled in the new work area (photo, p. 54). There was one additional takeaway: The old cabinets had bright orange interiors, which made me smile every time I opened a door or drawer. When I got the new cabinets, I painted the interiors with the same cheerful color.



DETAILS

Countertops
bamboorevolution.com

Refrigerator
thermador.com

Wall-oven combo
thermador.com

Ceiling lights
rejuvenation.com

Faucet
rohlhome.com

Sink
kohler.com

Floor finish
rubiomonocoatusa.com

Antique-light restoration
beckerplating.com

My new “U” space includes plenty of countertop worksurfaces as well as the sink, dishwasher, and gas cooktop. Upper cabinets hold dishes and pantry items; lower cabinets and drawers hold pots, pans, and cutting boards.

Traffic now flows past the far wall, where a built-in refrigerator/freezer and a combination oven, microwave, and warming drawer flanks a hutch that contains a generous appliance garage. It may not be a traditional work triangle, but I’ve found that this layout works

great for my partner and me, who often cook at the same time. In particular, the refrigerator’s position allows items to be taken out and staged on the nearby peninsula. When we’re done cooking, those items are easily loaded back into the refrigerator.

Tough countertops and finishing touches

The main countertops are made from bamboo flooring remnants by Bamboo Revolution of Portland, Ore. The company fabricated the

Painted interiors

Cate liked the cheerful vibe of the orange interiors of her old cabinets, so she painted the interiors of the new ones the same color—Benjamin Moore Buttered Yam AF-230.



DETAILS MAKE THIS KITCHEN BRIGHT AND PRACTICAL

With the problem of cross-kitchen traffic eliminated, Cate turned her attention to details that would make her small kitchen an efficient and pleasant place in which to work. Although all of the cabinetry, countertops, and appliances are new, she retained some touches from the older kitchen, most notably the brightly colored cabinet interiors.

Location Port Townsend, Wash.

Architect Cate Comerford, catecomerford.com

Builder Good Homes Construction, Port Townsend, Wash.

Cabinetmaker Fred Kimball, kimballwoodworks.com



Slide-out cutting board

A cutting board was the only piece of the old kitchen cabinets worth salvaging, and having it handy helps avoid inflicting damage on the bamboo countertops.



Small-appliance storage

The toaster, mixer, coffeepot, and other small appliances are kept out of sight behind folding doors.



Reclaimed countertop

Most of the countertops are reclaimed-bamboo slabs finished with marine varnish. But as an extra precaution against water damage, the sink is set in a 1¼-in.-thick slab of Carrara marble laid over plywood. A mitered lip in front gives the illusion of a thicker slab.



Petite peninsula

A small, half-round peninsula offers a convenient place to perch as well as a staging area for food on its way in or out of the nearby refrigerator.

countertops as 1½-in.-thick slabs and shipped them to the site, where my contractor matched them to a template to fit the desired layout.

Port Townsend is the home of the School of Wooden Boat Building and the Wooden Boat Festival, and many local carpenters work on boats as well as homes in town. For that reason, it's not surprising that my contractor suggested finishing the countertops with a marine spar varnish. This finish is not as brittle as other types of finishes and doesn't crack or chip. Although I've heard that almost all wood finishes are food-safe after fully curing, we continue to use cutting boards. The countertops clean up with soap and water followed by a dry cloth, and after three years, they still look great.

Countertops at the sink and in the appliance garage, where spills are more likely, are Carrara marble with a honed finish. At the sink, the 1¼-in.-thick marble is mounted on a plywood base and has a mitered lip that gives the illusion of a thicker slab (above right). Although

marble develops a patina over time, the stone I've used in my kitchen still looks almost new, despite three years of use.

Located over the sink is a restored vintage light fixture that I rescued years ago from the trash outside a historic home. I had the fixture rewired and the metal parts dipped for a new, oil-rubbed bronze finish. For flooring, we decided to imitate the oak "shorts" used in the main part of the house. These leftover cuts, 8 in. to 12 in. long, are less expensive than traditional hardwood flooring. The new flooring was finished with Rubio Monocoat, a one-coat stain and finish system from Belgium that is water-resistant, has zero VOCs, and has held up remarkably well in our kitchen. □

Cate Comerford's architectural practice focuses on historic restoration, renovation, and traditional design. Photos by Matt Varnado.