



**Circles and angles.** The refrigerator's angle, accented by the floor-tile pattern, lends visual interest to the kitchen while making the fridge more accessible. The circular cabinet with its cutting-board top defines the kitchen boundaries. A rack next to the sink pulls out to keep dish towels from being parked on appliance handles (inset photo).



**D**an Bathrick manages the local shoe store where I buy my Red Wing work boots. For years, I tried (as he fit my boots) to convince him that I could save him money on a kitchen remodel by changing the doors and drawers fronts on his existing cabinets. When Dan and his wife, Jerel, finally called me to look at their kitchen, I thought they wanted a cosmetic upgrade. But they had grander plans.

When I saw their briefcase full of drawings, pages torn from magazines, and a stack of kitchen-design books all decked out with Post-it notes, I knew they'd done their homework. Dan and Jerel were serious about changing their kitchen.

### A little angle makes a big difference

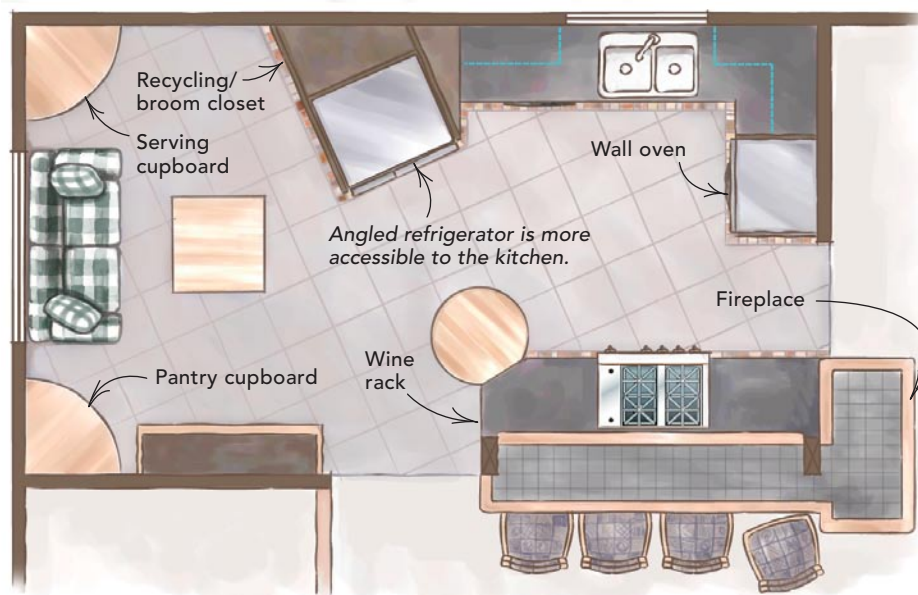
The new plan started by removing the wall between the kitchen and the living room to open up the floor plan. The centerpiece of the new kitchen is an island that includes a built-in downdraft fireplace on the living-room end, a four-burner cooktop, a breakfast bar, a wine rack, and a circular butcher block perched atop a round base cabinet.

Although the island plays a starring role in the new kitchen, the biggest gem was Dan's idea to angle the refrigerator in toward the island (drawing below, photo facing page). Bumping the fridge away from the wall makes room for a recycling center and broom closet in back (sidebar p. 59). The angled cabinetry creates a corner that helps to define

# A Shapely Kitchen

A cabinetmaker fuses curves, angles, and clever storage into a well-crafted, affordable design

BY REX ALEXANDER



**Pulling the refrigerator away from the wall at an angle** helps to define the kitchen and the sitting room while creating space for a broom closet and recycling center. The round cabinet attached to the island and the quarter-round cupboards in the sitting room add further geometric interest to the space.

the sitting room while letting the refrigerator be part of the kitchen. The angled fridge adds visual interest when viewed from the living room, and most important, the angled placement makes the refrigerator more accessible for increased convenience and efficiency in the kitchen.

### Levels and shapes create a functional design

The designs I incorporated in this kitchen celebrate the interaction between geometric shapes: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle. Together, these shapes blend to form a useful, practical kitchen.

A perfect example is the island with its different levels and a mushroom-shaped cabinet jutting out from its southeast corner. Topped with a 4-in.-thick John Boos cutting board (217-347-7701; [www.johnboos.com](http://www.johnboos.com)), the round cabinet provides a worksurface just 30 in. from the floor, the perfect height for



**No matter what shape you're in.** Different levels, shapes, and dimensions adorn the island between the kitchen and the living room. Various surface treatments give this hard-working area the richness of fine furniture, and even the round cabinet has surprisingly useful storage space (inset photo).





chopping veggies or for setting grocery bags. This circular element ideally complements the squares in the grid of the wine rack, the rectangular column, and the breakfast bar.

The next level, at standard counter height, is the island's cooking and food-prep area. The cooktop is flanked by an ample Technistone countertop that is a mixture of quartz and epoxy (713-869-9116; www.technistoneusa.com). The breakfast bar hovers a full 8 in. above the cooking area for guests who enjoy watching the chef. The breakfast bar also connects the columns and the fireplace.

A pot rack made of concentric rectangles floats above the island, adding yet another geometric accent to the island space (photo, drawing right). Jerel loved the utilitarian look of pots hanging over the stove for easy access.

### A sitting room takes shape

Near the top of my list of kitchen-design heroes is Johnny Grey, a British designer known for finely crafted and expertly conceived kitchen spaces. One of Grey's signature elements is a sitting room adjacent to the kitchen.

For Dan and Jerel's kitchen, we turned the original dining room into the sitting room. I gave the room its own geometry

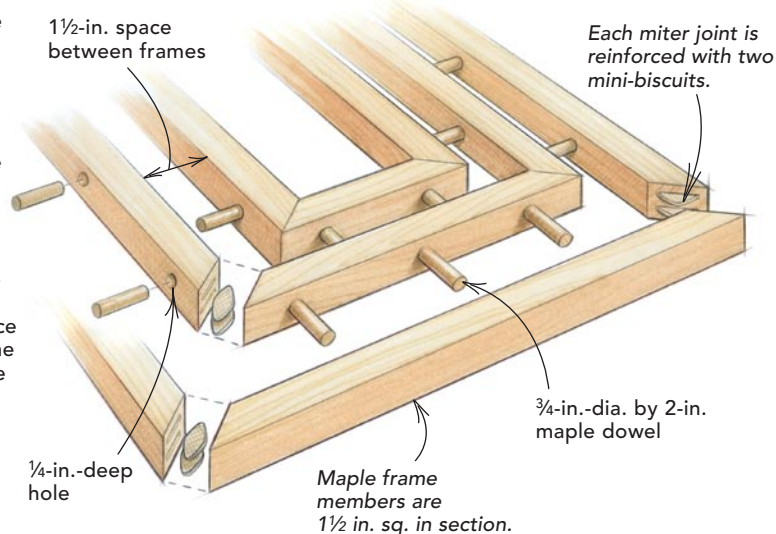
**Above the fray.** On the other side of the island, a cantilevered breakfast bar looks past the kitchen into the sitting room and serves as a spot for guests to visit with the chef while the meal is being prepared. The columns at each end frame the bar while supporting a new beam that replaced an interior wall.

**Beware: Working kitchen.** Pots hang at the ready from a hand-crafted rack over the stove.



### A pot rack made of concentric frames

This pot rack is similar to one that I'd seen ages ago. The outside dimensions are 21 in. by 36 in., but the design can work in almost any size. I made the three rectangular frames from 1½-in.-sq. maple stock, with a pair of biscuits at each miter joint. Maple dowels join the frames and maintain the 1½-in. spacing between them. I dry-assembled the frames using scraps of maple stock to space them apart. Then I laid out the dowel positions with a square for perfect alignment. After drilling holes for the dowels on a drill press, I assembled the rack, starting with the smallest inside frame and working outward.







**Beauty and practicality on a curve.** Simply designed Finnish-birch and maple corner cupboards in the sitting room go well with any style of furniture. The curved front means easier access to the contents of the cabinet (inset photo).



by incorporating two quarter-round pantry cupboards in the farthest corners (“Master Carpenter,” *FHB* #166, pp. 138, 140, 142). The left cupboard provides a place for overflow pantry items (photos left), and the right cupboard with its curly-maple top doubles as a serving cabinet. The rounded shape and curved moldings give these cupboards the feel of furniture.

### Smart material choices keep costs down

To fit these big kitchen plans into Dan and Jerel’s not-so-big budget, I came up with several cost-saving measures. To save on materials, I bought locally harvested white-birch logs, had them milled to my specifications, then stickered and air-dried the boards. I used this lumber for the doors and drawer fronts as well as for the panels and moldings. Making the lumber this way took extra time, but it saved me several dollars per board foot.

I built the cabinet boxes in the European style, a quick process that streamlines basic box building. You save the time and expense of building face frames. The exposed edges of cabinet cases can be finished with inexpensive iron-on edging (“Building Skills,” pp. 116, 118). The drawers and the doors (mounted with cup hinges) overlay these edges. I devised a simple system for building the doors with few tools and no headaches (photos, drawing, facing page).

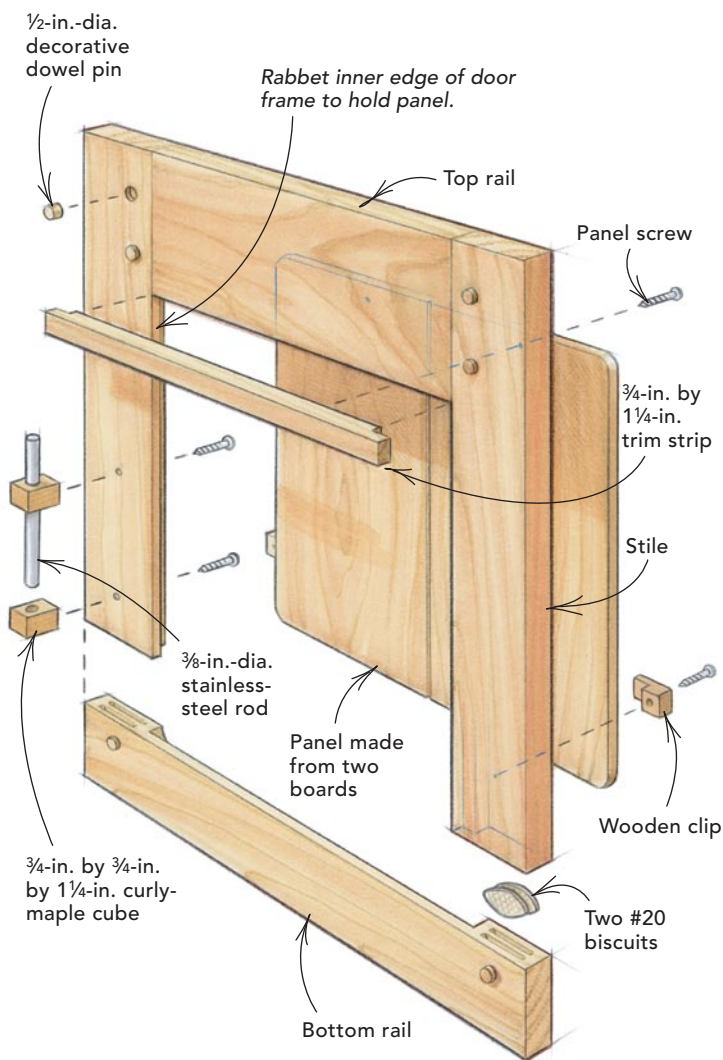
For more savings, I used melamine-coated particleboard (MCP) for cabinetry not exposed to water, such as drawer bases, cabinets that house pullout shelves, upper cabinets, and the refrigerator cabinet. MCP panels are typically less expensive than veneer plywood, and because melamine does not require additional finishing, we saved labor costs.

I mail-ordered the drawers and pullout shelves (Walzcra



## Distinctive doors

My shopmade doors are fairly easy and inexpensive to make. On upper cabinets, the doors feature a taller top rail; a trim strip extends along the top rail's inner edge. Standing slightly proud of the frame, dowel pins suggest pinned mortise-and-tenon joints. In reality, the door frames are assembled with biscuits, and then the frames are rabbeted to accept a panel made from two birch boards. A pair of screws and a pair of wooden clips hold the panel in place. On base cabinets, the orientation of the door frame reverses, placing the broad rail and trim strip at the bottom. The handles for these cabinets are made from cubes of curly maple and  $\frac{3}{8}$ -in.-dia. stainless-steel rod.



Industries; 800-237-1326; [www.walzcrafft.com](http://www.walzcrafft.com)). The factory made them out of hardwood to my specifications using dovetail joinery. Then they finished each drawer with super-tough conversion varnish. I saved even more money by fabricating the door and drawer pulls.

I kept the cabinet moldings simple so that I could make them using basic tools: a tablesaw and a router with a round-over bit. The moldings were fabricated, sanded, and finished quickly. To simplify construction further, I used biscuit joinery for everything from the cabinet doors and mitered moldings to the pot rack and the maple columns.

## Clever storage eases kitchen life

From our first meeting, Dan and Jerel made it clear that they wanted their new kitchen to be well-organized. So we planned carefully to maximize storage and to facilitate access. Behind cabinet doors, I added pullout shelves or shallow drawers that hold pots, pans, casserole dishes, spices, and anything else used on a daily basis. Pullout shelves allow convenient access to items in the back of a cabinet.

I designed a special towel rack in a cabinet that sits next to the sink (inset photo, p. 54). This pullout rack eliminates the need to have dish towels draped over every free appliance handle. To get full use from the blind corner in the cabinets, I built a massive lazy susan to hold small appliances and anything else that normally clutters up the countertop (*FHB* #133, pp. 98-103).

Each 32-in. carousel shelf can hold a whopping 1000 lb.

Under the breakfast bar on the living-room side, I designed a 12-in.-deep adjustable-shelf storage unit. This spot is perfect for occasional items such as tablecloths, napkins, place mats, small glass vases, decorative dishes, and other knickknacks.

## This kitchen recycles, too



Before the kitchen remodel, the homeowners already had plastic tubs in the garage for metal, glass, paper, and other recyclables. What they needed was a convenient way to get those items to the garage below. So the author installed a small door in the angled cabinet behind the refrigerator. Two large trash cans collect the recyclable items, which then can be distributed to their proper tubs.

The quarter-circle corner cabinets in the sitting room hold an incredible amount of pantry items only a few steps away from the main kitchen. The curved cabinet doors made this corner storage space surprisingly accessible. □

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