

The Kitchen-Deck Connection

A small addition with a sunny deck builds a bridge to the backyard



BEFORE

Barely functioning. Before the renovation, the natural-wood cabinets and small windows created a kitchen that was somewhat dark and showed the effects of active family life. Photo taken at A on floor plan.

BY LYNN HOPKINS

Not every addition has to be big to make a big difference. Sometimes just a few additional feet of space can make a substantial change.

I recently tested this theory with clients who own a stately colonial in the Boston suburbs. The kitchen was showing the wear and tear one expects from daily life with three kids and two big dogs. Also, the house is built into a sloping site, with the backyard and the pool at basement level. It was almost impossible for an adult in the kitchen to be able to monitor activity around the pool without running an obstacle course through the basement. My job was to design a bigger, better kitchen and to make the connection to the pool more elegant and direct.

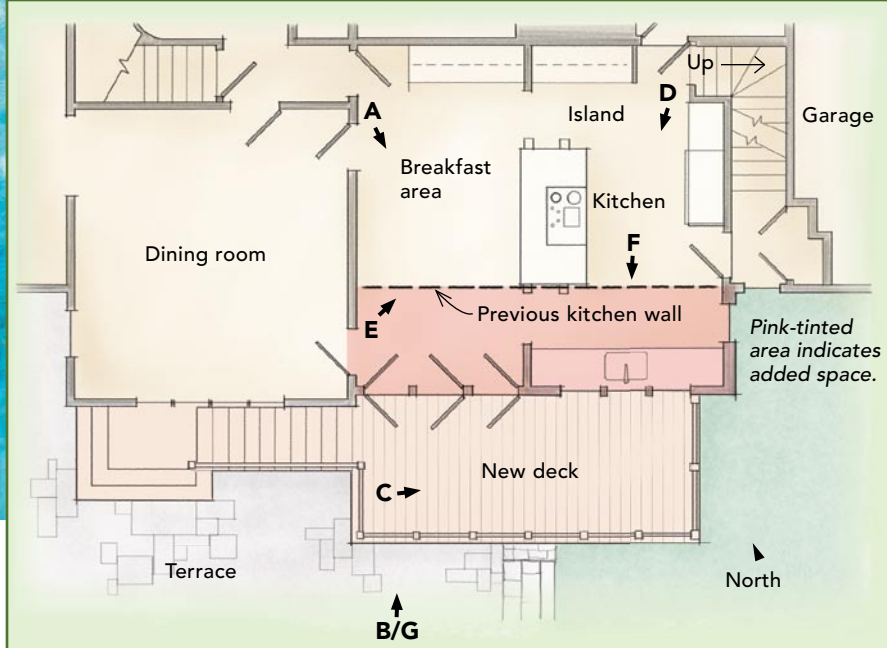
New cabinets boost a small increase in space

The first task was to improve the kitchen while keeping its scale appropriate to the house. Although functional, the room needed a face-lift and would benefit from



Translating a little space into a lot more room

At almost 13 ft. by 20 ft., the original kitchen was an adequate size, although not generous. By widening the room by an additional 5½ ft., the kitchen became large enough to substitute an island for a peninsula and to accommodate a breakfast table that comfortably seats six. The addition is scaled with the rest of the house and does not crowd the restricted space from the back to the pool. A small deck off the breakfast area became a spot where the family can enjoy alfresco dining; the deck also leads to the stairway down to the pool. Photo left taken at B on floor plan.



Photos taken at lettered positions.



Breakfast on the deck. Accessible from the kitchen's French doors, the narrow deck gets a nice mix of shade and sun, and during warm weather, it's a great place to enjoy a meal. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



The island serves as a see-through partition. Custom cabinets were designed for both traditional appeal and modern convenience. Doors on both sides of the island are operable; upper glass doors make the separation between workspace and breakfast area less formal. Photo taken at D on floor plan.

reorganization. At the drawing board, I discovered that if I pushed out the exterior wall about 5 ft., I could substitute a cooktop island for the peninsula that divided the kitchen from the breakfast area.

Builders Payne/Bouchier of Boston (www.paynebouchier.com) were in charge of the work. Posts at the sink end of the new island mark the location of the original exterior wall that was removed to expand the room (floor plan, p. 67). These two posts support the carrying beam that was framed flush with the second-level floor joists. To maintain symmetry, the posts are mirrored with dummies on the other side of the island (photo above right). Above the island, two cabinets flank a custom hood over the cooktop. We bought the guts of the hood (fan, lights, and filter) from Best by Broan (www.bestbybroan.com), then had a local stainless-steel fabricator make the enclosure. The kitchen's back wall holds two ovens side by side with a microwave mounted above.

The cabinets were custom-built by Gleason, Hendrick & Devine in nearby Somerville, Mass. I wanted a tra-

ditional appearance with contemporary features. The cabinets have a face frame with flush inset doors and drawer fronts; doors are frame and flat (not raised) panel, appropriate for the casual style of the kitchen. This type of cabinet construction has ties to designs that were common 100 or so years ago, but its uncluttered simplicity makes it feel appropriately contemporary. Face-frame cabinets also work well with farmers' sinks because the face frame can be scribed to fit the integral apron of the sink exactly. The island benefited as well; its base and upper cabinets have operable doors on both sides. Glass doors on the upper cabinets improve the visual connection between the kitchen and the breakfast area.

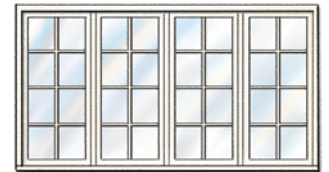
Turning up the light

To counteract the memories of the darkness of the old kitchen, I painted almost everything white for an open, airy feeling. Beadboard on the walls provides additional character and durability. Although I am a great supporter of natural materials, I now prefer beadboard that



Stick to the pattern

When choosing windows for an addition, I carefully consider the house and select a style that matches or coordinates with the existing windows. In this house, the first-floor rooms had groupings of casement windows with a two-wide/four-high lite pattern (top drawing). I opted for a grouping of three casement windows with a two-wide/three-high lite pattern for the area above the sink. (For this project, I used wood windows from Norco; www.norco-windows.com). The windows over the sink (photo above, taken at F on floor plan) are shorter than those in the adjacent dining and living rooms because the sill of the kitchen windows must start above the countertop. Despite being shorter, the kitchen windows have lites of the same proportion as those in the existing windows, a benefit of choosing the three-high lite pattern.



Existing windows



New over-sink windows



New French doors

I also prefer to use casement windows over a sink whenever I can because it's easy to reach over a countertop and turn a crank to open the window. Reaching across a countertop to slide open a double-hung can be much harder.

The French doors have a muntin pattern two lites wide and five lites tall. Again, the same proportion of lites was maintained, and the number of lites was adjusted to accommodate the taller glass in the French door.



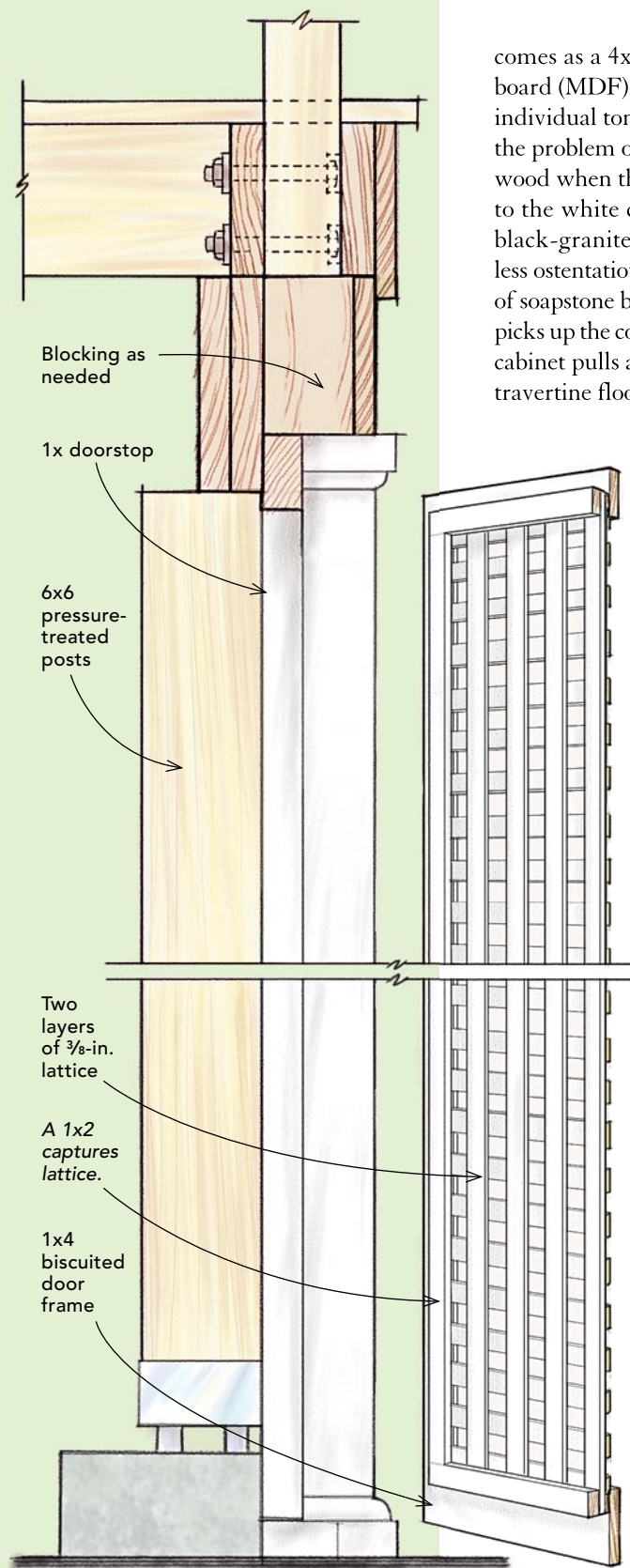
Homework central, cookie friendly. Cabinets at the end of the breakfast area offer storage space above a desk with file and pencil drawers. Like the cabinets above the island, these have divided lites patterned after the windows and French doors. Photo taken at E on floor plan.

DRESSING UP THE DECK

To improve the view of the deck from the pool area, I wanted to screen the below-deck storage and spruce it up with trim details that tied it to the rest of the house. Panels of heavy-duty pressure-treated lattice were the logical choice; they allow air to circulate but block all views. The panels were framed in 1x stock and attached



between square columns; the columns were positioned in front of the structural 6x6 posts, corresponding to the railing posts above. Because the columns weren't simply wrapped posts, I could make them as wide as the design needed. Photo taken at G on floor plan.



comes as a 4x8 factory-primed medium-density fiberboard (MDF) panel. It's more dimensionally stable than individual tongue-and-groove boards, and it eliminates the problem of paint cracks and gaps that occur in solid wood when the weather changes. To provide a contrast to the white cabinets, the clients and I decided to use black-granite countertops. The stone's honed finish is less ostentatious than one that's polished; it's reminiscent of soapstone but more durable. A border in the floor tile picks up the countertop color, as do the oil-rubbed bronze cabinet pulls and knobs. The center pattern of tumbled travertine floor tiles seems randomly casual but is made up of only two sizes of tile: 12 in. by 12 in. and 4 in. by 4 in.

In addition to the windows (sidebar p. 69), the French doors that lead to the deck, the dining room, the mudroom, and the back stairs all send light into the kitchen. The doors also close off the kitchen when the family wants to keep out the dogs.

Let's take it outside

Getting from the kitchen to the pool was the next task. After the exterior wall was moved out, I replaced a triple window with three new French doors that lead to the deck. At approximately 8 ft. by 20 ft., the deck is big enough for a small table (photo left, p. 68) and a generous landing for the stairs. Below, the deck and stair supports have been trimmed out and enclosed with lattice panels. One of the lattice panels is a door that provides access to below-deck storage and to the basement. Too often, the area below a raised deck like this is left open. Because it's dark and unfinished, the area becomes an eyesore: catch-all storage for toys, tools, and gardening gear. Enclosing this area screens the storage space from view and provides an attractive backdrop for poolside activities.

Although the square footage added to this home was minimal, the impact was substantial. I'm most pleased with a design when my clients say, "I can hardly remember what this space was like before. It seems as if it always should have been this way." □

Architect Lynn Hopkins works from her home office in Lexington, Mass. Photos by Charles Bickford, except where noted.