



Sublime simplicity.
The remodel of this farmhouse kitchen in northwest Connecticut evokes lessons in traditional design to create a welcoming space that's bright and comfortable.

A Kitchen Built on Tradition

Modernizing through the use of historical details



BY RAFE CHURCHILL

As the son of a second-generation master builder, I'm continuing a family legacy of creating traditional homes inspired by the historic architecture of New England and taking it further through work that responds to both the landscape and the specific needs of each client. My firm creates what has become known as the "new old house"—a building offering modern amenities, but with the scale, proportions, and textures of a historic home.

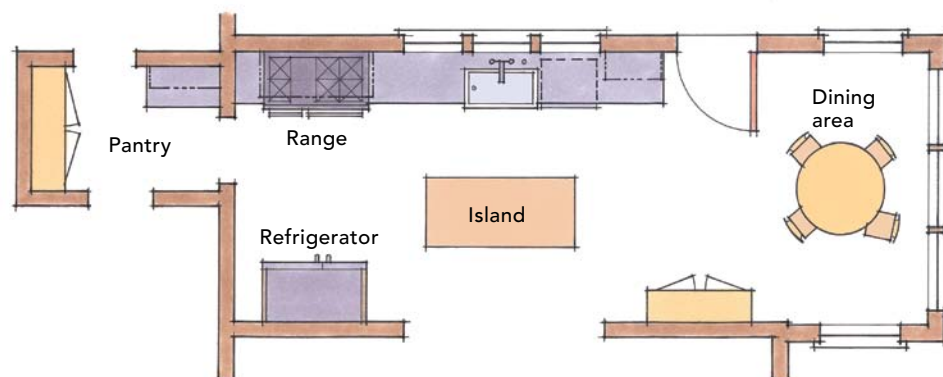
That approach to design and construction served as the foundation of this kitchen's redesign and reconstruction. The clients—a professional chef and an interior designer—wanted a new kitchen for their 1920s farmhouse that would have modern qualities as well as traditional ones to create a bright, welcoming, and comfortable atmosphere.

Understated design

My favorite kitchens are those found in old abandoned houses or those found in vintage farmhouses that have been untouched by overzealous remodelers. These kitchens were mostly built of freestanding cabinetry and simple wall-hung cupboards, and they included fully exposed appliances. Freestanding appliances imbue a kitchen with an unassuming simplicity, so we employ this design strategy where appropriate. In this kitchen, the range is built into the cabinetry, but a 48-in. stainless refrigerator with glass doors stands alone in the corner opposite the range. To make the kitchen appear older, we hung a single wall cupboard to the right of the sink to store glassware and introduced a shallow, freestanding hutch near the dining area for additional storage. In order to make so few upper cabinets possible, we relied on the nearby pantry cabinets, which are much larger, to handle the bulk of the kitchen's storage needs.

Sympathetic surfaces

If there is one element within the kitchen that markedly establishes its country style, it's the paneling that covers the walls and ceiling, which were original to the farmhouse. Painted Benjamin Moore's Moonlight White, the paneling extends into the adjacent living areas of the home, creating a bright and continuous backdrop throughout



A CHEF'S KITCHEN

The client wanted the kitchen to function efficiently without spilling its prep areas into the dining area. In response, the range, refrigerator, and island are placed toward the north end of the kitchen, near the pantry. Meal prep and cooking can occur without too much interference, even when guests gravitate toward the island.

BUILT FOR WORK



The kitchen's simplified arrangement doesn't come at the expense of functionality. A cook zone with a 48-in. Wolf range sits beneath a simply constructed custom hood. The schist backsplash extends to cover the entire wall surface behind the cooktop in order to make cleanup easy and to put its beautiful veining on display. Much of the kitchen's design is made possible by a pantry outfitted with floor-to-ceiling cabinetry. The pantry relieves the kitchen of an excess of upper cabinets and handles most of the bulk-food storage.



the main floor. To complement the white walls, ceilings, and trim, we selected rift and quartersawn white-oak flooring and installed it throughout the pantry and the kitchen and into the living room. The flooring is light enough to keep the bright and open theme intact; plus it's durable, making it a good option for this dog-friendly home. We finished the flooring with Rubio Monocoat, a unique hard-wax oil.

The countertops are the second-most prominent surface in the kitchen. The island top is made of 2-in.-thick premium wide-plank maple and has been oiled to give it a subtle contrast to the other countertops in the kitchen, which are—to the surprise of many—not soapstone. They're actually schist and have a beautifully rich gray color with slight veining throughout.

Cabinetry and color

The details of the few cabinets and the burst of color they impart on the space reflect some of our other kitchen designs, which these clients

were drawn to. We turn to Shaker sensibilities when designing cabinets for our kitchens, and this can produce a more modern aesthetic. The cabinets are locally made and feature simple beaded face frames, flat-panel doors, and solid drawer fronts. Wooden knobs and chrome bin pulls keep the cabinetry balanced and unified with the paneling and flooring. The elements of this kitchen aren't competing for attention; rather, they are working together to create a simple space.

When it comes to color selections, I prefer colors that are more subdued and restrained. However, the clients presented tear sheets of various dream kitchens to use, and they kept gravitating toward one with light-blue cabinetry. In the end, they selected Farrow & Ball Green Blue for all of the cabinetry in the kitchen. It's a more modern color selection, which adds to the way this kitchen presents traditional elements that feel firmly rooted in the present. □

Rafe Churchill is a designer in Sharon, Conn. Photos by John Gruen.



SOURCES

Cabinets

Nichols Woodworking,
Washington Depot, Conn.
nicholswoodworking.com

Pendants

CB2 Victory pendant (dining)
cb2.com
Olde Good Things vintage
pendants (island)
ogtstore.com

Countertops

Schist, Rock Solid Marble
& Granite, Sheffield, Mass.
rocksolidmandg.com

Paint

Farrow & Ball Green Blue
(cabinets)
farrow-ball.com
Benjamin Moore Moonlight
White (walls)
benjaminmoore.com
Kesi Brothers Painting,
Canton, Conn.
keslbrotherspainting.com

Sink

Shaws Fireclay farm sink
rohlhome.com

Range

48-in. Wolf dual fuel
subzero-wolf.com

Refrigerator

48-in. Sub-Zero

Hardware

Restoration Hardware
(bin pulls)
restorationhardware.com
Shaker Workshops
(wood knobs)
shakerworkshops.com

Flooring

5-in. rift and quartersawn
white oak, Franklin Wood
Products, Salisbury, Conn.
Rubi Monocoat clear finish
rubimonocoatusa.com

DESIGNED FOR LIVING

The kitchen's dining area is placed on the south end of the kitchen in front of a gable wall filled with glass. The area is drenched in daylight, which is reflected by the walls and ceiling of carefully restored planking

painted a warm white and by newly installed white-oak flooring. Beyond its attentive layout, the kitchen balances beauty and comfort through carefully selected products and finishes.