Projects: Kitchen

Designing a Kitchen for Multiple Cooks & Guests

Before the redesign, this kitchen was disconnected from the nearby living room and family room and was not a welcome area for entertaining. Designers Mark Haddad and Jaye Gordon of Interiology Design Company in Watertown, Mass., turned this outdated layout into a space that would suit multiple cooks and guests.

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Designer Mark Haddad's clients were ready to upgrade their dark and dated, U-shaped kitchen. In addition to a brighter room more in sync with the other gathering spaces on the floor, the clients wanted a functional layout that would work for multiple cooks and guests, including seating for large dinner parties.

"The family room, kitchen and dining room were aligned in a row but felt disconnected from each other," said Haddad, who is the president of in Watertown, Mass. "Our goal was to unite these three spaces and reflect the energy and contemporary style of our clients."

Making the Layout More Functional

The clients' New England colonial had space for just one cook, and there was only a single, narrow opening to pass in and out of the U-shaped prep area. The dining room was not used often – the small entrance kept it out of view of the kitchen – and a door stood between the large family room and the kitchen.

"In fact, there were three doors clustered in one space: an extra door to the office, a door to the large family room and a door to the powder room," said Gordon, who along with designer Susan Cracraft used Chief Architect to complete this project. "These three doors felt awkward and cramped."

To create a much more functional layout, the designer and his team removed the dining room wall and partially opened the kitchen to the family room. This entrance could not be opened all the way because the powder room was between the two rooms. Instead, Haddad removed the family room door and casing and widened the opening as much as possible without moving the powder room. He then removed the extra door to the adjacent office and closed off the opening.

"The homeowners are thrilled with the results," said the designers. "A simple change made a huge impact on the flow and connection between the family room and kitchen."

Now the kitchen feels significantly more open to the adjacent rooms, and there is space for a 13-ft.-long, 3-ft.-wide island with seating for five. According to Haddad, the team designed the width of the island so multiple cooks could easily pass by each other on the prep side, and the door to the basement could freely open on the traffic side of the island. There is also room for seating, a sink, dishwasher and plenty of storage at the island.

Creating Interest with Finishes and Colors

The newly opened kitchen features custom cabinetry in three door styles and finishes. The main kitchen area has contemporary, flat-panel doors in a warm tan tone for the tall cabinetry, which contrasts the base cabinets that are glazed in dark gray. The backsplash tile for the main prep area is a white, elongated, hexagon-shaped tile for an added pattern.

The bar at the far end of the kitchen stands out with its textured doors, which are custom carved in a wave-like pattern and finished in metallic gray with a semi-gloss finish. The two center wall cabinets at the bar meanwhile feature satin glass with aluminum door frames. The bar's backsplash tile contrasts these textures with a long, gray subway tile in a glossy finish. To unify the bar with the kitchen, all the countertops throughout were done in a clean, white quartz.

Mixed metals were an important part of bringing warmth and interest to the entire space. While the cabinets at the bar are finished in metallic gray, the modern light fixture above the island is gold, the sink fixtures are polished chrome, and the door hardware is brushed nickel.

"With an array of colors and finishes, you might expect this kitchen to be busy," said Haddad. "We loved how instead the broad mix of materials came together to form a welcoming space that feels modern, calm and sophisticated."