



Setting the range in the center of the kitchen added

Designing around the Stove

BY STEVE AITKEN

At first, you might not notice a lot of details in Warner and Allison McConaughey's kitchen—the way the window muntins line up with those on the adjacent cabinet doors, the little cutout in the corner that looks into the stairway, the pet door, the border around the floor tile. But you can't miss the stove. It's a vintage 1950s Tappan that they bought for \$100. And it sits in the middle of the room.

Owner of a design/build firm in Decatur, Ga., Warner McConaughey intentionally positioned the stove in the center of the kitchen to create the two spaces behind it (photo facing page). One is an intimate eating area with a café table flanked by two built-in cabinets. An over-size window behind the table looks out to the backyard. The other space holds a cabinet for recyclables and trash with a counter for the coffeemaker and microwave. This area also has the back door, so it not only makes taking out the trash easy but also functions as a mudroom.

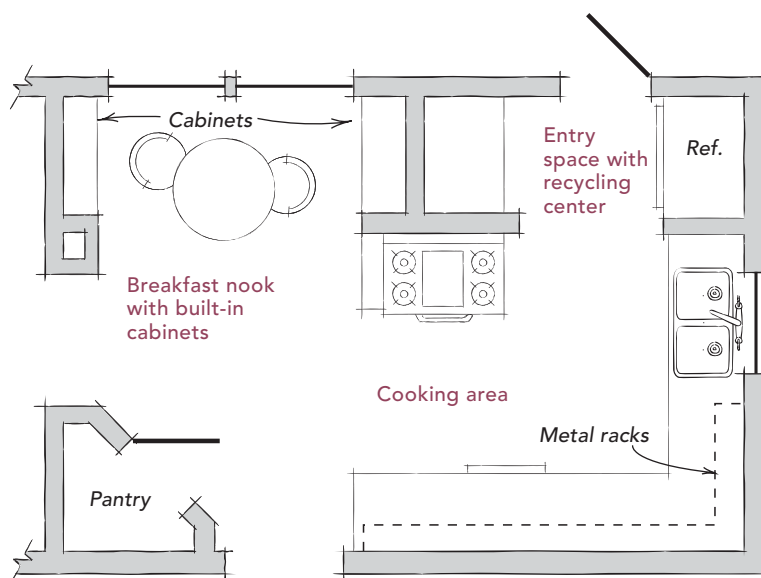
It may seem like the stove placement would make the 12-ft. by 18-ft. room too cramped, especially when entertaining. But the stove serves the same function as many kitchen peninsulas: It stems the flow of



Cozy breakfast nook with a view

THREE SPACES INSTEAD OF ONE

Had Warner McConaughey put the kitchen stove in the most common location—along one of the perimeter walls—the room would have been an expansive 12-ft. by 18-ft. rectangle. But by bringing the stove into the middle of the room and placing cabinetry behind it, he reduced the open floor space, thereby creating three distinct, highly efficient areas.

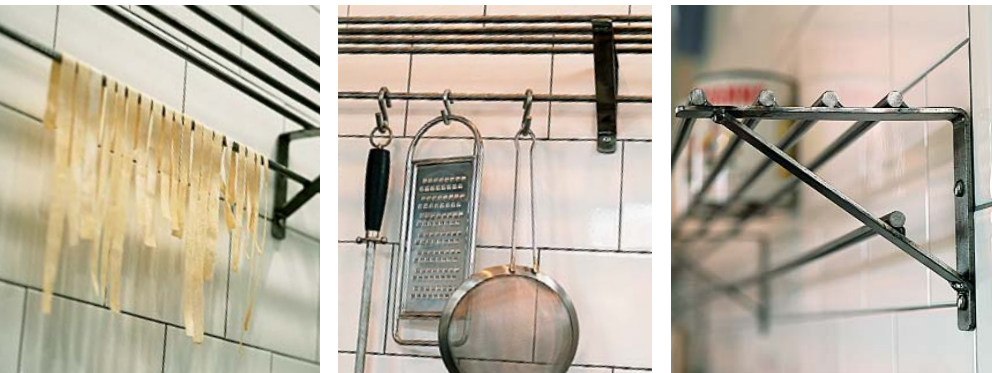


Handy recycling center

more spaces without taking up all the room

Multipurpose pot rack

McConaughey liked the idea of the kitchen's original wall shelf but wanted something more akin to a luggage rack on an old train. So he took his design to a local metal-fabricating shop. Three months later, he had his rack, suitable for holding kitchen implements and for drying pasta. The rack, along with a pantry, eliminated the need for expensive overhead cabinets and preserved the open feel of the small kitchen.



traffic, keeping guests away from the work areas of the kitchen but allowing them to interact with the host. The narrow passage by the oven diverts guests into the seating area for refreshments.

The stove also sets a tone for the room that is consistent with the rest of the 1910 four-square house. In his restoration of the house, McConaughey went to great lengths to retain the spirit of the original. Surprisingly, it wasn't difficult to include modern appliances in a kitchen meant to evoke the early 20th century. "Kitchens of that era had a very industrial feel," McConaughey explains. "I chose stainless-steel appliances to re-create that." The appliances and the pot rack running along the wall reflect light from the large windows, making the room feel bigger than it is.

McConaughey replaced the kitchen's original wood floor with porcelain tiles in a diagonal pattern, which enhances the room's size. Rather than regular black and white, he chose a faded black and gray to make the tiles appear worn, adding to the room's patina. A period-style border surrounds the new porcelain floor, while the old wood was saved to patch floors in the rest of the house during its remodeling.

Another detail maintaining the period feel of the house is the absence of overhead cabinets, a move that lost storage but saved money. A triangular pantry in the corner of the kitchen makes up for the lost storage. The money saved allowed McConaughey to afford handmade lower cabinets and honed-granite countertops.

A modern convection oven sits opposite its older counterpart. The vintage cooktop works well, but the small oven underneath is slow, so McConaughey stores pans and baking sheets inside it. While the old range isn't perfect for cooking a Thanksgiving turkey, it is still charming enough to be the centerpiece of the kitchen. □

Steve Aitken is an assistant editor at The Taunton Press. Photos by Chipper Hatter.





BUYING A VINTAGE STOVE

Antique stoves are still around for a reason. Along with their desirable chrome-and-porcelain vintage look is the fact that they were built before the days of planned obsolescence with a higher-gauge steel than is used today. Old stoves often are just as efficient as modern versions.

An antique stove usually will need to be restored before it's fit for use. But the term "restored" varies from company to company, so here are a few things to know before you buy one.

- The oven in a vintage stove is often much smaller than one in a modern stove. If you plan to use the oven, make sure the thermostat has been recalibrated.
- Make sure the stove insulation has been replaced.
- Have chipped porcelain reporzelained, not powder-coated. Porcelain can take the heat, is easy to clean, and looks great.
- To convert a natural-gas stove to liquid propane gas, you'll have to change the stove's orifices or get a converter to adapt the stove to the higher-pressure propane.
- Two good Web sites are www.vintagestoves.com and www.antiquegasstoves.com.