

Carriage House Kitchen

A pair of artists infuse innovative storage solutions with creative details in an open floor plan

BY ROB YAGID

When artists Jeff Carpenter and Sallie Ketcham sought inspiration for the new kitchen in their late-19th-century carriage-house restoration in downtown Philadelphia, they looked to a sculpture of a horse made of salvaged bits of miscellaneous materials. “This,” they told their friends, architects, and cabinetmakers, “is what we want the new space to feel like.”

Wanting to honor the integrity and the character of the old brick building, which is believed to have once housed the horses and carriages for Wanamaker’s department store, the pair envisioned an eclectic kitchen with modern amenities that would accommodate

a passion for cooking and frequent entertaining. Besides serving as a primary residence, the carriage house’s first floor was designed to serve as studio space and the upstairs to double as gallery space.

Whereas some may have been tempted to create a focal-point kitchen that could compete with the carriage house’s massive second-floor living space, Jeff and Sallie believed that the kitchen should not overshadow the existing architecture of the building and should not contrast too starkly with the adjacent, open living spaces.

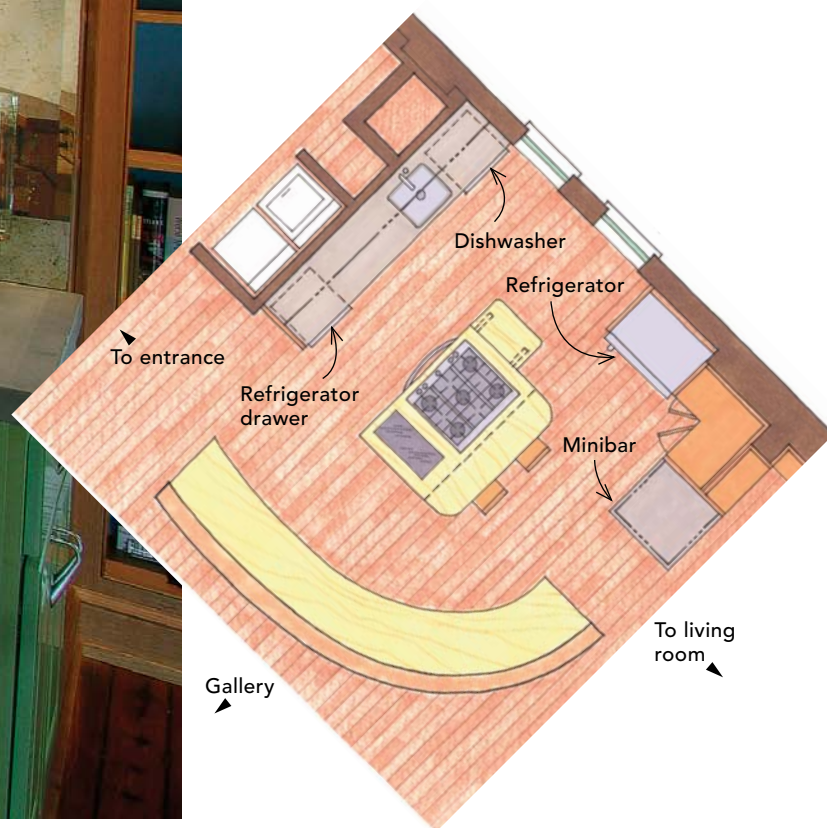
For Jeff and Sallie, and for architects Jeff Goldstein and Jackie Gusic, creating a kitchen within a space of extraordinary scale became an exploration in planning storage, blending materials, and carefully



Design: Jeff Carpenter and Sallie Ketcham
Architects: Jackie Gusic, Inhabitarch.com; Jeff Goldstein, Digsau.com
Cabinetmakers: Vincent Chicone, ChiconeCabinetmakers.com
 Bob Taylor, TaylorsMill.com

CULINARY CHOREOGRAPHY

The kitchen floor plan is arranged in a way that allows the space to remain functional and comfortable as you move through it. Cooking is rooted at the center island and prep surfaces, and storage areas are just a couple of steps away. Refrigerator drawers are next to the sink and adjacent to the curved cutting station on the mahogany island. They contain fruits, vegetables, and other items ready for preparation. The main refrigerator holds drinks, condiments, and stock items such as eggs, meat, and cheese. To retain order, stations below the open shelving are available for common tasks—seasoning dishes and making coffee or tea, for instance.



mixing contemporary elements with historic ones to create a functional space as unique and engaging as the building itself.

Storage solutions in an open plan

Occupying little more than 230 sq. ft., the footprint of the kitchen is a square. With little wall space to hang cabinets, Jeff and Sallie were left with a shortage of storage opportunities.

The two wanted the kitchen to remain as open to the adjacent living spaces as possible, but to feel nestled in the room. The solution came in the unorthodox approach of using two islands to define the kitchen and to provide storage and space for meal preparation.

The central island houses the cooktop and stove. Above it, the couple first envisioned a modern range hood. When the existing drywall ceiling came down during demolition, however, Jeff and Sallie discovered the original carriage hoist in the roof structure and quickly decided to expose it and make it a prominent design element. A downdraft exhaust fan now expels cooking odors and particles.

The sweeping, boatlike mahogany-clad outer island was designed by Jeff and built by cabinetmaker Bob Taylor (sidebar, p. 90). As an architecture student at the Rhode Island School of Design, Jeff redesigned a shingle-style boathouse with heavy timber trusses similar to those found in the carriage house. That project—combined with

How he built it

Cabinetmaker Bob Taylor of Hockessin, Del., was charged with constructing the striking boatlike island in this kitchen. While such an island would not be appropriate for every kitchen, a look into its construction yields tips on material selection, curved construction, and finishing techniques that can be applied in other custom-cabinet applications.



Material selection

Mahogany was selected for the shiplapped "strakes" because of its bending properties and its appearance. White oak would have been another good option, but Douglas fir failed when tested.

Trim

The curve in the top cap was seen from two mahogany boards. The boards were connected with a butt joint reinforced with a biscuit and screws.

Frame

Cabinet boxes were constructed with $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. birch plywood and edge-banded with mahogany at exposed edges. The contoured ribs are poplar.

Final finish

The cabinet was finished in place with three gloss coats of clear Magnalac lacquer and one coat of satin.

Cladding

Each mahogany strip was soaked in water for one hour, then placed in an 8-in.-dia. PVC-pipe steam box for 15 minutes before being removed and clamped against the cabinet frame to dry. The cabinet was disassembled and moved to the site. Once the frame was reassembled, strips were attached, and countersunk holes were filled with $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. plugs.

a love of wooden boats, and a realization that he'd likely never own one himself—prompted Jeff to create the nautically inspired island that alleviates the kitchen's storage demands. As Gusic explains, the island is also perfect for "perching"—grabbing a piece of island space for socializing with those in and out of the cooking zone.

Dishes, spices, and other common kitchen items are stowed in open shelves above the sink. Along with the tile backsplash, the open shelving gives the kitchen an informal, utilitarian feel. The tall cabinets around the refrigerator reduce the visual presence of the bulky appliance and offer pantry storage. This casework, along with the hanging cabinet above a bluestone-topped minibar, has the same proportions and trim and is made of the same material as the bookcases extending into the living area. This is the point of fusion between the smaller kitchen and the larger living area. It helps to create the seamless between spaces that Jeff and Sallie were striving for.

Custom cabinetry and a modest mix of materials

When you're selecting the finishes and materials for a new kitchen where the aesthetic goal is "eclectic," the results sometimes can be eccentric, and not in a flattering way. Fortunately, Jeff and Sallie had the vision and experience to pull together a palette of materials, colors, and fixtures that created a warm, inviting space that doesn't feel at all contrived, despite the boldness of some of their choices.

The cabinetry in the kitchen, excluding the mahogany island, and in the living spaces was designed by Gusic and built and finished by New York-based cabinetmaker Vincent Chicone. The natural-wood cabinets are quartersawn white oak to provide the warm atmosphere that Jeff and Sallie wanted. However, they feared that having all the cabinetry naturally finished would be overwhelming, considering that the ceiling would be naturally finished pine. To temper the impact of all that wood, Sallie decided to have select sections of cabinetry painted. The center island, the cabinets around the kitchen sink, and the bar cabinet were finished with M.L. Campbell's postcatalyzed varnish tinted Soothing Green. A hand-rubbed coat of varnish was applied over the paint to soften the appearance of the cabinets and to make them look slightly aged. Because Jeff and Sallie are painters, they enjoy varying the colors they use even if the effect is subtle. The open shelving above the kitchen sink is painted with M.L. Campbell's Ice Blue. These splashes of color break up the expanse of the natural wood, which allows it to be more easily appreciated and, like a lot of things in the kitchen, offers something unexpected to which you can't help but be drawn.

The variety of materials highlighted in the kitchen—including the exposed brick wall, the concrete countertops Sallie constructed, the vintage mirror used behind the small bar, and the range of wood species used on a variety of surfaces—suggests that the kitchen was constructed with items that had been reclaimed to fit a new use, much like the home itself. More refined items—such as the modern pendant and track lights suspended above the kitchen and the sleek stainless-steel kitchen sink, pot rack, and appliances—remind you that this is in fact a working kitchen.

For Jeff, the kitchen has the enveloping feel of a boat's cockpit, and the arrangement of the space feels like a theater, with the cooktop and island playing center stage. Sallie sees the kitchen in slightly different terms, as a genuine reflection of each of their personalities. □

Rob Yagid is a senior editor. Photos by the author.



Informal, but functional. The open shelving in the kitchen gives the space a utilitarian feel. From the refrigerator drawers to the dish racks, each item has its place, and each surface has a specific use to maintain order.

For the cook's convenience. A butcher-block counter provides prep space next to a range and induction cooktop. To preserve circulation space without sacrificing counter area, a piano-hinged leaf can be folded away when not in use and supported by hinged brackets when needed.



CONTEMPORARY CUSTOM CABINETRY

Jeff and Sallie liked the idea of open shelving, but they didn't want the cabinetry to look old-fashioned. Searching for a classic aesthetic with a clean modern look, they decided to paint the base cabinets and the raised-panel doors light green and to paint the informal, open uppers light blue. Stainless-steel appliances and fixtures and brushed-nickel drawer and door pulls help to give the kitchen an updated appearance, while LED undercabinet light strips illuminate a custom concrete countertop that reinforces the unadorned, industrial character of the old building.

Notable elements

Gas range: KitchenAid KFGU 706, KitchenAid.com • **Electric oven:** KitchenAid KEBS 107 • **Induction cooktop:** Schott Ceran, US.Schott.com

Exhaust fan: Dacor ERV36, Dacor.com • **Pot rack:** Checkolite, Checkolite.com • **Sink:** Elkay ELU281610, Elkay.com

Refrigerator: Fisher & Paykel 23217-A, FisherPaykel.com • **Faucet:** Brizo 64070LF Venuto, Brizo.com • **Refrigerator drawer:** KitchenAid KDDC 24RVS