



## DETAILS

**Stools** Recycled wood seats on industrial stool bases, [sticksandbricksshop.com](http://sticksandbricksshop.com)

**Pendants** Eleek Starlight in recycled aluminum, [eleekinc.com](http://eleekinc.com)

**Backsplash** Recycled aluminum 2x6 tiles in three finishes, [naturalbuilthome.com](http://naturalbuilthome.com)

**Floor** 12x12 natural-cleft Brazilian-slate tiles, [arrowtiles.com](http://arrowtiles.com)

**Faucet** Jaclo dual-articulated satin-nickel bridge, [Jaclo.com](http://Jaclo.com)

**Sink** Shaws Original fireclay apron farmhouse sink, [rohhome.com](http://rohhome.com)

**Countertops** Jet mist granite, honed finish

# Fit for a Family

With a new layout and smarter storage, this kitchen works for everyone

BY SCOTT TULAY

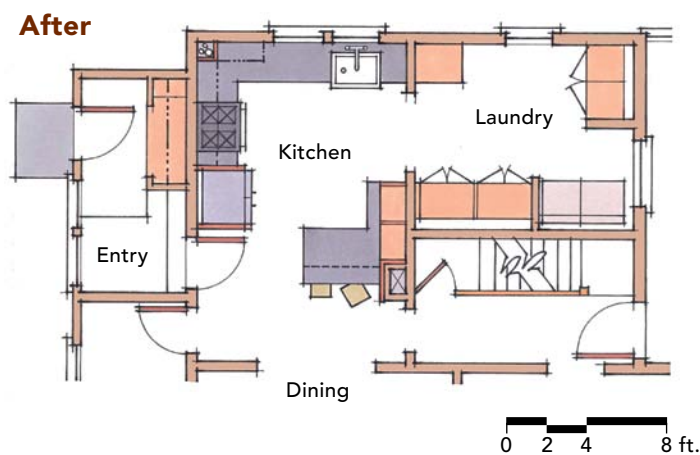
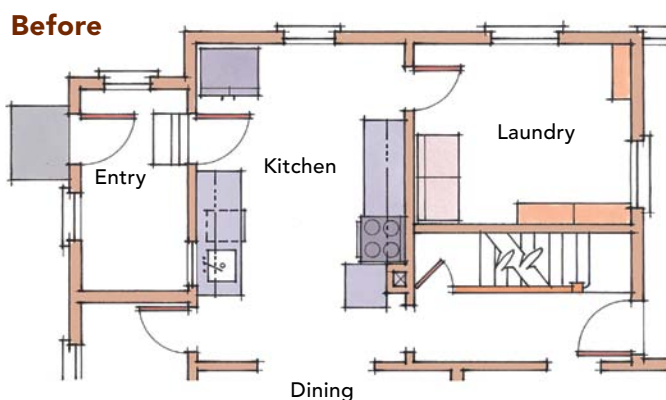
In 2006, my wife and I purchased a 1500-sq.-ft. cottage-style house in Amherst, Mass. Although the house was from the 1920s, its kitchen had been remodeled in the 1970s and was downright dysfunctional. We determined that the kitchen—along with every other room in the house—would have to be completely overhauled.

The original kitchen measured 11 ft. by 17 ft., with two short counters on opposing walls. With foot traffic running diagonally through the space, the kitchen was not conducive either to gathering or to

cooking. There was no dedicated storage space, and the limited countertop area was taken up by a microwave, utensils, a toaster, a mixer, and a bread box. The cabinetry was old and broken down, there was no dishwasher, and—even though the daylight hardly penetrated it—it had only a single overhead light.

We had several goals for our kitchen remodel: to improve the traffic pattern, to increase daylight, and to make the space feel more welcoming. Given our budget, we chose not to enlarge the kitchen. We

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## SAME FOOTPRINT, BETTER FUNCTION

With poor lighting, chaotic storage, and nowhere for lingering, the Tulays' kitchen was neither a comfortable gathering spot nor a satisfactory place in which to cook. Complicating the

situation further was that traffic to the backyard cut diagonally through the space. This was solved by moving the back door. Adding windows and opening up the wall between the

kitchen and the laundry room brought in more light. Clever custom storage was added to keep cooking supplies close at hand. With peninsula seating, there's now also a spot to do homework.



# A STORAGE WALL THAT DOES IT ALL

Because he wasn't adding to the footprint of the kitchen, Scott knew that whatever storage space he carved out would have to be extremely functional. The kitchen's interior wall offered lots of potential but also presented two challenges. The first was that locating the peninsula there would make it difficult to reach the storage above. Cabinetmaker Jim Picardi suggested outfitting the cabinets with shelving units from Rev-A-Shelf that pull down to bring items within reach. To be sure that these shelving units would be accessible, Scott made a full-size cardboard mock-up of the peninsula and measured his wife's reach to make sure she could grab the handles. The second challenge was a furnace chimney inside the wall that left only about 3 in. of useful space in front of it. To put this thin space to good



use, Scott designed a shallow cabinet with pockets for school papers and a charging station for mobile devices (top photo, facing page). A long power strip on the back side of the peninsula allows laptops to be plugged in when someone is working there. Other features of the wall include appliance garages, trash and recycling bins under the peninsula, and a deep drawer under the microwave to keep saucepans and lids organized (bottom photo, facing page).





**Kitchen central.** Cabinets designed by the author and cabinetmaker Jim Picardi incorporate storage and a peninsula. A shallow cabinet built over a brick chimney is just the right depth for school papers and electronic devices (above), and a deep drawer under the microwave, outfitted with dividers from Rev-A-Shelf, keeps saucepans and lids organized (below).





# A MEAL-PREP AREA THAT COOKS

On the business side of the kitchen, the emphasis is on keeping cooking and serving tools close at hand but preventing them from cluttering up the countertop. In the adjacent sink area, two dishwashers help prevent dirty dishes from piling up in the sink.



**Customized for cooking.** Drawers containing cooking and serving supplies surround the 30-in. KitchenAid dual-fuel range. A shallow drawer to the right organizes silverware and other utensils using spring-loaded stainless-steel dividers from Blum. Below it, a deeper drawer outfitted with a customizable pegboard keeps bowls and plates in order. To the left of the range, a custom drawer fitted with restaurant-style utensil canisters (below) puts cooking tools where they're needed while keeping them out of sight when they're not.



**Location** Amherst, Mass. **Architect** Scott Tulay  
**Builder** Roger Clark, Leeds, Mass.  
**Cabinetmaker** Jim Picardi, [jimpicardi.com](http://jimpicardi.com)



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did, however, decide to expand the opening to an adjacent pantry and laundry room that, because of its narrow door, felt hidden away.

### **Focused on the family**

To be sure I got the functionality right in the remodel, I asked my wife and daughters about how they used the kitchen, and then I observed them doing just that. I noticed that when my wife was cooking, she would have to walk over to the opposite counter whenever she needed a utensil. Spices and pot holders also required trips back and forth. With no garbage disposal and the trash can located in the back pantry, there were frequent trips to discard food waste and packaging. It became clear that the redesign should bring these areas within closer reach.

I also noticed that while my wife and I prepared dinner, our daughters often would trek downstairs from their rooms to ask for homework help. I decided to design a peninsula where they could do their homework. Along with moving the entry door, this peninsula would create a separation between the new kitchen work area and traffic coming through the back door to the rest of the house. At the same time, however, it would require a creative approach to ensuring access to the cabinets above it (see “A storage wall that does it all,” p. 32).

### **Lightening it up**

To remedy the lack of natural light, I added a window to the adjacent south-facing entry hall. I also decided to add more glass by asking local cabinetmaker Jim Picardi to build a custom door to the kitchen from the entry so that southern light could enter the kitchen for most of the day. This also solved a problem we had with our dog leaping up on the door (see “Great Ideas,” p. 29).

Enlarging the entrance to the laundry room and pantry also brought in more light and made the kitchen itself feel bigger. To help the two spaces feel like one, we matched the crown molding, window trim, and hardware in the laundry/pantry with that in the kitchen, even though we used off-the-shelf cabinets in the laundry/pantry to save money. Finally, we added two single windows near the sink’s new location, allowing in more sunlight and a view outdoors from the sink.

### **Custom solutions make it all work**

Given the kitchen’s small footprint and our desire to maximize storage, it was clear that custom cabinets would be a wise investment. Jim and I worked hard to add functionality to every cabinet and to utilize every square inch of space. Another goal was to minimize clutter by clearing the countertops of appliances when not in use, so I integrated appliance garages into the cabinetry on top of the counter. These allow us to slide the coffeemaker, the mixer, and the toaster out when needed and then hide them away when not in use.

Finally, I decided to place a small dishwasher on one side of the sink for small loads, and a full-size dishwasher on the other side for larger loads. Having two dishwashers allows the sink to be relatively clear of dirty dishes at all times and helps keep the kitchen looking open and clean. □

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Scott Tulay is an architect in Amherst, Mass. Photos by Nat Rea, except where noted.