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We tried not to do it. We tried everything but doing it. We even tried doing it in a different way. Finally, we simply had to do it. For our kitchen to be a pleasant, efficient, light-filled workspace, we had to move the basement stairs.

Our old kitchen, tucked uncomfortably into the corner of our 1911 Craftsman bungalow, was a gloomy mess of peeling paint adjacent to the sunny back porch. The kitchen was the main thoroughfare from the dining room to the basement, which was accessed by a flight of stairs on the back porch (floor plan, p. 59). We tried various plans that left the stair in its original location, but we were up against an inescapable fact: Moving the basement stairs was the only way to create an efficient floor plan and bring light into the kitchen. Our new kitchen now fills the former back porch's sunny southeast corner, and a small deck off the kitchen provides a secluded outdoor space (photo left).

Another benefit of the new floor plan is an expansive L-shaped counter. Situated beneath

Relocating a Bungalow Kitchen

Expanding the kitchen into a neglected porch filled it with daylight
and a view of the private, wooded backyard



An old porch becomes a new kitchen. Moving the basement stairs allowed the once dark kitchen to expand into the former porch's sunny southeast corner (photo above). A slight reveal beneath the slate counters, which are salvaged blackboards, allows them to float above the 1½-in. bullnose cherry (photo right).



the windows, the counter overlooks the rear yard rather than a wall of upper cabinets.

To make up for the missing upper-cabinet storage, we added a hutch along the west wall (photo facing page). On the wall adjacent to the basement stair, there's more storage in a cabinet over the refrigerator, in a pantry to the right of it, and still more storage above and below the wall oven/microwave. The cherry cabinets, island, and hutch were built and installed by The Arna-da Company, a local cabinet shop.

The clearance between the island and adjacent cabinets is a little tight (32 in. to 36 in.), but with multiple work areas, several adults can work together at the

same time. To give the kitchen a more open feel, we selected a cooktop with a downdraft vent in the island rather than a range hood ("Feedback," facing page).

Owners hold down costs with salvaged materials and discount appliances

We used salvaged materials in the kitchen both for the aesthetics and for the cost savings. It took a bit of luck and persistence, however, to pull all the materials together. We discovered the glass-prism pendant lights at a local building-salvage store, and they seemed compatible with the age of the house. It wasn't much of a leap to repeat the theme in the glass light shades

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FEEDBACK

DO DOWNDRAFT VENTS REALLY WORK?

We chose a cooktop with a downdraft vent primarily to preserve the outside view and to make the kitchen feel more open. We didn't research range hoods; we were going with a downdraft unit and were willing to live with less ventilation if necessary. Our Jenn-Air cooktop (model CVG2420; 800-688-1100; www.jennair.com) was rated at 325 cfm, but the short duct run (8 ft. with one elbow) allowed the fan to run at near capacity. We were prepared for less than ideal performance from the downdraft vent, but we've been pleasantly surprised by how well it has worked.

above the windows and the reeded glass in the hutch's upper doors (photo right).

The cabinet-door and drawer pulls also were salvaged; they were discards from another kitchen remodel, and fortunately, there were enough to outfit all the drawers and doors.

We also found three fir double-hung windows at a window manufacturer's yard sale for a highly discounted price. Then we had two more made to match the originals.

We also saved money by buying used and discounted appliances. The wall oven/microwave unit was marked down because of a minor dent, and the refrigerator was purchased in relatively new condition when it didn't fit the floor plan of its owner's new kitchen.

Incorporating salvaged items into the design was relatively easy, but the slate counters were another story.

Retired blackboards resurface as kitchen counters

When we salvaged several slate blackboards from an old classroom, we never imagined that they would end up as our kitchen counters. After several years of gathering leaves in the backyard, however, the slate became a dominant material around which we planned our kitchen.

We could have cut the slate to the proper shape and wrapped the edges with molding, but that would have been too easy. Because a certain amount of self-inflicted pain is necessary on any remodeling project, we decided



The reeded glass on the hutch's upper doors echoes the shades on the pendant lights. The cabinet-door and drawer pulls were recycled from a previous remodel.

to expose the edges fully (bottom photo, facing page). This complicated the installation because, although the slate was honed on one side, it varied in thickness.

Short on funds, we belt-sanded the slate to consistent thickness. This method worked eventually, but it was time-consuming, not to mention dusty.

The slate has held up well and, with an occasional mineral-oil dressing, looks as good as the

day it was installed. Slate is softer than granite, but any scratches that develop either can be removed with a mild abrasive or left to add to the patina. □

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Moving the basement stairs made the new floor plan work

Moving the basement stairs from the porch to an interior wall allowed the kitchen to expand into the sunny southeast corner. The new kitchen's improved circulation, daylight, and lack of overhead cabinets more than offset the cost of moving the stairs, which included additional framing and moving the furnace and masonry flue.

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