



Removing a wall and reconfiguring the counter space welcomed people into the kitchen

BY JEFFERSON KOLLE

Make for room breakfast



S

hawn and Tom Thomason's house in Santa Fe, N.M., is in the perfect location, secluded yet close to town, with stunning views of the Jemez Mountains to the west. But, oh, that kitchen. The house was built in 1983 (the Thomasons bought it in 1987), and the kitchen showed its age. The problem wasn't that it had a tiny refrigerator or no dishwasher. And there wasn't a lack of counter space. On the contrary, one of the problems came from the giant expanse of counter between the U-shaped kitchen and family room. Another was that a wall cut the kitchen off from the dining room.

They called architect Robin Gray to come up with a solution. "The rooms were compartmentalized," she says. "It wasn't easy to get from one place to another."

Shawn took the lead in working with Gray. "Because I spend so much time in the kitchen, I wanted to spend a lot of design time there, too." Tom was all for the remodel, but he had three requirements. He didn't want to increase the footprint of the house or cut through the ceiling



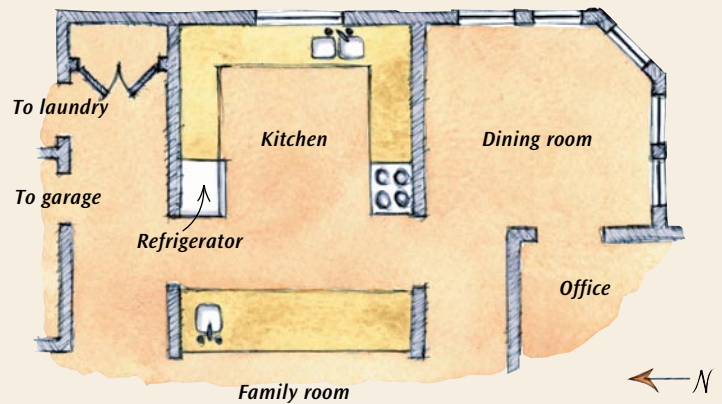
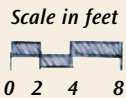
VIEW FROM THE FAMILY ROOM The original kitchen was blocked from the family room by a long countertop. Replacing it with an island set back into the kitchen opened the room up to the rest of the house



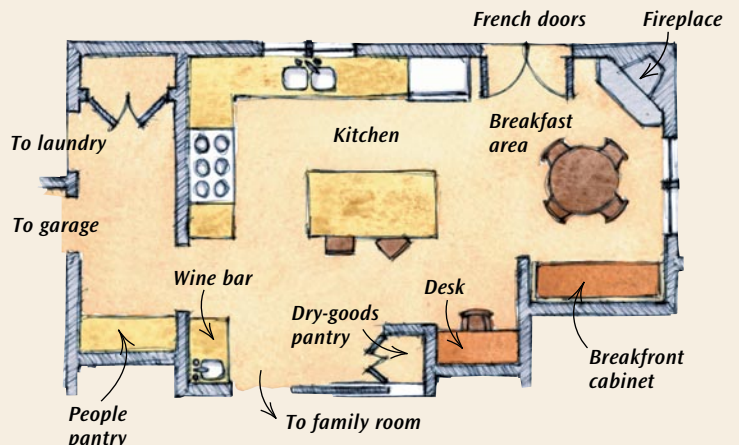
WARM AND INVITING Building a walk-around island and taking out a wall that stood under the single, lower ceiling beam improved the traffic flow through this kitchen. The space-saving corner fireplace, known as a kiva, adds two kinds of warmth to the new room.

S A M E S I Z E , M O R E R O O M

BEFORE THE REMODEL, the kitchen sequestered the cook and kept people out of the room.



AFTER PULLING THE ISLAND into the room, there was space for many built-ins, including a pantry, a desk, a wine bar, and a breakfast cabinet.





SNACK CENTERS
Tucked in at one end of the kitchen island, a microwave and bread drawer are close at hand for the family when they sit at the breakfast table. Across the hall from the wine bar, a dry-goods pantry backs up to Shawn's desk.



(because of the existing wires), and he wanted a bread drawer. "Sounds weird," says Shawn, "but he had to have his bread drawer."

Reclaiming wasted space

While the long counter in the original kitchen provided plenty of prep space, it had full-height partition walls at each end and was a barrier to the goings-on in the family room. Gray's design called for removing the counter and replacing it with an island set back into the kitchen. Locating the island in the center of the room welcomed the family into the area and involved them in the activities. "The old counter was an obstruction," says Gray, "but the new island is a destination."

The kitchen island is quite big, almost 9 feet long, but Shawn is happy for every square inch of the granite countertop. The island's main purpose is food preparation, but it's used for lots more. "Robin suggested putting a second sink in the island, but I didn't want to interrupt the surface, so we decided to put a tiny second sink in the wine bar counter," Shawn says.

The island is in constant use. Their daughter does her homework on it. For entertaining, Shawn can set it up as a buffet table. "And during

MOLDINGS ADD SIMPLE FORMALITY
The molded edges of the countertops, the cornice above the upper cabinets, even the accent tiles on the range hood and the raised panels in the cabinet doors add an understated formality to what might otherwise be a rectilinear, too-plain kitchen.



TABLE LINENS AND MUSIC ARE CLOSE AT HAND The built-in breakfast front's drawers hold tableware, and the upper cabinets contain audio-visual equipment.



the holidays," Shawn says, "We take turns wrapping presents there."

Underneath, the island is fitted with drawers and doors, and stools slide under an overhang on one side. And, located at one end, close to the breakfast table, is a microwave and a bread drawer. "Tom is very happy," says Shawn.

Dining room becomes breakfast area


Installing a structural beam in place of the wall of cabinets and appliances between the old kitchen and the dining room opened up the space. The new beam is stained to match the original rough-sawn ceiling beams, and the grid of wood looks as if it had been built at the same time.

"The old dining room was really too small for large gatherings, but now it's perfect for a four-person breakfast table," says Shawn. The family room now holds a large table for entertaining and holiday feasts.

Along with opening up the breakfast room to the kitchen, they wanted to open the room to the outdoors. A bank of casement windows sheds light on the table from the south side of the house, and French doors lead to the backyard patio.

In the corner of the breakfast area a small, raised-hearth fireplace, known as a kiva in traditional southwestern architecture, provides warmth and a place to sit during chilly Santa Fe winters.

Adding French doors and the kiva required the removal of much of the hot water baseboard heat in the room. To make up for the lost heating output, Gray specified a flat European wall radiator. Projecting from the wall a mere 4½ inches, the white enameled radiator is inconspicuous under the window (photo, p. 39).

One of Shawn's favorite features of her new kitchen is what she calls the people pantry, which is in the hallway leading from the garage into the kitchen. "When we come in, we each have our own cubbies to dump our stuff," she says. "Without it, I know that all that gear would end up on my island." 

Jefferson Kolle is managing editor.

For more information, see Resources, page 92.



BEHIND THE WINE BAR IS THE PEOPLE PANTRY A cabinet with space for every family member keeps the kitchen island from turning into a dumping ground.