

New Kitchen, and Then Some

How a small addition improved an average ranch house with a new kitchen, a better dining room, a porch, a mudroom, and a bath

BY STEVE KUHL

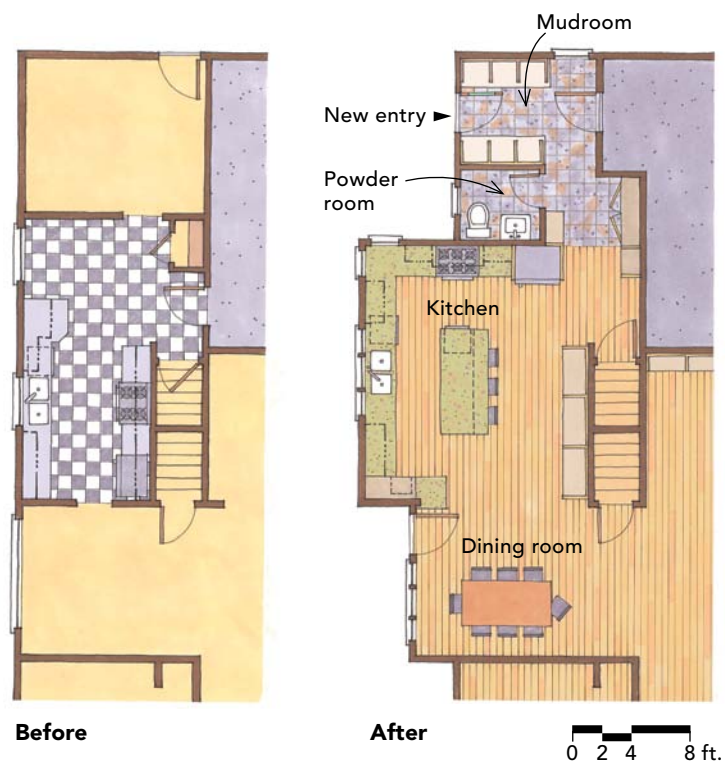
The house was getting too small for its growing family. The three children participated in every sport under the sun, yet there was no storage for the mounds of equipment, shoes, bags, and junk that constantly clogged the rear door. No storage, no guest bath, and an outdated galley kitchen meant that it was time for a change.

The original kitchen was long and narrow—essentially a working hallway that left no room for an island. Parents prepped meals while kids ran back and forth right behind them. A key concept behind the addition of the island was to create “defensible space” to keep guests and children out of the work zone.

The homeowners and I decided on a modest 79-in.-wide addition off the rear of the house. This new space (about 150 sq. ft.) gave us more room on the interior and created a little bonus porch off the dining room. By adding a flushed steel beam in the ceiling in place of the old kitchen’s exterior wall, we could



A new connection. Stepping back the addition at the dining room made space for a covered entry, which brings the backyard patio that much closer.



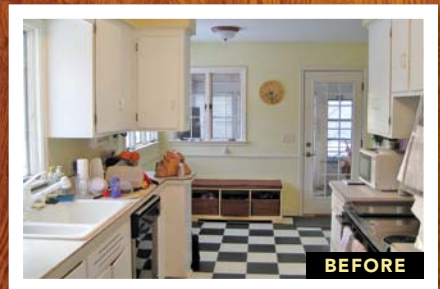
ONLY AS MUCH AS NECESSARY

Originally, this ranch house’s back wall ran straight without interruption to the three-season porch. To enlarge the space, a structural beam was installed at ceiling height along the length of the kitchen and dining room. Next, a narrow expansion added approximately 3 ft. to the dining room and 6½ ft. to the kitchen. The jog in the addition created space for a new entry porch. At the end of the house, a three-season porch was closed in and became the location of the mudroom and powder room.



A wealth of light and space.

A new larger window above the sink and a corner window bring plenty of natural light into the kitchen from two directions. Views of the yard can be appreciated from anywhere in the kitchen.





The island has a separate identity. To make the island a distinct part of the kitchen, the author specified that it be made of cherry and detailed its base differently from those of the other cabinets. The oven's position at the end of the island reduces its visual impact on the cabinet-filled kitchen.

remove the wall entirely. To capture space from the three-season porch, we raised its floor with tapered sleepers to make it flush with the main floor and insulated it with spray foam. With the floor leveled, we added a guest bath and an extremely generous mudroom, with a large closet and cubbies for five.

There's always a need for more storage

The extra width in the kitchen provided enough room to include a "wall of tall" that acts as a large pantry and concentrates the storage away from the windows. Other details emerged from our initial design interviews with the clients. We discovered that they wanted something larger than a standard appliance garage, so we made a double-wide door on barrister hardware (swings up and in) to fill the otherwise awkward space between the upper and lower cabinets in the corner of the kitchen. The appliance hangar was born.

At my firm, we like making microwave openings slightly oversize so that future units can be accommodated. Because staring at the ugly gap between an appliance and the cabinet is less than desirable, however, we use custom snap-in face frames to trim out the space. A



A stealth storage idea. Concealing a drawer in the kick space below the oven is a good way to store items that are used infrequently. The drawer is accessed with a touch latch from Rev-A-Shelf.

GETTING CREATIVE WITH STORAGE

It's always surprising to find out how space can be reconfigured when the default route isn't taken. Here, one corner typified the thought and engineering that went into cabinet design.



Custom face frames. To minimize the empty space around the microwave that's especially noticeable in a white kitchen, the author designed a close-fitting face frame. Attached by panel clips, it can be replaced with a smaller face frame if the homeowners buy a larger microwave later.



Garage? No, hangar. Discussions between the client and the designer yielded this supersize take on appliance storage.



Dead space reclaimed. Corner base cabinets are notorious as a waste of space. Rather than use a lazy susan, the author installed hinged corner doors that open as one. This makes for easy access to the cabinet's interior.

Not in the way of the windows. The clients wanted a lot of natural light but did not want to sacrifice too much upper-cabinet storage in the process. This tall built-in pantry (right) took off some of the pressure.



The way station. Strategically located between the mudroom and the kitchen, this compact space with a stand-up desk, cabinets, and bulletin boards is the place to post calendars, schedules, and other important family information.



couple of simple panel clips attached to the inside of the cabinet box and face frame make it all come together smoothly.

We have used drawers built into the toe-kick space for many years, in particular in small kitchens. The concealed space is perfect for occasional-use items such as serving platters and oven racks. The toe-kick drawer here has the added feature of a kick-activated opener. Tap the drawer with your toe, and it pops open a few inches.

When we create a feature piece such as the island in this kitchen, I like to use a few different architectural details to communicate its independence. The valanced feet in the toe kick add a subtle touch of character that announces the island as something special.

Lazy susans are a necessary evil in most kitchens that have inside base-cabinet corners. To minimize the hassle, we buy the best units we can find. (Here, we used a Rev-A-Shelf pie-cut wood-and-ball-bearing unit.) This kitchen has two inside corners, so we elected to use a double-hinged corner door at the other location to create wide access to the full cabinet. Our clients appreciated having two types of corner-cabinet storage.

We used a hand-brushed finish on the kitchen cabinets so that they would be consistent with the other built-in pieces located throughout the house. We made the island from cherry to add more character to the kitchen. Two coats of catalyzed varnish help the island to stand

Notable elements

Cabinet hardware: Blum.com • **Island light fixtures:** HudsonValleyLighting.com • **Windows:** Marvin.com • **Granite counters (golden jade):** TMSupply.com

Design and construction: Kuhl Design+Build, Hopkins, Minn. • **Cabinets:** SquareOne Cabinet Studio, Hopkins, Minn. • **Interior design:** Shauna O'Brien



Convenience included. Part of the former porch space was devoted to a new powder room. A durable slate floor is a good idea this close to the mudroom.



Organize with a new mudroom. An entry from the backyard opens into the mudroom, where individual cubbies and a separate closet provide plenty of room for coats, boots, and sports equipment.

up to the abuse that the homeowners' kids are able to dish out on a daily basis.

Lighting should be subtle

I can't stand being blasted by intense light coming straight down from recessed cans in the ceiling. Therefore, most of our kitchens embrace the concept of peripheral lighting, which, when used in combination with undercabinet lighting and strategically placed hanging fixtures, expresses a range of functions and moods. All recessed fixtures are arranged on the outside of the room so that the light can wash onto walls and cabinets. This refracted light is easier on the eyes and creates dramatic scallops of light on the walls. □

Steve Kuhl is co-founder of Kuhl Design+Build and has been remodeling in the Minneapolis area since 1999. Photos by Charles Bickford, except where noted.

What's the cost?

We went through a series of design revisions to meet the clients' budget. Although there were many cuts, the finished project represents quality rather than sacrifice. Here's the way the costs broke down.

Envelope (demo, framing, etc.): \$46,200

Mechanicals: \$14,700

Interior finish: \$19,300

Cabinets: \$30,500

Materials (windows, doors, fixtures, etc.): \$25,800

Overhead: \$38,800

Total: \$175,300