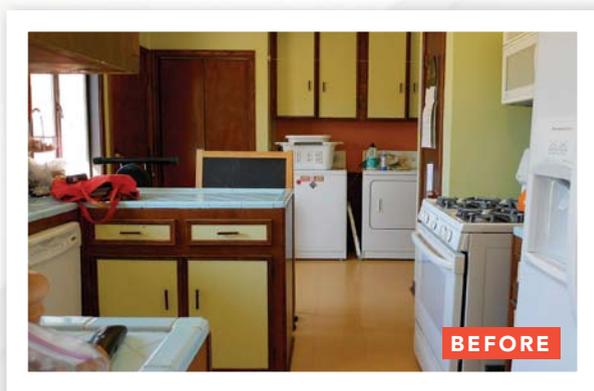
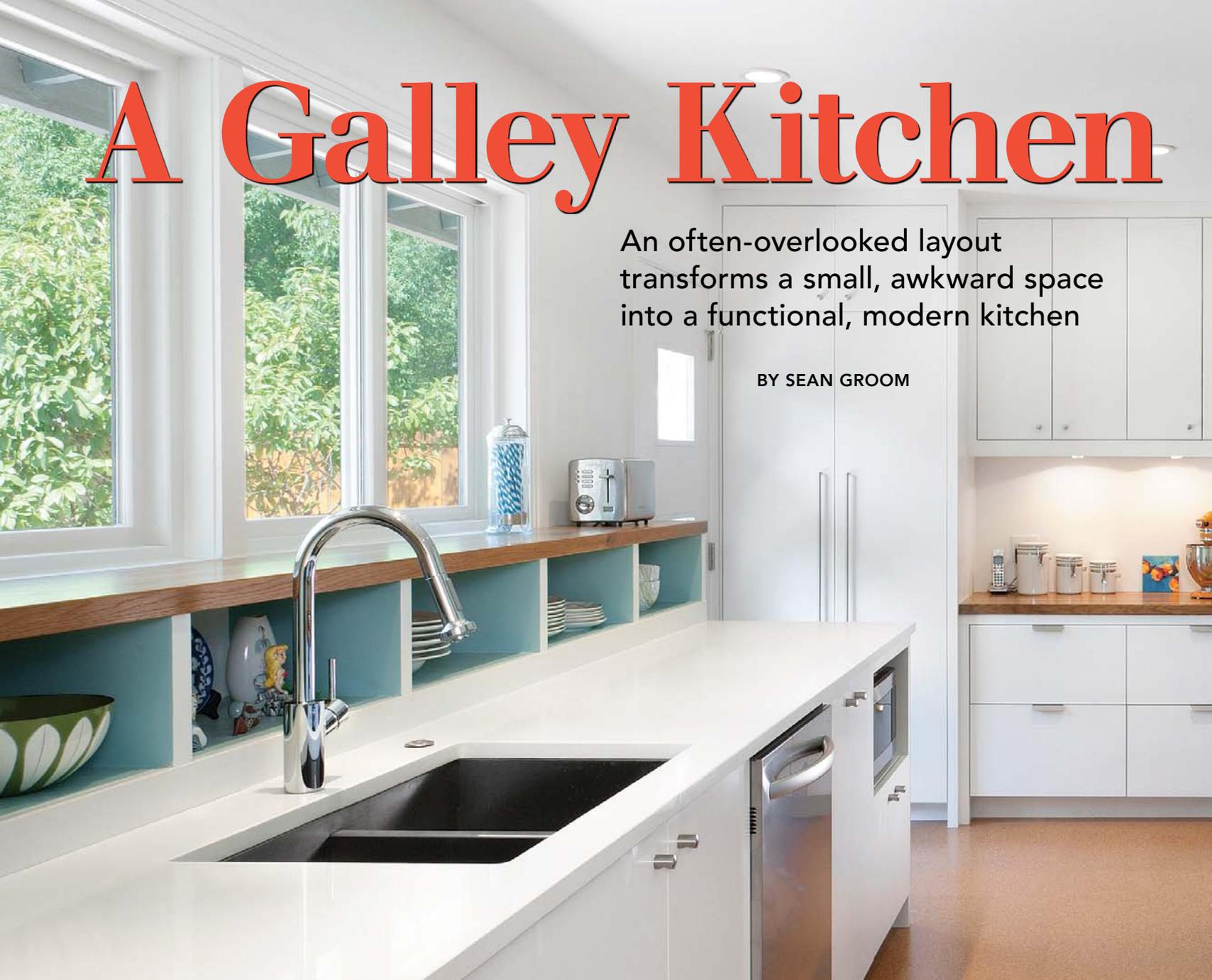


# A Galley Kitchen

An often-overlooked layout transforms a small, awkward space into a functional, modern kitchen

BY SEAN GROOM



**Smaller feels larger.** The former kitchen was cramped, and its layout reduced the perceived size of an already small space. The new kitchen feels open despite the fact that the plan reduced the floor space between the countertops.

After years of living with a kitchen they called dysfunctional, Laura and Blake reached a breaking point. “The kitchen was a mess,” Laura says. “When the refrigerator was closed, it stuck out into the doorway connecting to the dining room. With the door opened, the passageway was completely blocked.” The range was also a problem spot: It was marooned in its opening, unable to fill the space designed for a larger 1950s appliance, and the small square of counter space on the right-hand side provided little useful work or storage space. On top of that, the breakfast area suffered from multiple-personality disorder, serving as eating space, laundry room, utility closet, and entry from the backyard.

Laura and Blake met with architect Cindy Black to consider their options. They briefly contemplated stealing space from another room in the house. However, as they looked at the footprint of their 1260-sq.-ft. home in Austin, Texas, they realized that there was no place they could afford to give up. Another option—pushing out into

# That Works



the backyard—wasn't financially feasible, so Black went to work on a design for revamping the kitchen. When she came back with a galley plan, Laura was surprised. "It's certainly not what we were looking for when we hired Cindy to design our new kitchen," she says.

People generally don't undergo the expense and disruption of remodeling to convert their kitchen to a galley kitchen. For Black, though, a galley design was the obvious solution. The original kitchen had a cramped, U-shaped worksurface with little counter space and hard-to-access corner cabinets. The cabinets divided the long room into a kitchen area and a breakfast area, neither of which was adequate for its purpose. To solve these shortcomings, Black drew inspiration from the long lines, open plan, and generally efficient layout of the midcentury-modern house.

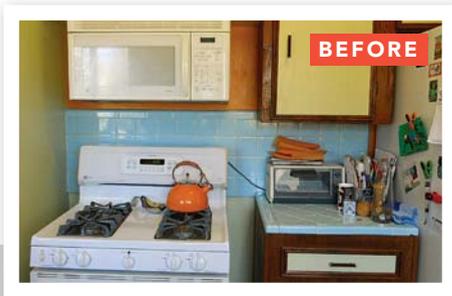
While the term *galley kitchen* might evoke images of a narrow, confined, hallwaylike cooking area with negligible counter and storage space and minimalist appliances, Black's design required a second

look at the floor plan to confirm that she didn't add square footage to the kitchen. As Laura and Blake studied the plan, their initial skepticism evaporated, and they saw how a galley layout was ideal for the long rectangular space they had to work with.

## **Galleys work if the size is right**

The key to avoiding the stereotypes associated with galley kitchens is to ensure that the counters have the right amount of space between them. Too little, and you'll feel like you're cooking on board a boat; too much, and shifting between workstations will feel like an ocean crossing. For a galley kitchen to work, the room must be between 9 ft. and 12 ft. wide. At 10 ft. 4 in., Blake and Laura's kitchen was within this range, but slightly larger than Black's ideal.

To narrow the width between the counters on each side of the kitchen to 4 ft. 8 in., Black turned to deeper cabinets. The open shelf and window ledge running the length of the countertop on the sink side of the

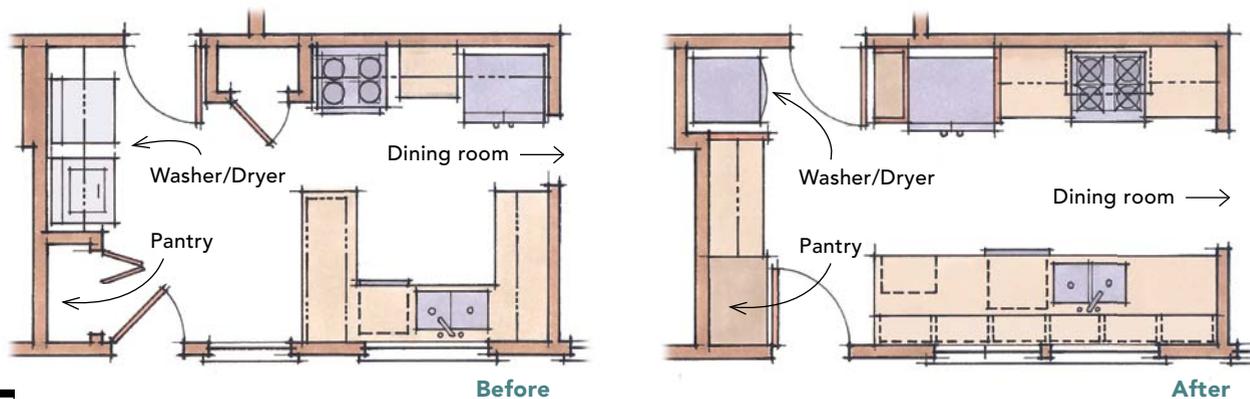


**Deep cabinets create practical storage.** A range should have enough space on each side for placing a pot or a roasting pan. The old range area lacked any semblance of this convenience. Now, a 31-in.-deep countertop wraps around the entire range, with bonus spice and cooking-oil storage behind the stovetop. Extradeep 28-in. cabinet drawers below swallow loads of cooking accessories, and 15-in.-deep upper cabinets provide storage for even the largest plates and serving bowls.



## SAME SPACE, BETTER PLAN

Although the kitchen's footprint didn't change, reimagining the space as a narrower galley kitchen actually made the kitchen function better and feel much larger.



**Architect:** Cindy Black, Hello Kitchen Design; [hellokitchen.net](http://hellokitchen.net) **Location:** Austin, Texas **Builder:** Michael Winningham, RubyAnne Designs; [radhomz.com](http://radhomz.com)

kitchen moved the cabinets on that side 12 in. closer to the centerline. The cabinets here are a standard 24 in. deep.

On the other side of the kitchen, 30-in.-deep cabinets narrow the space between the working sides of the kitchen by an additional 6 in., with several practical benefits. With extradeep lower cabinets flanking the range, the counter wraps behind the cooking surface to create a handy, accessible storage area for cooking oils and spices. These cabinets have 28-in.-deep drawers, and the upper cabinets also have extra depth at 15 in. rather than the standard 12 in.

The deeper cabinets turn the standard-size refrigerator into a counter-depth version. A double-door fridge, which doesn't open as wide as a single door, helps to keep the pathway through the kitchen open. The fridge is intentionally at the end of the counter run. In this layout, kids can enter the kitchen to get drinks from the fridge without intruding on parents working.

Black says that because people typically rely on a single trip to the fridge to gather their ingredients when they begin cooking, the refrigerator can lie a bit farther from the sink and the range. (The perimeter of a triangle among the sink, the range, and the fridge, though, must be less than 21 ft.) In Black's view, it's more important to focus on the sink as the critical location of the cooking pattern. The range is directly opposite the sink, with enough space between the counters for two people to work back to back and a third person to squeeze through.

The pantry area of the kitchen is also slightly removed from the primary work triangle. Pantry storage is on the utility wall and is organized for three storage types: Bulk foodstuffs are in bins on the counter; pullout drawers are below, including one filled with grab-and-go food items that allow a person to refuel without entering the core of the kitchen; and cabinets are above. Drawers are used for undercabinet storage throughout the kitchen because they are easier on the back and knees than shelves. Laura has turned into a real fan of drawer storage. "When things are on shelves, lesser-used items get pushed to the back and forgotten," she says. "With the drawers, I can see everything we have in a glance."

### Striking the right note

While Laura and Blake desperately wanted the new kitchen to improve their cooking experience, they didn't want it to change the way they felt about the rest of their house. They had seen plenty of opulent kitchen remodels that made the rest of the house seem unfinished or inadequate.

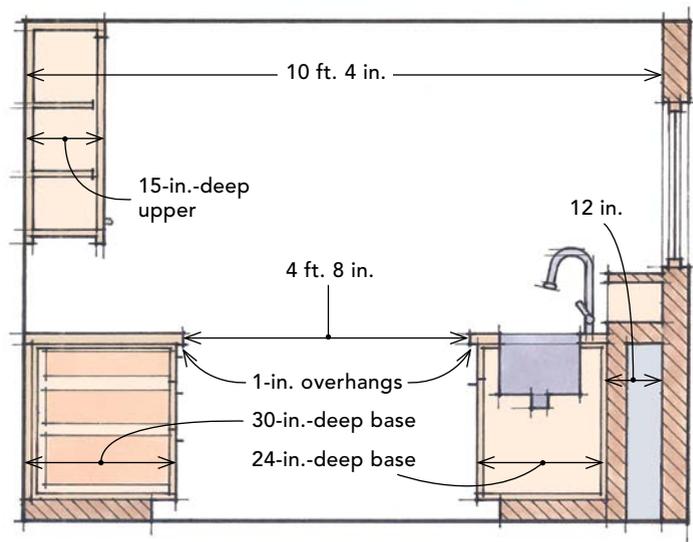
Like the rest of the houses in their planned 1950s neighborhood, this home is a long, low, single-story house with an open carport, wide unadorned overhangs, and large windows. The new kitchen draws on this design language. The galley concept echoes the straight, long lines of the house, and the 8-ft.-long window over the sink allows light to pour into the kitchen. The simple white cabinets and clean lines fit nicely with the midcentury-modern home, and the reflected light accentuates the open, airy feel of the space. The warm wood tones of the butcher-block counter sections and the blue accent tiles behind the stove, with matching blue paint in the open shelving, are both period appropriate and appropriately playful. □

Sean Groom is a contributing editor. Photos by Whit Preston, except where noted.



## CLOSE THE GAP

Narrowing the distance between the countertops was a counterintuitive design approach that made this kitchen work. In order to reduce the open floor area to roughly 4½ ft., the designer varied cabinet depths and specified a framed chase that eats up floor space while supporting open shelving.



## DETAILS

**Countertop:** Caesarstone, Blizzard; caesarstone.com  
custom butcher block, oak; devoswoodworking.com

**Dishwasher:** KitchenAid; kitchenaid.com

**Faucet:** Hansgrohe, Talis S; hansgrohe-usa.com

**Flooring:** APC Cork Apollo, Natural; apccork.com

**Range and hood:** KitchenAid Architect II

**Sink:** Kohler Vault; kohler.com

**Tile:** Clayhaus Ceramics, Falcon Blue; clayhausceramics.com