

A kitchen is reborn through a
bright and spacious renovation

BY ELIZABETH HERRMANN

Going Toward



Though untouched since it was built in the 1980s, this house had lots of potential. However, its lack of windows made the interior dark. It was a disjointed, compartmentalized building that paid surprisingly little attention to its surroundings. Knotty-pine paneling covered many of the house's small rooms. The new owners, who knew that the house was ripe for a redesign, hired me to create an open plan more suited to the lifestyle of a modern family.

Here, as in many homes, the kitchen is the hub, and it was crucial that it work just as well for large gatherings as for daily family routines. The key was to get rid of some interior walls, to add larger windows, and



Reflect light, don't absorb it. This new kitchen was the main beneficiary of a whole-house remodel that converted a dark and choppy interior (above) into one that glows. White cabinets, bigger windows, light wood, and a contrasting dark-stained floor all contribute to the overall effect.

to brighten the interior—all while staying within a tight budget.

The homeowners also hired builder Red House of Burlington, Vt., to do the remodeling, which began with gutting the entire first floor. Together, we reconfigured the space to include a mudroom, large kitchen, living room, laundry, and half-bath.

Wood and windows

The original house had a lot of wood in addition to the knotty-pine paneling, including some fir beams and a blond-oak floor. The flooring was still in good condition, but the finishes were worn, so we decided to refinish it with an ebony stain and water-based poly to unify the different areas of the floor plan. (We also stained the treads and risers with the same ebony color.) To brighten up the house, we replaced the pine

the Light



Architect Elizabeth Herrmann, eharchitect.com **Builder** Red House, redhousebuilding.com **Location** Cornwall, Vt.

wall paneling with drywall, or in the case of the stair wall, we chose to paint it white.

Around the kitchen, I specified new windows that match the style of the existing windows to help maintain an overall continuity to both the interior and the exterior. The new windows also made a huge difference in the amount of light reaching the interior. I located them to frame views of the surrounding area that make the kitchen feel bigger. In particular, the massive 9-ft.-wide window in the kitchen looks out onto the Green Mountains and brings light deep into the house.

We used the kitchen's existing fir beam as a departure point and added one perpendicular to it to define the area around the island. To replace the bearing wall, Red House added a matching post and custom-made the beams' enameled-steel connecting hardware.

How the kitchen works

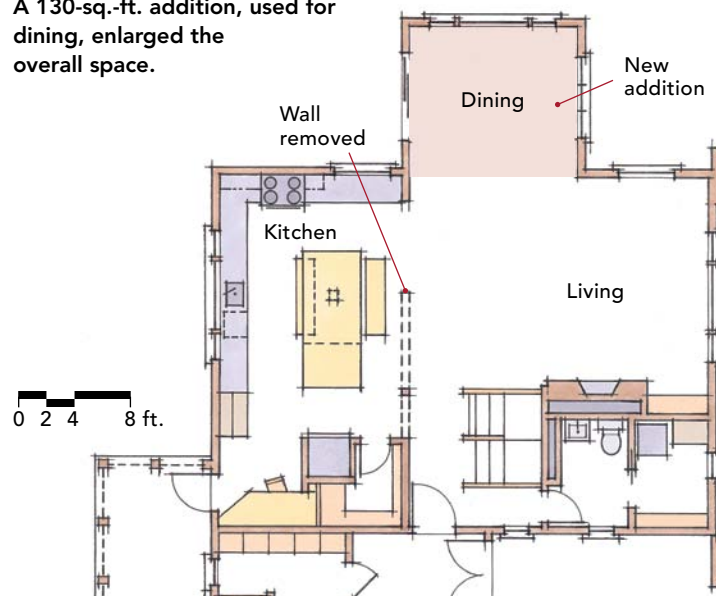
The kitchen design evolved out of discussions about family life and routines. This room needed to be a hardworking space flexible enough to accommodate diners at the island, an influx of guests, children doing homework, and two cooks at a time.

With an active family of five in the house, this kitchen had the potential for overcrowding if everyone gathered there at once. To keep the circulation open, we avoided dead ends, except in the organizational nook in the corner of the kitchen. The island, which functions as the heart of the house, has a 3-in.-thick Douglas-fir top that's finished with Watco butcher-block oil. It serves as the breakfast table and homework desk, and when the benches are tucked underneath, it becomes a cook's workstation and chopping block.



ADDING OPEN SPACE

By removing interior walls in the old kitchen, the designer unified the kitchen and the living room, creating a more flexible space. A 130-sq.-ft. addition, used for dining, enlarged the overall space.



Part of a larger plan. Creating an open floor plan blended the living, dining, and kitchen areas into one relaxed space. The exposed fir beams convey a sense of scale. The open plan of the house creates access to lots of natural light.

Balancing the cost

The most important budget guideline we used was to employ expensive materials just enough for the right function and impact. The pricey red Heath ceramic tiles are a good example of what allowed me to add another layer of interest, link spaces, and create some fun highlights. We also had stainless-steel countertops fabricated to include a stainless-steel sink. They were expensive, but it's a great effect. Our many cost-saving measures included using metal cabinet drawers from Blum instead of custom wooden drawers, and refinishing the existing wood floor and stairs rather than replacing them. □

Elizabeth Herrmann practices architecture in Bristol, Vt. Photos by contributing photographer Susan Teare, except where noted.

DETAILS

Cabinets, island, fir benches Red House

Light fixtures Island pendants, West Elm, westelm.com; living-room pendant, Criss Cross Bubble Lamp by George Nelson, dwr.com

Floor finish Ebony stain, finished with DuraSeal water-based poly, duraseal.com

Windows Andersen 400 series, andersenwindows.com

Counters Custom stainless-steel around the perimeter, Metalworks, metalworksvermont.com

Sink Vigo, vigoindustries.com

Faucet Grohe Concetto, grohe.com

Appliances 36-in. Blue Star Residential Nova Burner gas range, bluestarcooking.com; 36-in.-wide Frigidaire Professional Series refrigerator, frigidaire.com