

kitchen connection

Without adding square footage, a reconfigured floor plan and architectural cohesion make this house more than the sum of its parts

WRITTEN BY JESSICA KEENER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREG PREMUR

If the kitchen is the heart of the home, then Stacy and Michael Mach's 60-year-old Colonial-style house in Lincoln, Massachusetts, needed a transplant. Stacy, who loves to cook, felt the room's limitations most acutely. "The galley kitchen was dark, and all the appliances were squashed into one corner," she says. "It felt like wasted space." In addition, contemporary floor-to-ceiling windows and doors from previous renovations striving for a modern look caused temperatures to fluctuate uncomfortably. "Too hot in summer, too chilly in winter," says Stacy. "It wasn't cozy."

More important, the kitchen's awkward placement in relation to adjoining rooms and in sight of the front door added to its dysfunction for this growing family, which includes the Machs' two sons, Chris, 13, and Ryan, 11, and their dog, Fuzzy.

A CENTER ISLAND with sink, the Viking range, a workstation beneath new casement windows, and a vaulted ceiling with skylights make the kitchen a cook's delight and a family hub for Stacy and Michael Mach and their two sons.



K + B **KITCHEN**
Better, not bigger

THE LONG COUNTER

under the windows is used for baking projects and is "great to have for drinks and entertaining," says Stacy Mach. In addition to counter seating, the room has a table and chairs and a sofa (BOTTOM PHOTO).

THE CENTER ISLAND

is where the kids eat breakfast and daily meals are made. A generous 48-inch Viking stove features duel fuel, that is, gas for stovetop cooking and electric heat for the range's two ovens.

DESIGN DECISION

Passages

As a firm, DSA|Dewing & Schmid Architects took a team approach to the Machs' kitchen renovation, which led to a more comprehensive approach to the creative process, says architect W. Timothy Hess. Team members considered the whole first floor and paid special attention to traffic patterns and sightlines. They asked questions such as: How do you get from one room to the next? How do the spaces relate to each other? "We looked at places in between," says Hess. "We thought of spaces as framing a view from one space to another in a way that formed a compelling invitation to go into that adjoining space. We stitched the spaces together, made them into a cohesive whole."

Before, the view from the front door was straight to the galley kitchen, and there was no clear path from the kitchen, sitting area, or breakfast room to the living room. Today, the view from the front door (A) is into a beckoning light-filled space that only hints of a kitchen. A new passageway (B), outfitted with built-in cabinetry, connects the dining room with the kitchen sitting area, and there is a clear path (C) from the living room through the kitchen to the study and office on the opposite side of the house. (This involved enlarging the powder room and changing the access to it.) The fireplace wall was extended to close off the living room from the staircase, creating a definitive panel-lined doorway (D) to the room in the process. "Now," says Hess, "all the spaces are nicely woven together."

BEFORE

- 1 FOYER
- 2 LIVING ROOM
- 3 DINING ROOM
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 BREAKFAST ROOM
- 6 SITTING AREA
- 7 OFFICE
- 8 STUDY
- 9 POWDER ROOM



AFTER

- 1 FOYER
- 2 LIVING ROOM
- 3 DINING ROOM
- 4 KITCHEN
- 5 SITTING AREA
- 6 OFFICE
- 7 STUDY
- 8 POWDER ROOM



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Initially, looking for just a kitchen redo, the Machs called on DSA|Dewing & Schmid Architects in Concord and South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, for help. "They wanted the kitchen to operate better," says W. Timothy Hess, a principal at DSA, "but it became apparent that it was more than that. Kitchens are not just their own organ; they need to be connected to the rest of the animal. There were lots of doglegs and zigzagging spaces," he says of the old floor plan. "You had to weave your way, shoehorn from one space to get to the next."

All of this contributed to what Hess refers to as the house's identity crisis. "On the outside, it presented as a classic Lincoln homestead, a two-story Colonial with impressive brick masonry, beautifully sited on a hill." Inside, however, efforts to create a more contemporary space were less than successful. "There was no indication where to stop or start in the 'open concept,'" says Hess. "It amplified this confusion and conflict of what the house was."

CLASSIC SUBWAY TILES form a backdrop to the stainless steel range and complement the pair of cabinets flanking the range hood. Inside each cupboard, shelving for glassware is cleverly backlit by exterior windows that let in natural light and afford glimpses of the Machs' wooded yard.



Discussions between the Machs and the DSA team, which included Hess, principal R. Jeffrey Dearing, interior designer Tricia Upton, and senior project manager Justin R. Mello, on how best to resolve these issues led to a holistic solution. It became clear that changes to adjacent dining and living rooms would enhance the outcome.

Today, the interior and exterior of the house are in harmony. The kitchen, repositioned to the back of the house, no longer impedes circulation. Rooms and hallways flow freely, and architectural elements such as wainscoting, crown moulding, and built-in cabinetry unify the rooms. Yet no square footage was added, says Hess. "We actually made spaces smaller and more valuable."

In fact, the kitchen, though a bit smaller, is twice as efficient, with two refrigerators, two sinks, two dishwashers, and two eating areas, plus a seating nook with sofa and television. Modifying the kitchen's exterior wall from a crescent shape to a simple squared-off plane trimmed square footage of the kitchen suite from 522 square feet to 436 square feet but expanded work space. This change allowed for a new set of traditionally styled casement windows, which in turn provide for additional countertop space and storage below. A pair of skylights in the newly vaulted ceiling flood the room with natural light. "Ironically, there are less windows," says Stacy, "but I see more sky."

The kitchen's classic design, with Shaker-inspired cabinetry, wainscoting, and plate railings all painted eggshell white, sets the tone for the rest of the renovated space. "The cabinets are really the bones of the house," says Upton, who worked with Stacy to select materials, including light fixtures, furnishings, and paint colors. "Their clean, simple lines are very traditional."

Similar cabinets make up the dining room's built-in breakfront as well as the built-in drawers and shelves in the two passageways linking kitchen and dining room. "In this house, connections are key," says Upton. "Cabinetry becomes part of wainscoting, casing, and millwork."

In the living room, the entire wall around the fireplace was redesigned with paneled millwork to convey a heft and substance that was



formerly lacking. Generous crown mouldings give the illusion of height to the 7½-foot ceilings. Soapstone, "a familiar, quintessentially New England material," says Upton, makes up the fireplace surround and visually relates to the kitchen countertops' black granite "leathered" finish, which gives the stone a matte patina. Throughout, a palette of soft whites, creams, deeply saturated yellows, and beiges synchronizes furnishings, ceilings, walls, and floors.

In the end, says Dearing, had the design team not explored the possibilities beyond the client's original expectations, "Mike and Stacy would have a terrific kitchen, period, but now they have a terrific home with highly functional circulation zones, separate and distinct spaces that now complement, instead of compete with, the inherent architectural language of the home."

The transformation took about 15 months. "My favorite thing was the conversations we had," says Stacy. "The ideas generated, the [DSA] team's understanding of my thoughts and wishes — and humor!" she says. "It was a magical journey. It's a working house where beauty and function are equal. I love it." ■

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