

Home Style Kitchen & Bath Spring 2001

Down to the Sea Again
by Michael Walsh

Almost afloat on the ocean blue, a relocated cottage kitchen is a seafaring feast for the eyes.

The best seats in the house? A trio of kitchen stools overlooking the edge of the continent.

Gazing at the driveway from the kitchen of her 1880s house on the coast of Maine was not Susan Kaplan's idea of a good time. "It was painful to know that, while I was standing at the sink doing dishes, there was this truly amazing view on the other side of the house that I wasn't getting to look at," she recalls. Since the down-at-heels cottage she and her family bought two years ago required a top-to-bottom renovation anyway, the opportunity to move the kitchen to the home's Atlantic side was too tempting to pass up. "There were all kinds of good reasons not to do it--the lack of wall space, the expense--but I'm so glad we did," she says. "On a crystalline day or during a storm, the view's always incredible."

Portland architect Sam Van Dam and New York interior designer Lyn Peterson collaborated on a triple-threat space that combines the new 12 x 16 foot kitchen with a dining area and a family room, all three with visual access to the lighthouse-caliber view. Topped with honed marble, a substantial island compensates for the lack of perimeter cabinets in the wide-open two-wall kitchen. "It's so big we call it the island of Manhattan," says Kaplan. "It swallows a lot of stuff."

Carpenter-style cabinets with vintage-look crown moldings and beaded and framed doors and drawers help blur the distinction between then and now. For the same reason, the design team specified concealed ventilation above the commercial-style range. "A big, traditional exhaust hood would have clearly said 'year 2000,'" Kaplan notes. "This way, people aren't quite sure if the kitchen is original, done in the '20s or two months ago." White cabinets and black soapstone countertops make a statement, yet allow the sea and sky to act as the kitchen's acknowledged focal points, while yellow walls give the room a sunny disposition whatever the weather.

Saving Graces

While the exterior of the 1880s Shingle-style cottage was retained, the interior was rearranged to give a new kitchen/family room an unobstructed view of the Atlantic and the rocky coast below. Traditional elements--soapstone and marble counters, painted cabinets, divided-light windows, reproduction woodwork--enhance the home's vintage character. The functional floor plan, though, is thoroughly modern.

Family Friendly

Susan Kaplan's daughters, junior bakers Annie and Jane, appreciate the marble countertop on the island, the hub around which the kitchen revolves. The heavy-duty range was played down by recessing it into a tiled alcove and concealing the vent.

See-Worthy Details

Ceramic tile in watery hues provides a dollop of pattern in the range alcove; above it, a barely-there vent takes place of an exhaust hood. The oven's black surface coordinates it with the vintage-style apron-front sink and countertops of soapstone, a regional New England favorite. When not in use, three stools are parked out of the way in a niche at the end of the barn red island.

Between the Kitchen and the Deep Blue Sea

A seaside screened porch, accessed via a French door in the dining area, is furnished with a weather-worthy antique French winery table and bistro chairs. Its proximity to the kitchen makes eating outdoors during the summer as easy as eating inside.

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