



## Breaking Down Walls

*A kitchen is redesigned to be the center of attention for a family who loves being together*

**A**FTER SEVERAL DECADES OF ENDURING a dimly lit, closed-off and outdated galley-like kitchen, the homeowners worked with Dana Bacher, senior designer with Jarrett Design LLC in Emmaus, Pa., to achieve a complete overhaul of the space. Although they are empty nesters, the couple's grown children visit frequently, and the wife is from a large family. Ideally, the homeowners wanted their kitchen to be a gathering place for family, but the original space was not conducive to hosting multiple people. Like many older 1970s kitchens, it was rather tight and divided, so the goal was to transition the first floor into an open-concept layout.

### ADDRESSING ISSUES

"The space was defined by walls," said Bacher. "We wanted to open everything up and have it be much brighter, so when family would come home, they could all be together."

The kitchen also had significant layout issues; the configuration of the space was clunky and cluttered, with appliances jutting out and tables in the way.

"They had a table sitting in front of the sliding doors, so you had to go around that to get to the back porch," said the designer, who explained that a refrigerator, which was on the same wall as the sink, partially obstructed the entrance to the family room.

The space felt even more confined with the peninsula that was to the left of the sink. The closet-style pantry juttied out in the middle of the room and encroached into the remaining available space. The former kitchen was also fairly dark, as the only window and source of natural light was just over the sink overlooking the back porch. The white cabinets, original to the kitchen, were falling apart, and the tile floor was outdated and drab.

### MAXIMIZING AND INTEGRATING SPACE

Bacher's primary challenges were to find a way to maximize the use of space and maintain a consistent flow throughout the entire downstairs.

"Since they were not adding square footage to the actual kitchen, and we were losing considerable wall space by removing valuable cabinet real estate by taking walls down, we needed to find ways to make sure they didn't lose too much cabinet space," said the designer. "We did this by carefully planning out exactly what would go inside each cabinet and utilizing organizers like rollouts, tray dividers and spice organizers to make the most of each cabinet."

Adding the new peninsula also provided additional storage for pots and pans while also offering a place for the designer to locate the range and incorporate counter seating. It was also important that Bacher integrate the kitchen design throughout the other adjacent rooms.

"Trying to make it all seem intentional was important to us," she explained. "We didn't want to take three walls down and have nothing work together, so it was important that the spaces echoed each other, made sense and were related."

To that end, for example, Bacher made sure that the new hutch had the same door style and cabinetry color as what was in the kitchen. She also used the same style of chairs for the counter stools at the peninsula that are in the dining room. All the hardwood floors throughout the downstairs were retained the same color so that there is a unified look, and all the trim was painted to match the kitchen cabinetry.

**ABOVE** Reclaimed barnwood provides a warm contrast to the white kitchen, while the eye is drawn to the window above the sink as the focal point of the entire kitchen.

**BELOW RIGHT** Pullout drawers in the island next to the microwave work well as space savers in this smaller kitchen.

By **HILARY DANINHIRSCH**



**WHEN THE WALLS CAME DOWN**

Bacher removed three walls that separated the kitchen from the adjacent dining room and family room to open up the space. As they all were supporting walls, they had to install a beam and post.

“We tried to use this as an opportunity to add some architectural interest and detail,” she said. “We had a local master craftsman construct a wrapped beam and post using reclaimed barnwood. It added such a nice detail to the space and warmed it up.”

As with many older homes, this one had a low ceiling. One pleasant surprise was when they took everything down to the studs, they discovered that the adjacent family room had a vaulted ceiling hidden beneath the drywall. The extra height made the whole space feel a bit larger.

Knocking down the surrounding walls also brightened up the whole space, eliminating the need for the designer to add more windows.

**RECONFIGURING THE LAYOUT**

At the homeowners’ request, Bacher kept the window by the sink, which she used as her focal point since it is the first thing seen when walking into the kitchen. The challenge it posed was that it threw off symmetry on either side, so she needed to create a more balanced view. In part, this was accomplished by installing oil-rubbed sconces to flank it.

To the left of the farmhouse sink is the refrigerator, and to the right is a wall-to-counter cabinet with pocket doors that hides out-of-the-way appliances. Bacher built a peninsula where the refrigerator was and put in a range with a downdraft, as the homeowners did not want a hood to obstruct that open feeling.

“We put counter seating on the other side of the range, so that if you’re working in the kitchen, you can have family sitting at the counter on the other side, interacting with you,” she said.

**ACING THE DESIGN AESTHETIC**

Bacher said she often asks clients to find photos and images of kitchens they like so they can begin



**ABOVE** Guests can sit on scallop-edged chairs around the countertop to talk to anyone working in the kitchen.

**SOURCES**

**DESIGNER:** Dana Bacher, Jarrett Design LLC;  
**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Jesse Jarrett

**BACKSPLASH:** Fireclay Tile;  
**CABINETS:** Plain & Fancy;  
**CHANDELIER:** Ferguson;  
**COUNTERTOP:** LG Hausys;  
**DISHWASHER:** Bosch;  
**FAUCET:** Brizo; **HARDWARE:** Top Knobs; **MICROWAVE,** **RANGE & REFRIGERATOR:** KitchenAid; **PAINT:** Benjamin Moore;  
**SCONCES:** Visual Comfort;  
**SINK:** Kohler

**LEFT** The old kitchen’s layout was not set up for gatherings and was disconnected from the rest of the downstairs.

to develop a design style for the space they feel reflects their vision. In this case, the client pulled images consistent with a French country style.

“The primary goal was to balance formal elements like moldings and refined decorative details with rustic accents found in things like natural wood, distressed paint finishes, natural metals, etc.,” said Bacher. “We ran with that concept, and you can see it reflected in the use of corbels on the cabinets and carved legs at the sink. The reclaimed wood on the beam and post provided the needed rustic accents to round out the French country vibe.”

**CONTINUING THE NEUTRAL PALETTE**

The former kitchen was predominantly white, and the homeowners wanted to stick with that shade for the remodel. The maple cabinets were painted using a warm white, which became the jumping-off point for the rest of the color scheme. The quartz countertop, chosen for its lower-maintenance properties, was speckled with a bit of gray. White was also chosen for the subway tile backsplash behind the sink.

“We used the cabinetmaker’s white on the cabinets and then color matched it to be used for all of the trim to help make everything look cohesive and connected,” said Bacher.

She said that white is not only popular for kitchens but also helps keep the room bright and open. Polished-nickel hardware for the sink and oil-rubbed bronze for the rest of the fixtures, knobs and pulls add warmth and provide contrast.

“I really like this kitchen,” said Bacher. “It’s one of my favorites as it offered numerous challenges.”

And the clients are pleased as well. The designer said that the open-concept plan better reflects their lifestyle and promotes family interaction. She also admitted that she learned a lot from the experience, particularly as it had many constraints she could not change.

“I learned that by embracing those – rather than being frustrated by them – actually helped create a more interesting space and ultimately, I think, a better result,” added Bacher.

