

Country Home

FEBRUARY 2005

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FAMILY-STYLE
KITCHEN

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on second thought. IT'S A WOMAN'S PREROGATIVE TO CHANGE HER MIND. GOOD THING, BECAUSE TWO YEARS AGO ARCHITECT KATE JOHNS OF CHATHAM, NEW YORK, REALIZED SHE'D FALLEN OUT OF LOVE WITH HER OLD KITCHEN.

"I'm at a point in my life where I want everything quieter, simpler, and more serene," says Kate, who knew that a streamlined cooking space—with hidden storage for all her gadgets and spices—would reignite her culinary passions. "I was so tired of clutter, like open shelves with jars of flour and beans, which had been part of my original design 20 years ago. I didn't want to have anything out but beautiful objects."

Kate and her husband, Jason Shaw, embarked on their first renovation of the 1790s Dutch post-and-beam house when they bought it in the 1980s. It was a run-down rental populated with vast and sundry pets. "There was one of every kind of animal living in the house, including a pig that bit me on the leg when I visited the first time," says Kate. Still, they bought it and started the revitalization by swinging their own hammers. Sticking to a tight budget, they combined three small rooms into one large kitchen area, then installed inexpensive white-panel stock cabinets, old-fashioned beaded board, wood floors, and an L-shaped island to separate the cooking from the eating space. (See a floor plan on page 120 of *The Source*.)

When contemplating this second redo, Kate didn't want change simply for the sake of change. After all, the basic layout she'd designed years before still functioned very well. And, surprisingly, so did that inexpensive cabinetry. "The cabinets were a good, classic style," says Kate. "I've always liked them, and they've actually held up." So this time around, the project became more about retrofitting, reusing, and repainting than wholesale rebuilding. Stained and damaged butcher-block countertops flanking the stove were removed, refinished, and reinstalled, bottom side up, for a good-as-new appearance. The existing cabinets stayed but were creatively tweaked: Undercabinet storage was enhanced with new sliding drawers to hold trash bins and bottle recycling; crown and base moldings were added; white porcelain hardware was swapped out for brass pulls and knobs; and an empty space to the right of the refrigerator was filled with one of the room's few new cabinets—a pullout pantry that holds the jars of staples that once sat out in the open. "With the addition of these details, they look like custom cabinets," says Kate.

The money that had been budgeted to cabinets—Kate estimates the savings at \$30,000—went toward top-of-the-line stainless-steel appliances; soapstone countertops and sink; vintage-style faucets and light fixtures; and fabrics and rugs that introduce a soft palette of blues, yellows, creams, and whites.

Tackling the problem of clutter included finding a space for Buck, the couple's German Shepherd. "Buck had a big, filthy pillow in the middle of the kitchen that we had to walk around and look at all the time," says Kate, who ingeniously carved out space for a recessed dog bed (*next page*) by lopping off the bottom of the front-entry coat closet. "In putting everything in its place, I wanted Buck to have his place, too."

OPPOSITE Clean, restful lines define the renovated kitchen in architect Kate Johns' 18th-century New York home. "I like simple runs of countertops that aren't broken up," says Kate of her design principles. "I like to group all the tall elements—pantries and refrigerator—on one wall so there's not a lot of up and down." A new Sub-Zero refrigerator complements her seamless approach: At just two feet deep, it can sit flush with the 20-year-old stock cabinets to its left. To make the built-in cabinets beside the range look like a freestanding hutch, an arched base was installed in front of the standard recessed toe kick. To further the illusion of depth, the kick board is covered with a dark piece of linoleum.

A BOLD VIEW

Transforming the beverage alcove into a clutter-free zone was important because this door—guarded by Buck, the resident German Shepherd—is the home's front entrance. Guests remain happily unaware that the beaded-board doors to the right of this recessed bar hide hardworking office essentials, or that the short cabinets on the backside of the island hide pullout storage for bottled drinks.



1. CARE FOR A BEVERAGE?

Because this new beverage alcove is tucked into the wall away from easy view, coffee cups and small appliances, such as an electric kettle, can be left out without adding visual chaos. This space once housed the washer and dryer; the old cabinet doors were removed and new soapstone counters, an undercounter refrigerator, and shallow open shelving were installed. The plate rack is practical and decorative: It disguises the seam between the beaded-board wall paneling and what had been the laundry's doors, and it provides beautiful display space for Kate's blue-and-white dishes—gifts from her sister, aunt, and grandmother.

2. ALL WASHED UP

To minimize countertop extras, the deep soapstone sink is paired with a nickel faucet with pull-out spray and two built-in dispensers—one for hand soap, one for dish soap.



3. TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE

Kate loves this Fisher & Paykel dishwasher, which has two drawers that operate independently.

4. AT HOME. AT THE OFFICE

Two beaded-board doors—just to the right of the beverage alcove—swing open to reveal a 30x30-inch pantry-turned-office, outfitted with new drawers, painted-wood countertop, and shelves. "It's for all the little odds and ends," says Kate. Two plastic file holders mounted on the inside of each door—one for each of Kate's two children—keep important papers organized.

5. GONE TO THE DOGS

To give Buck his own room with a view, Kate co-opted space from a full-height closet. The bottom quarters of the closet doors were sawed off, then a shelf was installed to function as both the new bottom of the closet and the top of Buck's alcove. Arched molding, which mimics the arch on the beverage center, adds the finishing touch.



TAKE A SEAT

Used as a banquette, a small sofa sits against the island's half wall to provide ample seating at the oval dining table. "It's a good space saver and more comfortable than all chairs," says Kate, who designed the parchment-shade light fixture. The blue-and-white Pierre Frey toile chair slipcovers and sofa cushion were cut from a king-size duvet cover. "It's very economical," says Kate. "There's usable fabric on both sides."





CLEAN SWEEP

Built as an addition to the house, the laundry room provides a back entrance. "Before that, we had one door: the front door into the kitchen," says Kate. "Muddy boots and dogs—everyone came in that way." A salvaged copper sink in a well-worn oak countertop was mounted on a simple construction of open shelves, then skirted with a fabric in cream-and-white checks. Custom-made beaded-board panels disguise the Miele washer and dryer and make the blue milk-painted cabinets look like a vintage hutch. ☼

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND KITCHEN FLOOR PLANS, SEE THE SOURCE BEGINNING ON PAGE 116.