

Better Homes and Gardens, Special Interest Publications

KITCHEN

AND BATH IDEAS

Cardinal Rules It's a red-letter day for a couple whose laid-back outlook colors their fresh-start kitchen.



MADDENING COMMUTES AND A POORLY PLANNED KITCHEN used to have Fred and Carlene Condon seeing red. Now that they've traded crowded turnpikes for the slower pace of seaside living, the couple still see red — in their relaxing kitchen.

When the Condons left behind their stressful lifestyle and built a new home on a plot of island real estate, Carlene looked forward to having more time for cooking, playing with her twin daughters, and gardening—activities that she wanted the kitchen to embrace.

Working with architect Patrick Ahearn and kitchen designer Beverly Ellsley, the couple asked for sophisticated English cottage styling and a smooth-functioning plan to match their new low-key approach.

"I wanted the kitchen to be warm, comfortable, have lots of storage, and be convenient and user-friendly in its layout," Carlene says. "I had to walk forever in the old kitchen."

While Ellsley concentrated on a step-saving layout, Ahearn designed sunny windows focused on views of the ocean, Carlene's gardens, and the children's outdoor play areas.

ABOVE LEFT: The presence of red keeps the family kitchen from feeling too staid. The color covers the island base and stools and repeats above the range in the checkerboard-pattern tile backsplash. ABOVE: A vented bifold door serves as a delightful cottagestyle disguise for the wall oven and microwave oven. LEFT: Carlene wanted the kitchen to be a place where she could spend time with her twin daughters. The window seat is a favorite spot for sharing books.

Elements with a freestanding look and a deliberate lack of uniformity suggest a space that evolved over time.



Placing a long island at the center of the kitchen was key to creating short traffic routes and multiple work zones. The island itself is a self-sufficient station, offering a prep sink, refrigerator drawers, and a dishwasher, as well as an expansive countertop and seating on one side for casual meals and conversation between the cook and family or friends.

A windowed alcove along the exterior wall is the main cleanup zone, harboring another sink—a generous farmhouse model—a second dishwasher, and a trash compactor. Whichever sink she is standing at, Carlene enjoys a pleasant view while she works.

ABOVE: Yellow-painted beaded board provides a sunny contrast to the white cabinetry. An oval window offers a bonus ocean view.
ABOVE RIGHT: The farmhouse sink, surrounded by marble countertops, basks in the light of a wide arch-top window.
RIGHT: Carlene wanted the window seat in lieu of a desk area, which she feared would attract clutter.
OPPOSITE: Glass doors, cherry countertops, and furniture-style feet give built-in cabinetry a free-standing look.

The cooking zone is anchored by a red French range with high-power gas burners that handle anything from quick searing to all-day simmering. A compartment beside the oven cavity keeps foods or dishes warm, while a cheerful checkerboard pattern of red and white tile warms the range backsplash. A wall oven and microwave oven nearby help Carlene manage bigger meals. To meet a family's storage needs, upper cabinets extend to the ceiling, and lower

No matter where you stand or sit in the kitchen, there is plenty of natural light and a pleasing seaside view.



cabinets feature a combination of drawers, doors, and pullout bins. A pair of tall pantry cabinets stores an abundance of dry goods, while an appliance garage keeps countertops clear.

The stylistic backbone of the functional layout is cabinetry designed to reflect the charm of vintage English furnishings. The mix includes rectangular, square, and oblong recessed panels, as well as plain fronts, glass inserts, and oversize round knobs. "Paying attention to scale is one way to create a cottage look for cabinetry," Ellsley explains. "Larger stiles and rails on the doors give them a more informal look."

Ellsley employed two other design elements to shape the vintage cottage look. "One of my signature trademarks is to do a paneled treatment on the backsplashes," she says. "This is a detail that was commonly seen in turn-of-the-century kitchens. Beaded board can also be used." Brackets, scrolled feet, and vented bifold doors for the wall ovens pick up on this furniture feel.

Secondly, Ellsley mixed countertop surfaces. Wood visually warms much of the kitchen, from the recycled pine planks on the floor to the cherry on the island top and select perimeter countertops. However, in the cleanup zone and around the range,

creamy marble countertops lend elegance and variety.

"If you want a kitchen to look cottagey, don't make all the countertops the same," Ellsley says. "I'm very fond of wood countertops. I've had them in my home for 30 years. They're very durable, but if they do get burned or scratched, five minutes with a belt sander and you can make them look new again."

For the couple and their daughters, a more tranquil lifestyle has made them feel new again, and their kitchen is an integral part of it. They are especially fond of a window seat that parallels the island. Like the whole kitchen, it represents both a lookout and an outlook. "The girls are always at the island having a snack or coloring, or sitting in the window seat reading or playing with their dolls," Carlene says. "My herb and flower gardens are always within view out the kitchen windows. And I finally have the time to cook, rather than just read all those beautiful cookbooks I collected over the years."

Now that they've left behind outrageous commutes and a frustrating kitchen, the Condons have never been so happy to see red. **KBI**

ABOVE: Antique painted doors that once hung on a wall in the couple's former home now provide elegant passage to the dining room.