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Homeowners Suzie and John Gilchrist worked with their design team to create a dream kitchen that features vintage charm and modern convenience.

Zoned for PERFECTION

A new kitchen combines classic style and modern convenience to suit a busy family's lifestyle.

BY REBECCA ITTNER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AIDIN MARISCAL

When Suzie Gilchrist and her husband, John, were designing their home, the kitchen took precedence. "I wanted an open kitchen but one that was clearly its own space," Suzie says. "I love to cook, but I also wanted space for family and friends to gather and hang out." Working with architect Carol Tink-Fox, builder John Boland and interior designer Randy Boyd, the Gilchrists crafted a modern kitchen with the vintage look they desired.

"The whole design process started with the kitchen. It is the pivotal room of the house as traffic from all-shared spaces flows through the kitchen," Tink-Fox says. "First we talked about the functional needs of the space and then zoned areas for specific uses, such as food prep, cooking, homework and entertaining." Suzie, a busy mom of three, was clear that she wanted the space to be bright, and that it include a large island, a farmhouse sink and appliances fit for a true working kitchen.

Lights Up

During initial construction, Suzie was nervous that there would not be enough natural light in the expansive space, so she worked with Boland to solve the problem. "Because of the way the kitchen is situated, there was only one wall with room for a window," Suzie says. "I am crazy for natural light and didn't want to have to turn on lights during the daytime, so we decided to add the big skylight." Light pours in through the skylight and window, providing the natural light that Suzie craved. "I love it," she says. "My kitchen is so bright that I really don't need task lighting except over the island and sink." Designer Randy Boyd chose the unique light fixtures for their vintage flair.

White walls and woodwork lend a bright, airy feel to the space and tie the rooms of the house together. "I love white; it feels

left
Adding this bi-level bar created a great space for entertaining. The bar separates the kitchen and great room.

above
Instead of putting computers in the kids' bedrooms, Suzie and John included the homework center in their kitchen design.

opposite
With the right care, a large, marble-topped island is perfect for food prep, entertaining and kids' projects.

Caring for Marble

Marble's attraction lies in its beauty. However, it is porous and stains easily. To keep this natural stone surface looking great, be diligent in its care. Sealing your marble countertop prior to use will give some protection from stains.

Cleaning marble: For daily cleaning, wet a sponge with lukewarm water, then wring it out thoroughly. Wipe the surface of the countertop, then buff it dry with a clean, soft cloth. Do not use abrasive or harsh cleaners, window cleaner, all-purpose cleaner, vinegar or other such product to clean marble; many are acidic and will etch and dull the surface. If the countertop does stain, consider using a specialized stone cleaner. The Marble Institute of America (marble-institute.com) provides time-tested home remedies for stain removal.

Protecting marble: The best way to avoid stains is to protect the surface of the counter and use coasters and trivets. Use cutting boards when working with acidic ingredients. To prevent scratches, put felt on the back of display pieces like bowls, plates and baskets.

Oak flooring grounds the white room and adds warmth, making the generous space feel inviting. The butler's pantry connects the dining room and kitchen.

clean and fresh," Suzie says. "It's classic—I never get tired of it." All of the kitchen woodwork, including the ceiling, was painted in Swan White from Dunn Edwards. The walls are dressed in Lighthouse Landing by Benjamin Moore.

Island Living

Next on Suzie's wish list was a large island. "I love to cook, so a big island was really important to me," she says. "I also wanted my three kids to be able to spread out their stuff on the island during the week, and yet still have enough room there for me to cook." Suzie chose to top the large center island with white marble. "People told me not to get marble because it can stain," she says. "But it's a great surface to work on. Plus, I don't mind the way that use makes it look aged. I like things that are distressed and natural." Because marble is porous, Suzie does take care when working with ingredients that can stain this natural surface. "We had some big square marble tiles left over from another space in the house, so I had a couple of pieces cut for use on the island," she says. "I backed the pieces with felt, then set them on the island. Whenever I am working with things that can stain or etch the surface, like lemons, wine or vinegar, I'll work on those marble pieces."

Suzie also made sure the kitchen design included plenty of storage. "I didn't do anything fancy, though, just made sure to include pull-out trays in the cupboards so I could get to everything." In addition, the island houses the trash pullout and a Scotsman ice machine.

A Wolf range, Thermador wall oven and Thermador side-by-side refrigerator and freezer perfectly suit Suzie's culinary needs. The avid cook says, "I love having an oven under the range; it reminds me of something from the past. With these appliances, it looks like a real working kitchen, not just some fancy space." Suzie often uses both ovens, especially when entertaining. The refrigerator and freezer were fronted with panels that match the cabinetry, and Carrera tile was chosen for the backsplash because it ties in with the marble-topped island.

Kitchen Design Checklist

Architect Carol Tink-Fox worked very closely with Suzie and John Gilchrist in the design of their home. About the kitchen she says, "Designing a kitchen is very personal, there is no one solution that works for everyone. Many homeowners make the mistake of picking out finishes or appliances first, but there are many steps to kitchen design that come first." Here is Tink-Fox's checklist for approaching the design of your dream kitchen.

Determine how many cooks are going to be using the kitchen at the same time, as this drives the layout.

Layout your kitchen based on needed zones, including the storage that supports them. The three zones needed at a minimum are:
- Prepping
- Cooking
- Cleaning

Determine any additional zones (depending on your needs and space available):
- Eating
- Entertaining
- Baking
- Serving/staging
- Meal planning
- Others

Keep in mind the need for separating zones:
- Hot and cold areas
- Wet and dry areas
- Multiple cook areas

Assess tools needed in each zone (don't forget the cookbooks or access to internet and TV):
- Sink(s)
- Built-in appliances
- Small appliances
- Pots, pans and utensils

Shop for appliances and plumbing fixtures only after the preliminary layout is set to determine the maximum sizes that fit:
- Keep in mind the availability of water, gas and electricity (some appliances need higher voltage or dedicated circuits).
- Do a final layout after all built-in appliances have been selected to be able to incorporate that must-have piece, or a maximum size that was exceeded.

Configure the specifics of the cabinets (consider users' heights and/or disabilities):
- Open shelves, glass doors or solid doors
- Drawers versus shelves and necessary hardware
- Countertop height

Layout lighting to create layers of light right where you need it:
- Task areas
- Ambient light

Select finishes: Cabinet style, flooring, countertop and backsplash selections are often aesthetic decisions, but you should consider their durability and maintenance and well as their relationship to adjacent styles and materials.

Select cabinet pulls and accessories to put on the finishing touches.

top
Located off the kitchen, the laundry room provides a bright, open space for folding laundry, wrapping presents and doing crafts.

above
John Gilchrist worked with builder John Boland to create the patio dining area just outside the kitchen.

Workstation Solutions

Centered beneath the one window is a farmhouse sink, providing a restful place for chores. "I wanted to be able to see outside while washing dishes, and I wanted a window sill with a nice, deep ledge, like those found in old homes," Suzie says, adding, "The deep farmhouse sink is large enough to wash big items with no hassle."

Custom cabinets crafted by Boland accommodate needs the homeowners and Tink-Fox talked about during the "zoning" process. The built-ins opposite the island house the kids' homework station. Suzie uses the workstation to check e-mails, download recipes and take care of household business. Glass-fronted units were added to some of the cabinets as a way to break up the long lines of wood. "I got the glass-fronted cabinets I like without having to worry about the way items are stored inside," Suzie says. "They also added charm to the kitchen." Boyd carefully selected vintage-inspired hardware to outfit the cabinets and drawers.

To house Suzie's large collection of cookbooks, she and Boland designed a unique bookshelf. Suzie explains, "My cookbooks inspire me and make me happy, so I wanted to be able to see them, but couldn't figure out a way to display them. I showed our builder a picture from a magazine of a similar bookshelf, and we came up with this design." The curved piece was

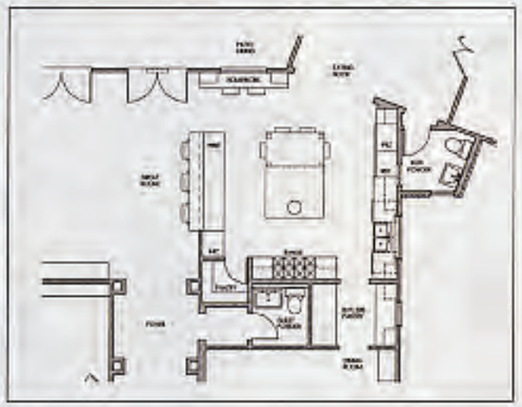
added to the top of the shelves to soften the look of the piece and help it blend in with the vintage aesthetic.

A bi-level bar between the kitchen and neighboring great room provides the separation of spaces that Suzie desired. "My kids eat breakfast there," she says. "This is also a great area for entertaining. We can set up drinks and appetizers and everyone can socialize, even while I am in the kitchen." A U-line beverage center sits under the corner of the bar in the kitchen, providing an easily reachable place to store cold drinks for the kids and guests.

The homeowners chose natural soapstone for the counters and bar. Suzie says, "I love its history; it's been used in farmhouses forever. Soapstone is a great material—it's not porous so it doesn't stain. It is soft, so it scratches and nicks up easily, but I think that just adds to the vintage look of the kitchen."

The floor is crafted of hand-selected white oak with a blend of quarter-sawn oak. A satin polyurethane finish protects the floor. Suzie says, "We have three kids and a dog, and the wood floor stands up really well."

In one corner of the kitchen, Tink-Fox designed an eating nook. With the Gilchrist children's hectic sports schedules, it's not always easy to enjoy meals together, but Suzie felt it important to try. "We use the table for eating dinner together at least a few nights a week," she says. For a farmhouse feel, Randy Boyd paired wicker chairs with a dark wood table. The faux kerosene pendant lamp adds vintage charm.



Around the corner from the kitchen is the laundry room. In addition to its standard duty, this space is also used for gift wrapping and crafting. The blue-and-white checkerboard floor and blue walls create a cheery working environment.

Just outside the kitchen is a large patio cooking and eating area. John Gilchrist and builder Boland worked closely together to build the perfect outdoor entertaining area. Suzie says, "This is my husband, John's, domain. He loves to entertain out there."

The kitchen is truly the heart of the Gilchrists' home and perfectly suits their busy family. From its classic lines and vintage touches to its modern appliances and efficient center island, the family enjoys the results of its well-planned design.

SEE SHOPPING GUIDE, PAGE 94.

Caring for Soapstone

Soapstone is a natural stone with a unique quality—it does not absorb stains. It is softer than marble or granite, but any nicks and scratches can be easily sanded out. It will darken over time; applying mineral oil to the surface will help it to darken evenly. This durable stone requires little care. Here are the basics of its maintenance:

Cleaning soapstone: Any kind of basic cleaner can be used to clean soap stone. However, because your countertop will be used for food prep, consider using a food-safe soap like Dove or Palmolive.

Oiling soapstone: Though not required, rubbing the surface of your soapstone countertop will enhance its deep color and add a slight sheen. If using mineral oil, choose one that is food grade, then rub it into the surface with a clean, soft cloth. Remove any excess oil using a clean paper towel. (Oiled cloths can be kept in a sealed plastic bag for repeated use.) Reapply the oil as desired.

Bee's oil is more of a paste. Rub it on the surface of the soapstone with a clean dry rag, let it sit for a few minutes, then buff it off. Bee's oil will impart a longer-lasting patina than mineral oil.

Removing scratches: Surface scratches can be disguised with an application of mineral oil. Deeper scratches and nicks need to be sanded out. The deeper the scratch, the lower number grit sand paper needed to begin sanding. For light scratches, begin with 300-grit sandpaper, then graduate to a higher grit like 400 for a finish that will be close to the original. For deep scratches, begin with 120-grit sandpaper, then step up to a medium grit, then a higher grit. Once the sanding is complete, rub mineral oil or bee's oil on the surface. You may have to reapply the oil a few times over the next couple of days in order to match the rest of the counter.