

Crowd Pleaser

The renovation of a small kitchen yields big results.

By Rob Duca
Photos by Jessica Delaney Photography

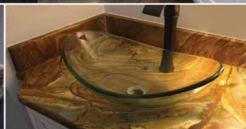
ARCHITECT: D. Michael Collins Architects
BUILD: Campbell Construction
KITCHEN DESIGN & PROJECT MANAGEMENT: White Wood Kitchens
LIGHTING: Lucia Lighting & Design



Joanne DiFrancesco and her husband, Bob, fell in love with Cape Cod years ago. "It's where my husband always vacationed as a child and where we went every summer with a group of friends," she says. "We loved the West Dennis/ Dennisport location as it was an easy drive from our home on the South Shore and offered all the amenities we needed."

So, when they purchased a ranch house in 2016, they knew it would be a place where their two grown children, extended family and friends would want to visit. DiFrancesco also realized that the small, outdated kitchen would require a complete renovation. "We love to entertain and knew early on that we'd need a kitchen/dining area that would be able to accommodate a good amount of people, depending on who was visiting at any given time," she says.

The 8-foot center island seats four and includes storage drawers, oven and a wine and beverage cooler.



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An 8-foot sliding glass door, originally located in the sunroom, was relocated to the back wall of the new dining area to provide more natural lighting along with easy access to the new backyard patio.

Kitchen expansion

The original kitchen, which measured approximately 10 feet by 14 feet, was a 1960s-style L-shaped space located at the rear of the house, with dark cabinets, knotty-pine paneled walls, linoleum flooring, little

counter space and barely enough room for a small kitchen table. It was only accessible through the living room and a third bedroom situated between the kitchen and the hallway.

The goal was to expand the kitchen space while retaining a third bedroom. For help, DiFrancesco turned to D. Michael Collins Architects of Catamnet and South Natick, Massachusetts, who suggested removing the

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—Joanne DiFrancesco

wall between the kitchen and the dining room and opening up the third bedroom to create an open floor plan, meanwhile converting an existing sunroom into a new bedroom, Collins also recommended relocating an 8-foot sliding glass door that was originally in the sunroom to the back wall of what was to become the dining area of the new kitchen, thus allowing light to stream into the room and providing access to a new backyard patio. “When we purchased the house, the first thing my husband did was take Mike through it. He knew right off the bat what we needed to do to make the house function the way we wanted it to.”

Once the plans were drawn, Gail O’Rourke, owner of White Wood Kitchens in Falmouth and Sandwich, was brought in to turn DiFrancesco’s vision into reality. “It’s always a challenge to create a large kitchen in a cottage,” O’Rourke says. “The goal was to be able to entertain large volumes of people in a small space, while also trying to design enough room for storage, seating and appliances so the kitchen was still serviceable.”

Strategic placement

With all that in mind, O’Rourke recommended tucking the cooktop into a corner instead of placing it on the new 8-foot center island, which seats four and includes storage drawers, oven and a wine and beverage cooler. Now, the cooktop is close enough to be handy but far enough away not to intrude on social gatherings. “I went back and forth on that,” DiFrancesco says, “because even though it’s nice to be cooking and to be able to converse with people on the other side of the island, the area can get really hot. Putting it in the corner was the perfect place for it and gave me so much more counter space on the island.”

Team effort

DiFrancesco calls the renovation, which also included Campbell Construction in South Dennis, “a real team effort.” She was especially appreciative of how O’Rourke took the time to discuss in detail any potential changes before making decisions.

“Gail gave me a ton of ideas,” she says. “I’m one of those people who know what I like when I see it but can’t always visualize it. Gail was great at walking me through it in order to understand how I

was going to live in the kitchen. We talked things out, so she knew exactly what I wanted.”

Coastal colors

DiFrancesco knew she wanted to decorate the kitchen in a coastal theme befitting its location, so the room is awash in hues of white and navy blue. The island countertop features a subtle pattern of gray, white and blue quartz, while the remaining counters are navy blue, matching the wood of the island. DiFrancesco preferred quartz for its durability and easy maintenance. A white tile backsplash continues the Cape Cod theme. Hanging over the island are three pendant lights from Lucia Lighting & Design in Lynn. The same fixtures are used in a hanging, tiered pattern over the dining table. “I really wanted lights that were not seen in every kitchen,” DiFrancesco says. “Lucy Dearborn from Lucia recommended several great choices. These were perfect for the size of the island and dining table. They are definitely one of the standout features.”

Special features

Another innovative idea was to build a beverage/coffee station into a wall alongside a dark blue, 8-inch-wide floor-to-ceiling pantry. The beverage/coffee station has three small drawers on each side, space for a coffee maker, a shelf for coffee cups, hanging wine glass rack and slots to store eight bottles of wine.

“Behind that wall are stairs leading to the basement, so we couldn’t take down the wall,” DiFrancesco says. “I love the coffee nook, which has drawers for storage, and the navy floor-to-ceiling pantry was another great idea [O’Rourke] had for what would have been an empty space.”

An existing kitchen window was retained for aesthetic reasons. “From the hall you can look through that window to the backyard, which makes the room appear larger,” O’Rourke says.

The now 20-foot-by-14-foot kitchen was completed last summer, just in time to host a dinner for more than 30 friends who were on the Cape in August for the wedding of a friend’s son. “That would never have been possible before,” she says. “My husband and I are totally thrilled with how the kitchen and entire home came out.” 🍷