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What's Cooking



EVERETT & SOULE



CHARLES CLAYTON CONSTRUCTION

HOMEOWNERS ARE
ADDING SPACE,
MIXING FINISHES
AND DOUBLING UP
ON EVERYTHING.

By Teresa
Burney

When they first bought their Longwood home, Beth and Al McKenna thought the 1970s-era kitchen seemed dated but large enough. Then, eight years ago, their triplet boys and three corresponding highchairs came along.

"They were really crammed in there," recalls Beth.

Still, the couple coped with the forced coziness until a few years later, when they brought home twin 15-month-old girls, adopted from a Russian orphanage. At that point it became abundantly clear that something had to be done about the cramped quarters.

"We were all crowded around one tiny table that would seat four comfortably," Beth says.

The remodeled kitchen in this Winter Park home was a 2005 Aurora Grand Award Winner for Charles Clayton Construction. It now sports an English manor ambience as well as two islands—a lower one for food preparation and display and a higher one for casual, in-kitchen dining. Designer, Rick Grinder of Designerrick.

So the McKennas planned an overdue home renovation that would include doubling the size of the kitchen and replacing the tired cabinetry, outdated appliances and Formica countertops. They hired Jonathan McGrath

Construction, a remodeler based in Longwood, to do the work.

Six months later, the work was complete and the family of seven had a nine-foot-long, granite-topped bar to gather around for casual meals. They also had two ovens, two dishwashers and two giant refrigerators.

"Now we can easily get 16 in our kitchen to eat," says Beth McKenna. "It was well worth the wait."

Kitchen remodels are among the most popular home-renovation projects, contractors say.

"Clients frequently want a bigger kitchen," says Marion McGrath of Jonathan McGrath Construction. Plus, she adds, they often want walled-off kitchens in older homes opened up to the family's main living area.

The kitchen is usually the most expensive room to remodel. And living in the home while the work is under way can be difficult, to say the least.

However, unlike many other remodeling projects, for which homeowners can rarely recoup their full investment, a kitchen makeover will frequently return more than 90 percent of its cost when the home is resold, studies show. In the meantime, homeowners get to enjoy a more comfortable—and aesthetically pleasing—space for cooking, eating and entertaining.

Not only is the McKennas' kitchen functional, it's also tricked out with some of the hottest equipment, fixtures and finishes available today: double appliances, granite countertops, mixed-finish cabinetry, faucets in an oil-rubbed bronze finish and a huge island.

With many floor plans now designed around the kitchen, the island has become a true household hub, designers say. Often the island is where fami-

lies dine, children do homework and guests perch during parties.

As a result, islands have become more elaborate. Many are ornamented with extensive woodwork details and outfitted with everything from sinks and cooktops to refrigerators and second dishwashers.

"That's the place where a lot of

creative things are happening," says McGrath.

For instance, some families are opting for multiple food-preparation areas, including secondary sinks, according to Victor Farina of Farina & Sons, a remodeler based in Winter Park.

"Double ovens are as popular as ever," Farina says, "but sometimes one



The owners of this 1930s home near Lake Davis wanted to preserve its charm while enlarging its outdated kitchen. So the

space was reconfigured to bring

the kitchen to the center of the home, where

it's accessible from the living room, dining room, family room,

sunroom and master bedroom. The project also included installation of oak flooring and stained cabinetry coupled with distressed pieces painted a mellow sage to suggest a room that had evolved over a long period of time. Designer,

Architectural Artworks; contractor, PSG Construction.

KITCHEN REMODELING: A SURVIVAL GUIDE

Beth McKenna has one piece of advice for families planning to live in their home during a major kitchen remodel: "Go away on vacation as long as you can."

Beth and Al McKenna and their five small children lived without their kitchen for four months during a six-month makeover that also included renovations to the rest of their home.

Jack McGrath, whose company, Jonathan McGrath Construction, remodeled the McKenna home, suggested they move out during the work. But, like many people remodeling their homes, the McKennas didn't want to incur the extra cost.

When vacating isn't an option, remodelers do what they can to help families survive life without a proper kitchen. Often that means fashioning a temporary space for food preparation.

"Jack can get pretty creative," says his wife and business partner, Marion. "Usually he finds a place for family members to have a small table, the refrigerator, a microwave and a hot plate. But we tell our clients up front that these are custom jobs, and they have to be patient. They adapt."

At first, families are typically excited by the novelty of the renovation work. "Then by the middle, they are really tired of it and we'll send them a gift certificate to their favorite restaurant," Marion McGrath adds.

Stephen Gidus of PSG Construction says his company often offers to build an elaborate temporary kitchen for customers whose new kitchen won't be available for months.

"When you're displaced from your kitchen and you don't even have a place to make breakfast, it becomes very disruptive," Gidus says, "especially if there are children in the house."

PSG has gone so far as to create a plywood-wall kitchen within another room in the home, installing sinks, stoves and refrigerators and even hanging the old cabinets.

"Sometimes the cost of doing that will be less than the inconvenience and costs of going out to eat all the time," Gidus says.

If the client doesn't go for a temporary replacement kitchen, PSG usually finds somewhere in the home to set up the bare necessities, such as a refrigerator and a microwave. Laundry rooms often work, especially if they have a sink, he says.

"I've never given birth," says Gidus. "But I'm told it's like that—nine months of pain. But when the baby is born, you forget about it."



JONATHAN MCGRATH CONSTRUCTION



JONATHAN MCGRATH CONSTRUCTION

Beth and Al McKenna doubled their kitchen space and replaced dated cabinets, appliances and Formica countertops. The family of seven now has a nine-foot-long, granite-topped bar to cozy up to for casual meals along with two ovens, two dishwashers and two huge refrigerators. Contractor, Jonathan McGrath Construction.

Their makeshift kitchen during the renovation included a microwave and a refrigerator in the garage. Because there was no sink, meals were served on paper plates.

"We usually tried to wing breakfast and lunch," says Beth. "At first we went out for dinner, but with five children that got old fast."

Not to mention expensive.



Gooseneck faucets, like this one from Systema, are beautiful and practical. For example, they make filling deep pots quick and easy.

backsplashes adorned with metallic tiles. And the choices have expanded beyond the shiny silver of stainless steel, chrome or nickel to more rustic-looking, oil-rubbed bronze faucets and copper sinks.

But don't think you have to discount standard chrome.

"Chrome is kind of timeless, neutral," says Grant Gribble of Gribble Interior Group, based in Orlando. "Not so [with] shiny brass finishes, which are way out now."

Buyers who pay big bucks for commercial ranges and other appliances are making them kitchen focal points. For example, they're accentuating ranges, with elaborate hoods. And they're not hesitating to mix manufacturers.

"Buyers may choose a Viking range and a Sub-Zero refrigerator for the same kitchen," Gribble says.

While some homeowners choose to display their high-tech appliances, others choose to conceal them with cabinetry. Some refrigerators have wooden cabinet fronts camouflaging the doors while dishwashers and warming ovens are being concealed behind drawers.

Gribble is also seeing more interest in contemporary design in some kitchens. "It's a boutique hotel look, with deeper, darker woods," he says. "It's more streamlined, warm and metropolitan."

Kitchen lighting is taking on a different tone as well. Gone are the single

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Kitchen Craft



This redesign moved the kitchen from the center of the house into what was formerly an unused ballroom. Additions included a large wraparound island with seating, a formal dining room (foreground) and an intimate sitting area (background). The resulting space is perfect for large family gatherings and for entertaining guests. Designer, Lucia, Kassik and Monday; cabinets, Central Kitchen & Bath; contractor, PSG Construction.



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Dimmers are installed on many of these fixtures to tone down the lighting from operating-room bright to ambient mood lighting. That's especially important when kitchens adjoin family rooms.

There's not just one dominating kitchen design trend anymore, says Farina. "For a while, it was all about the wooden cabinets," he says. "Then it was the granite countertops. Then it was the appliances, then the flooring. Now it's about everything."

With so many choices for kitchens, the task of choosing fixtures and finishes for a renovation can be daunting.

Stephen Gidus of PSG Construction, based in Winter Park, didn't fully appreciate how difficult it is to navigate all the choices until he renovated his own home.

"It really enlightened me," he says. "It shed a lot of light on what the customer goes through in the selection process. It really is time-consuming." Even Gidus, an award-winning remodeler and custom homebuilder, got a little help from his company's kitchen designer.

"Yes, absolutely, get some help," says Gribble, adding that even do-it-yourselfers can get some design assistance at home-improvement stores and on the Internet. "It's a lot for a person to take in, and there are people who design kitchens all day long."

McGrath agrees: "It's so important that you get someone to help you who knows what they're doing, so they can help you get a kitchen that works for you." 🌱

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