

kitchen warmth



The remodeled kitchen of designer Sally Ross's 1907 house stands ready to dish up holiday memories

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A FULL YEAR OF PATIENCE, persistence and pluck has finally paid off: At long last, Sally and George Ross have a new kitchen that fits not only the way they and their two children live, but also the kind of house they live in—a gracious old Colonial Revival home in New Jersey. “What we had was a 1950s kitchen in a 1907 house,” recalls Sally Ross, a designer. The goal, though, wasn’t to pull off some line-for-line reproduction of a period kitchen. That would have been impractical as well as inappropriate. Instead, they set out to strike just the right balance between vintage style and contemporary convenience.

“Even though the kitchen is just 10 by 22 feet,” says Sally, “the whole project took a year to do. We did it in stages so that we could afford the things we really wanted, and because we wanted to get it right.” But long before appliances and cabinets went in, the old kitchen, with



Vintage details in the breakfast area and kitchen include painted wood cabinets with nickel-plated bin pulls and knobs, 2-inch-wide bleached wood window blinds, mahogany countertops and linoleum floors. Above, left: Treats served with old-fashioned charm.



IT TAKES TIME
By doing things in stages, the Rosses got their dream kitchen. Drawback? The renovation took a year. "We wanted to be sure of the space plan before committing to the placement of the cabinets," says Sally. Thus, after enlarging the raw space, they tried out the placement of their new range (right, top) and dishwasher (right, bottom), eventually deciding to move the dishwasher to the left of the sink. Next they added new windows. Only then did they install the newly crafted, "old-fashioned" cabinetry (above).



its fluorescent lights, small casement windows and vinyl floor, went out. "To find more space, we annexed a small storage area, a mudroom and the back porch," says Melanie Taylor, the architect for the kitchen. "That done, we had some room that allowed us to reposition appliances, devise a sensible floor plan and create a window-lined breakfast area."

Materials, in particular, reflect the twin aims of practicality and period grace. Most of the countertops—17 linear feet—are mahogany, an unusual but affordable and practical choice. A 1/8-inch-thick molding under the lip of the 3/4-inch counters makes them look substantial. Because wood isn't heat-resistant, black granite was used for countertops on either side of the stainless steel range. "It too is a natural material that's in keeping with the period style," says Sally.

Though brand new, the cabinetry, with its simple inset doors and drawers, is reminiscent of carpenter-made cabinets from early in the century. To maintain that neovintage quality, the cabinets were installed first and then painted ivory on-site. The interiors of two glass-doored cabinets and three open-shelf units were lined with old-fashioned beadboard, which was painted a mellow shade of sage. The matching sage and ivory floor tile is authentic linoleum—another material that evokes kitchens of the past. "Linoleum is made of wood flour, cork and linseed oil," says Sally, "and it fit in with my resolve not to resort to modern synthetic materials."

The breakfast area, a former back porch now lined with double-hung windows, takes the kitchen back to its real roots in Colonial America. It was inspired by Thomas Jefferson's tea room at Monticello. "In terms of performance," says Sally, "we needed a functionally modern kitchen. In terms of style, this is the kind of kitchen that preserves the integrity of the original design of the house."



swags

For an easy seasonal swag, wire an evergreen garland loosely to a curtain rod, letting the garland drape across the top of the window and trail down the sides.

scent recipe

Fill your kitchen with yuletide aromas: Simmer cloves, citrus peel, nutmeg, cinnamon sticks, ginger and water in a small saucepan on the stove.

color

Take advantage of your local produce section: For wreaths, mantels and centerpieces, use fruits and nuts. Create a fresh color scheme with lemons, limes, magnolia leaves and dark teal ribbon—or try pomegranates, plums and aubergine ribbon.

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The stainless steel sink has an integral drainboard that helps keep water off the mahogany countertops. The backsplash is capped with a 3-inch-wide ledge, a convenient surface for odds and ends; directly behind it on the 10-inch-deep windowsill, an herb garden grows.