



WRITER *LuAnn Brandsen*
 PHOTOS *Werner Straube*
 FIELD EDITOR *Hilary Rose*

RECIPE FOR *SUCCESS*

Blending Craftsman and Italian design elements, a once-dated Illinois kitchen becomes its owners' favorite place to be.



THIS PHOTO: "My favorite part of the kitchen is the vista of that beautiful work-of-art copper hood with the Italian-flavor tile behind it," homeowner Laura Scariano says. "I love cooking at that stove." OPPOSITE: A large island's counter space displays easy-to-grab snacks.



“I’D NEVER HAD A KITCHEN THAT I LOVED IN MY WHOLE LIFE,”

Laura Scariano says. Though she’d used numerous kitchens, none enticed her to linger once the dishes were done. So when she and childhood sweetheart Frank Bednarz reconnected and purchased a 1990s Craftsman-inspired home in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, for their blended family of eight, the couple immediately focused their attention on revamping the large but lackluster kitchen. “We wanted it to feel like a family room—a space I would be happy to be in whether I was cooking or not,” Laura says. As a nod to their Italian heritage, the couple also wanted to give the renovated kitchen a warm, Mediterranean feel.

Enter designer Rachel Alcorn, who kept within the existing footprint while addressing the need for additional storage and a more free-flowing space conducive to a large family. First on the to-do list was removing a peninsula topped with bulky glass-front cabinetry that separated the kitchen from an adjacent fireplace seating area. Next,

ABOVE: The smaller of the two islands is situated near the appliance wall and contains a handy prep sink, a warming drawer, and an oven. **RIGHT:** “I love dark colors with lighter, brighter accents,” Laura says. “I want the kitchen to feel cozy, but not heavy.” Sparkling glass pendants and creamy quartzite countertops balance dark cabinetry and black islands.

DESIGNER INSIGHTS: STAR APPEAL

Designer Rachel Alcorn explains the importance of choosing a room’s wow moments carefully.

• **Identify the stars.** Once the layout is determined, decide what the eye-catching features will be. Depending on the architecture of a space, opt for two starring design elements—three at the most.

• **Use pacing for effect.** Generally, it’s best not to concentrate the focal points. For instance, the typical kitchen layout puts a range hood and lighting in proximity, so choose one or the other to be the star. The same goes for countertops and backsplash tile.

• **Rely on a supporting cast.** Once Alcorn identified this kitchen’s range alcove and decorative ceiling beams as the starring focal points, she chose other design elements accordingly. Clear glass pendants, a receding charcoal wall color, and simple hardware play their roles beautifully without stealing much of the spotlight.





“IT’S COZY,
YET OPEN,
AND SO
COMFORTABLE.
I FEEL
CAREFREE IN
THIS KITCHEN.”

—LAURA SCARIANO,
HOMEOWNER

”

Alcorn designed a pair of hardworking islands—one for prep, the other for dining and storage—to replace a single central island. Extending and stockpiling an interior wall with panel-front appliances, a pantry, and a wet bar cleverly allowed the bank of windows on the opposite wall to remain intact. She tucked a pro-style range topped with a copper hood into an alcove at the far end of the room.

“Stylistically, it was a really delicate balance to express their Italian heritage while honoring the home’s Craftsman style and not making it feel like a period reproduction,” Alcorn says. “Fortunately, the two styles both feature a lot of natural wood that’s stained, not painted.” New maple cabinets stained dark gray with warm brown undertones play down the original orange-tinted oak flooring and cherry window trim. Decorative wood beams speak to both styles, while a striking terra-cotta tile backsplash behind the range delivers classic Italian flair.

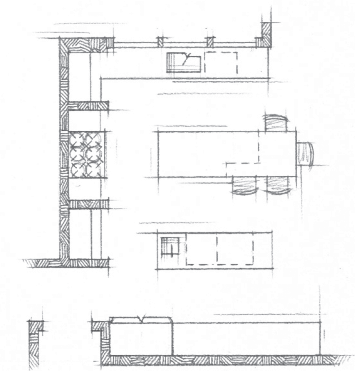
Laura credits the renovated kitchen for transforming her from a take-out expert to an adventurous cook. The highly efficient space makes it enjoyable to whip up family favorites such as wontons, Asian noodles, and light Mexican fare. “It’s cozy, yet open, and so comfortable,” Laura says. “I feel carefree in this kitchen and don’t worry about making a big mess because cleanup is so easy, too.” Neither does she worry about tiring of the space. “I wanted a kitchen that was timeless, and I know I’m good for at least 20 years!” she says.

Resources begin on page 100.

OPPOSITE: Featuring retractable doors, the large countertop cabinets flanking the range can easily remain open when desired. ABOVE RIGHT: “We knew from the beginning that we didn’t want to touch the windows,” designer Rachel Alcorn says. The tall threesome remain bare to showcase their beautiful profile and keep things light.



the plan



Designer Rachel Alcorn replaced a peninsula that divided the kitchen from a seating area with two islands—one for prep and one for gathering. The pro-style range tucks into an alcove, and a bank of original windows naturally illuminates the cleanup zone.