





# Smooth Sailing

A couple chart a new course for their floundering kitchen, relying on careful planning and a modest bump-out to right the flagship of their home and steer it into calmer waters.

WRITTEN BY **LYNNE MEREDITH SCHREIBER**  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **JIM WESTPHALEN**  
PRODUCED BY **KARIN LIDBECK-BRENT**

A graceful arch separates the kitchen and breakfast area, providing the kind of architectural feature the room was missing. The arch shape repeats in the fireplace and the backs of the chairs.



Norman Ward and his wife, Patricia King, are both doctors, but when Norman begins the day with breakfast and the paper in the quiet, comforting surroundings of their Vermont kitchen, he imagines himself in another line of work. “I feel like the commander of a ship,” Norman says. “I have an affection for old sailing vessels, and when I look at the arch over the peninsula in our kitchen, and how everything has its place, I feel like I’m standing in the transom of a sailboat.”

A shipshape kitchen is a far cry from what Norman and Patricia inherited when they bought their 1950s home in 2001. The entire place needed a major overhaul, especially the kitchen, which fell short on function, flow, and style.

A long, narrow footprint made the work space awkward, the sink and appliances were oddly positioned, and there was no delineation between the kitchen and breakfast area. Meager windows limited natural light—a real downer, especially during the short days of Vermont’s long winters—and the only other outdoor connection was a sliding door to a tiny deck.

Originally, the couple considered adding a small sunroom or three-season porch (with a fireplace) between the kitchen and the new patio they planned. But they weren’t sure that would solve their problems. Eventually, they opted for a bump-out that expands the breakfast area and incorporates the sunroom and fireplace ideas.

**ABOVE** The L-shape cooking area offers galley-style efficiency by keeping the sink, refrigerator, and range all within a few steps. The tablelike island boosts prep and storage space. **OPPOSITE** A peninsula separates the kitchen and breakfast area without isolating one from the other. The countertop is a convenient serving spot for buffet-style meals.



**smart strategy**

Moldings on the ceiling and around the cabinetry add depth and detail, creating architectural character that the old kitchen didn't have.

# Kitchen



## In the Details

Like many 1950s spaces, this Vermont kitchen offered minimal natural light and architectural character. Designer Mitra Samimi-Urich worked to boost both by paying close attention to details.

- **Furniture-style legs** set off the tablelike island, *above*, which features a cherrywood top, paneled sides, and open storage below. Samimi-Urich chose the wood top to provide a warm contrast to the granite perimeter countertops. The panels and turned legs complement the cabinetry, while the white-painted finish stands out against hardwood flooring.

- **Shelves and brackets** create pretty and practical display space along the walls, including this area near the fireplace, *above right*. Curves in the brackets echo the more prominent arch shapes in the kitchen, with the shelves maintaining the straight lines set by strips of molding. The soft white color of the shelves directs attention to the objects they hold.

- **Divided-light windows** in the sink area, *right*, shed natural light on this prep and cleanup space as they add traditional character. The light brings out other details in the kitchen, such as the sheen of the Uba Tuba granite countertops and the gleam of the brushed-nickel faucet.





“We only added 80 square feet—enough to add windows, increase the breakfast area, and create better traffic flow,” designer Mitra Samimi-Urich says. “Now it’s flowing, it’s comfortable, it’s airy and open. It functions well—every square inch of space is used. We tied in so many elements that it feels like, *Wow! It can’t be any other way.*”

Careful planning was key to the success. Having remodeled two previous homes, Norman was hands-on, doing his fair share of drawings, and the couple spent a lot of time discussing their wants and needs with Samimi-Urich. “There’s always tension when you’re doing a big project like this because you’re spending a lot of money,” Pat says. “In the end, investing in the design phase made all the difference.”

The layout is just right for the couple, and so is the style. It’s a pleasing mix of texture and color—milky-white wood cabinets and golden wall tones balanced by dark granite countertops and a rich

cherrywood island top. Strategic moldings and a graceful archway between the cooking and breakfast areas add architectural character.

“There are so many things happening in this kitchen—windows, the built-in fireplace, a broom closet, and multitiered cabinetry—but we needed all of these things to make the kitchen function well,” Samimi-Urich says. “I tied it together by creating gentle lines in the molding and trim.”

The result is a port of calm for the couple after their busy work days. They reconnect each evening as they fix dinner and enjoy the soothing atmosphere and efficient ease. “The kitchen has really facilitated enjoying our end-of-the-day time and cooking more,” Patricia says. “I love to go into my kitchen, switch the stove on, and feel cozy. Really, even doing dishes has ceased to be a chore because everything has its place.”

**RESOURCES ON PAGE 112**

**ABOVE** A modest bump-out to the back of the house allowed the kitchen to expand and incorporate a larger breakfast area. Walls of windows and sliding doors let abundant light into the once-dark space, suggesting the sunroom the homeowners originally considered.

## smart strategy

Stylish sliding doors provide access from the expanded breakfast area to a new patio, smoothing the way for indoor-outdoor kitchen gatherings.





OPPOSITE On the breakfast-area ceiling, built-up moldings mimic exposed beams, adding architectural interest and delineating the space. LEFT The built-in fireplace was inspired by a wood-burning stove the homeowners had in a previous dwelling. Its sleek profile hugs the wall, leaving a clear path between the kitchen and breakfast area. ABOVE A new patio complements the bump-out to the back of the house, providing an inviting outdoor option.

## PROBLEM

The small, narrow kitchen of a 1950s home lacked light, storage, and architectural character, and its floor plan complicated cooking and traffic flow.

## SOLUTIONS

- **Bumping out** the back of the home enlarges the kitchen and boosts natural light.
- **An archway and peninsula** separate the kitchen from the expanded breakfast area, while new spots for the range and refrigerator ease meal prep and traffic flow.
- **A new cabinetry configuration** improves storage and display space, especially on the wall opposite the sink.
- **A built-in fireplace** creates a hearthlike focal point without taking up floor space and crowding the kitchen.
- **Classic white cabinets**, some with glass fronts, pair with dark granite countertops and rich wood to convey a timeless look.
- **Wall and ceiling moldings** and furniture-style flourishes in the cabinetry add architectural character where there was little before.

