

A Challenging Kitchen Remodel

by Sandy McAdams

Remodeling a kitchen on a tight budget is always tricky. Sometimes the limitations of the existing layout and the expectations of the clients can make it seem nearly impossible to arrive at a good solution. That's how I was feeling as I approached the design of the kitchen remodel described here.

The kitchen in this small, 70-year-old, one-story house had last been remodeled in the '50s. Four doorways — to the basement, the hall, the dining room, and the porch — turned

the kitchen into a thoroughfare, with constant traffic through the work area.

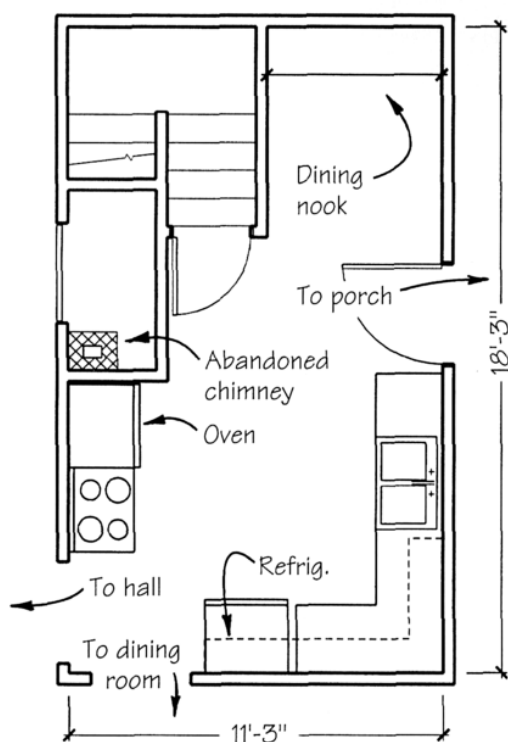
Gathering Info

As a first step, I used my kitchen planning questionnaire (see "Custom Kitchen Design: Gathering the Facts," *K&B*, 6/94) to get information from the clients. They were a young professional couple with one small child. Sally was the primary cook, and there was rarely more than one person cooking at the same time. The

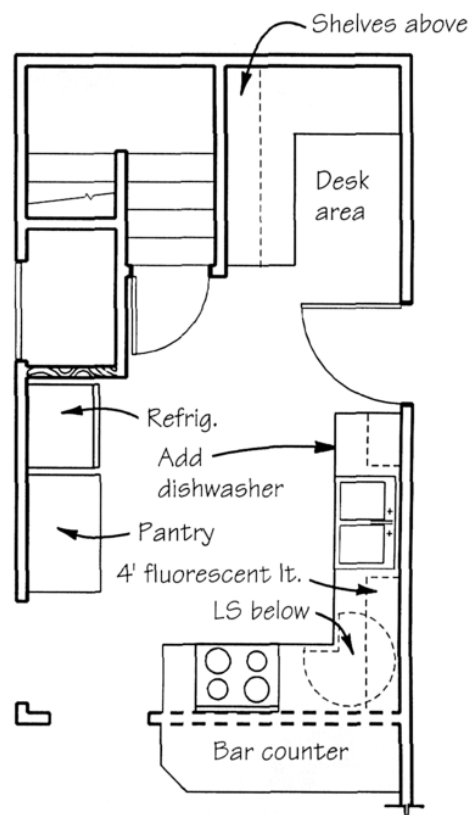
couple grocery shopped frequently, buying little in bulk, so they didn't require a large food storage area. Still, because the existing kitchen was so small, they wanted a pantry cabinet.

They also wanted an informal eating area in the kitchen, particularly because of their small child. Entertaining in the existing kitchen had not been feasible, but they wanted that option with their new design. The family had no other special needs, except that they hoped to move a desk and computer from a

Existing Floor Plan



Revised Floor Plan



Problems: The original kitchen had inadequate storage and no dishwasher. The small dining nook was crowded and uncomfortable and there was no space for entertaining guests in the kitchen. Also, the location of the stove placed the cook in a high traffic area. The clients also wanted a desk and computer area in the kitchen.

Solutions: By removing the abandoned chimney in the bedroom closet, the author was able to move the closet wall, making room there for the refrigerator and a pantry cabinet. This in turn allowed the wall between the kitchen and dining room to be replaced by a bar counter, opening up both rooms and providing for informal eating and entertaining. A lazy susan replaced the inaccessible corner cabinet, and the former dining nook became a desk area. A dishwasher and new lights and receptacles completed the makeover.

corner of their bedroom to a desk planning area in the kitchen.

Beyond that, they had the usual assortment of small appliances needing to be stored, but no other special storage requirements. They were also planning to replace all the major appliances except the refrigerator, which was only a few years old.

Likes and Dislikes

I always ask clients what they like and dislike about their existing kitchen. In this case, the list of dislikes was much longer. They liked having the kitchen sink under the window and they liked the door that opened onto the porch. This gave them easy access to the outdoors — particularly important because their young daughter often played outside.

Topping the list of things they didn't like was the lack of a dishwasher. They also had no disposal. The location of the existing cooktop made Sally feel as if she were cooking in the hall. Plus, there was very little work surface and none at all next to the cooktop or ovens. Access to the dead corner in the lower cabinets was a major frustration. The dining nook space was crowded and uncomfortable. As is often the case in older homes, the kitchen was poorly lit — one light fixture in the center of the room and another over the table.

The Redesign

There were two main limitations to the redesign — a \$15,000 budget (which included gutting the space, new framing, new flooring, new cabinets, and new lights, fixtures, and appliances) and tight zoning setbacks that would not allow even a modest space expansion to the outside. However, I did discover an old abandoned chimney in a closet next to the existing oven cabinet. Removing that and relocating the closet wall gained a few additional feet for the new kitchen.

Because the clients were right-handed, I would have preferred to locate the dishwasher to the right of the sink. To keep the sink under the window, however, it was best to locate the dishwasher on the left so that when it was open it would not interfere with the primary work area and the range. This also allowed me to place a lazy

susan cabinet in the corner, eliminating the dead corner space.

I opted for a slide-in range/oven rather than giving up precious storage space for a wall oven. This also allowed me to provide a full-height pantry cabinet for storing food and the small appliances that get only occasional use.

Opening Up the Space

Moving the refrigerator enabled me to open up the wall between the kitchen and the dining room. In a small house, this makes both rooms feel larger. Instead of the wall, I provided a 42-inch-high bar that could serve the need for informal eating for the family, as well as providing a place for guests to sit without getting in their hosts' way when they were entertaining. Sally particularly liked the fact that she would no longer feel closed in and isolated while preparing meals in the new kitchen.

By moving informal meals to the bar, the previous nook area became a perfect location for the desk planning area, with plenty of room to accommodate the computer.

The four doorways remained where they were, but traffic is less of a problem since the range was moved away from the hall door into the main work area. Because the house had an unfinished basement, venting the downdraft range and plumbing for the icemaker were not a problem. There was also good attic access for the new lighting layout. I also added several additional 120-volt receptacles — these are always in short supply in older homes.

Given the budget, this design worked well and met most of the clients' wishes. I was able to retain the features they liked about their previous kitchen and changed most of what they didn't like. The new plan provided better lighting, more work and storage space, a desk planning area, informal eating and entertaining space, a lazy susan in the corner, and a dishwasher and disposal — all without adding space to the house. ■

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