

by Ellen Cheever

KITCHEN DESIGN SOLUTIONS: BEFORE AND AFTER

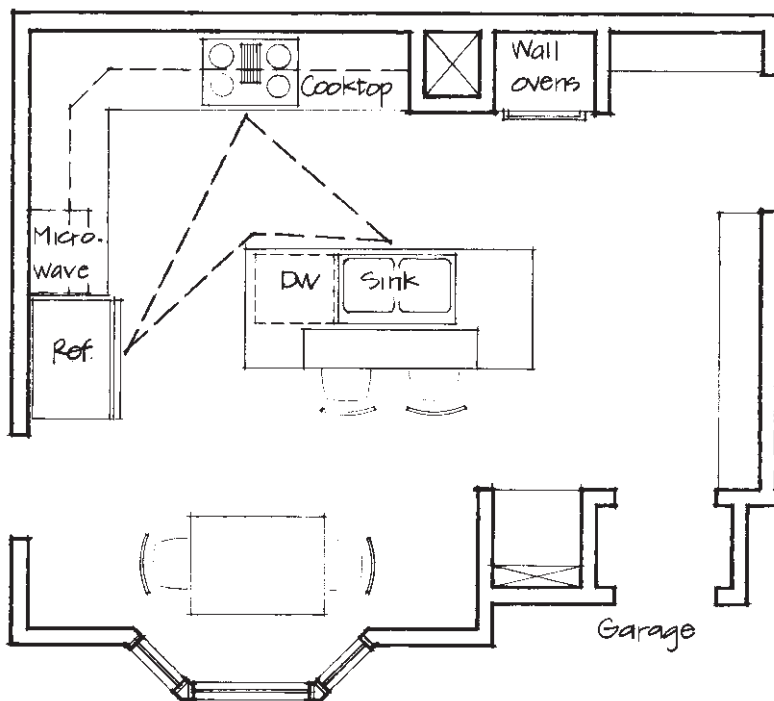
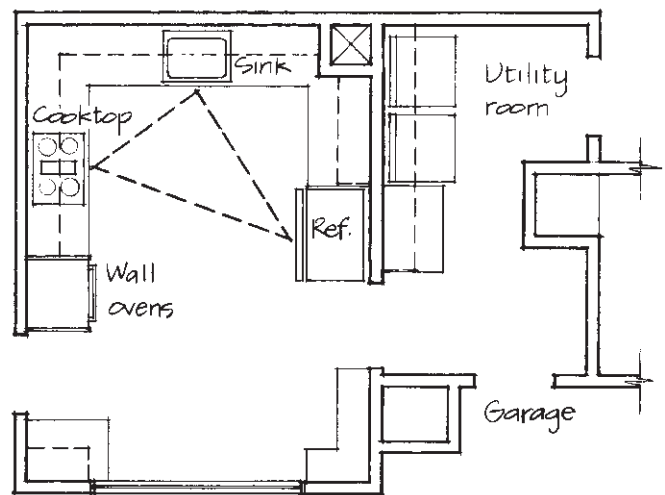
The kitchen remodels featured here were designed by kitchen specialists from across the country, and demonstrate the wide array of design solutions that can be brought to bear in any kitchen project. These are all actual installations — designed for real people with real budgets and construction limitations.

A good designer takes a disciplined approach to kitchen remodels, sorting through the many possible

design solutions and identifying which ones will work and which won't. A good designer looks at the room as a whole, and considers how it will serve the family members and fit within the home. Good kitchen design means more than filling the walls with boxes. It means studying the family, then creating a custom solution specifically tailored to the clients' lifestyles, dreams, budget, and construction constraints.

Before ►

In this project, the designer started with a maze of small rooms in the kitchen zone. The owners had hated the kitchen for years. The wife wanted a room where she could cook while her husband sat and visited with her. She also needed a place for two antique corner cabinets somewhere in the breakfast area. Her husband wanted to add an entertainment bar.



◄ After

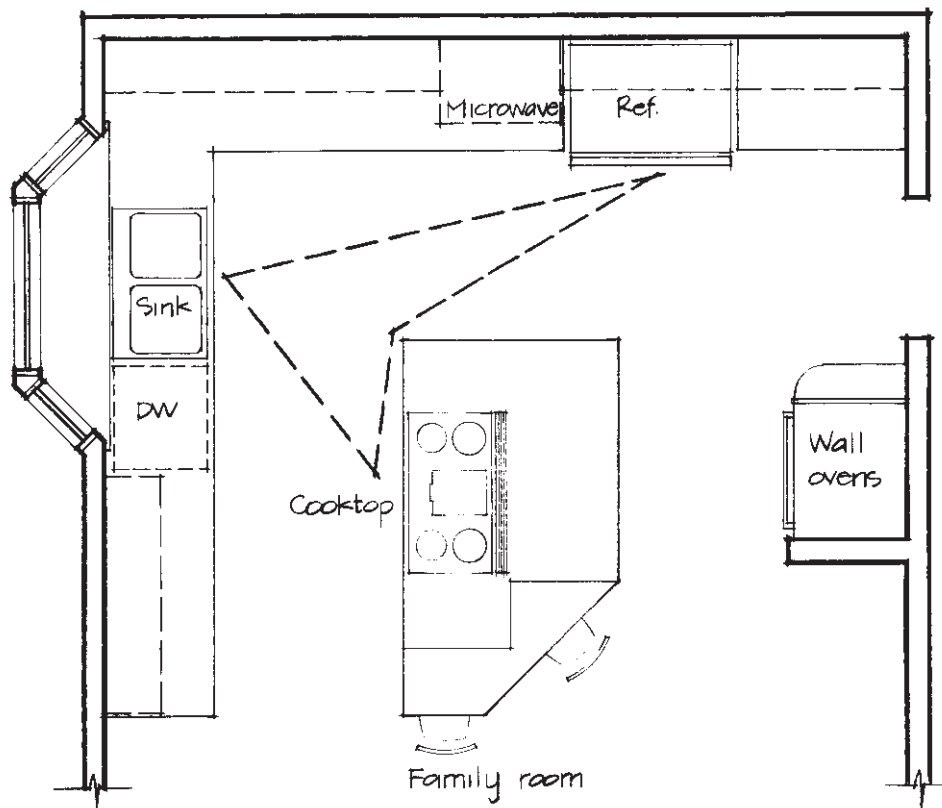
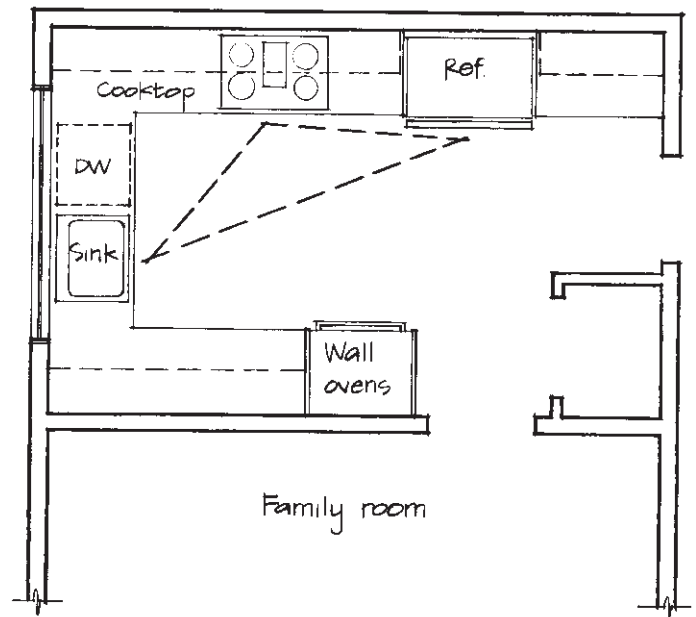
The solution for these clients involved some structural changes. The homeowners wanted to move the laundry equipment to a large closet in a little-used guest bedroom upstairs. The wall between the utility room and the kitchen was removed to create one large room.

These changes provided room for an L-shaped kitchen with an island. Instead of putting the cooktop in the island, the sink was placed there because the client did a great deal of fresh vegetable and salad preparation. In the new kitchen, the cook can stand at the sink and visit with her husband, who sits either at the island or at the small table in the alcove. An 18-inch-deep bar was added along an adjacent wall for the couple's entertaining needs.

Before ►

In this typical 20-year-old house, the designer started with a boring U-shaped kitchen next to the family room. The small, cramped kitchen was totally inadequate for a busy family. The clients wanted the kitchen and family room to be totally open to each another. However, the clients were concerned about the ceiling transition because the kitchen had a flat, 8-foot-high drywall ceiling, while the family room had a cathedral ceiling. The two rooms would also need different floor surfaces: carpet for the family room and hardwood in the kitchen.

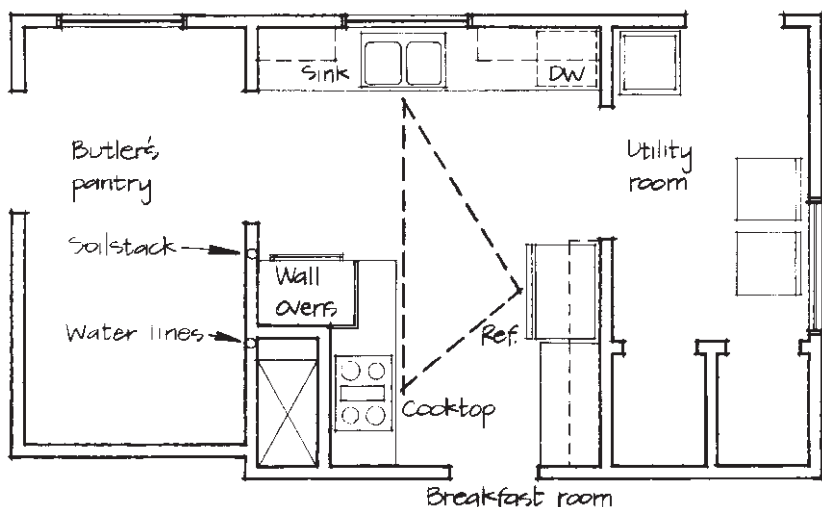
The clients did not want to make major structural changes and had been told that there was no way to dramatically improve the space without investing a huge sum of money and completely rearranging both rooms.



After ▲

Before removing the partition wall between the two rooms, a place had to be found for the wall ovens. The solution was to tuck them into a corner. With the wall gone, there was room for a cooktop island. The angled eating counter at the end of the island helps tie the two rooms together, so that the transition in the ceiling from flat to cathedral seems more natural.

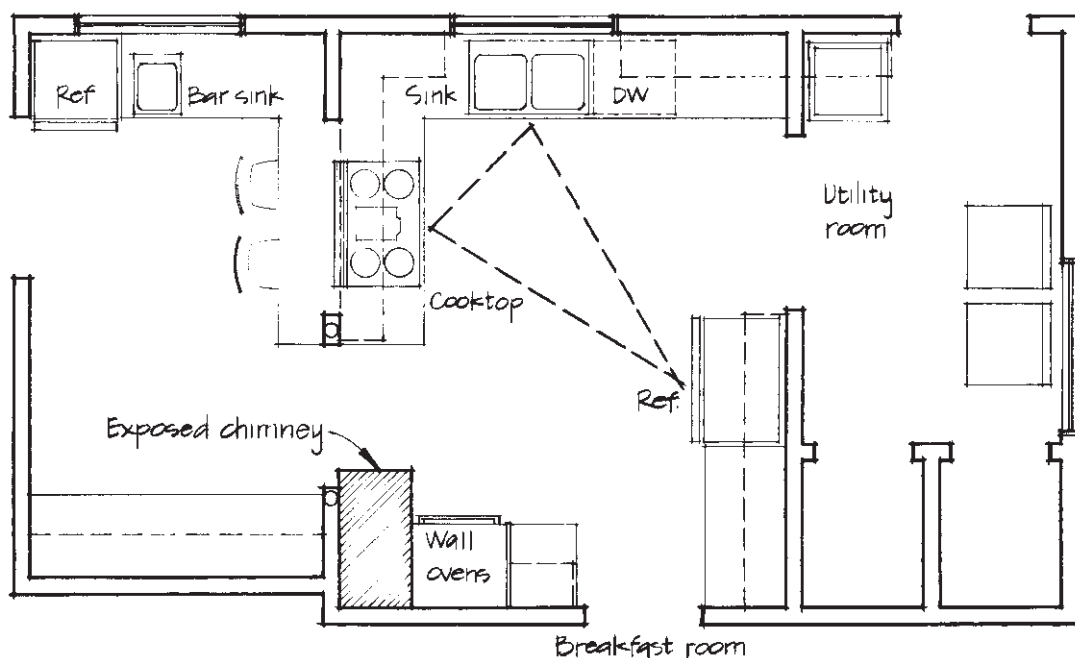
Although the new oven location is outside the work triangle, this is acceptable because the client does not use them a great deal. The microwave, which is adjacent to the refrigerator, gets far more use. The wall cabinets to the left of the sink have glass doors, creating display storage visible from the family room. A tall pantry cabinet to the right of the refrigerator adds extra storage space.



◀ Before

This kitchen was in a stately 60-year-old Spanish hacienda house. The main grocery entrance was through an awkward utility room into the T-shaped kitchen. A butler's pantry separated the kitchen from the dining area. The gas cooktop and ovens were awkwardly positioned, and traffic through the work triangle was a problem.

The clients wanted to combine the butler's pantry and the kitchen, and create a separate bar area at the same time. But the wall between the two spaces concealed the soil stack and water lines serving an upstairs bath — prompting some designers to say that the remodel was impractical.



After ▲

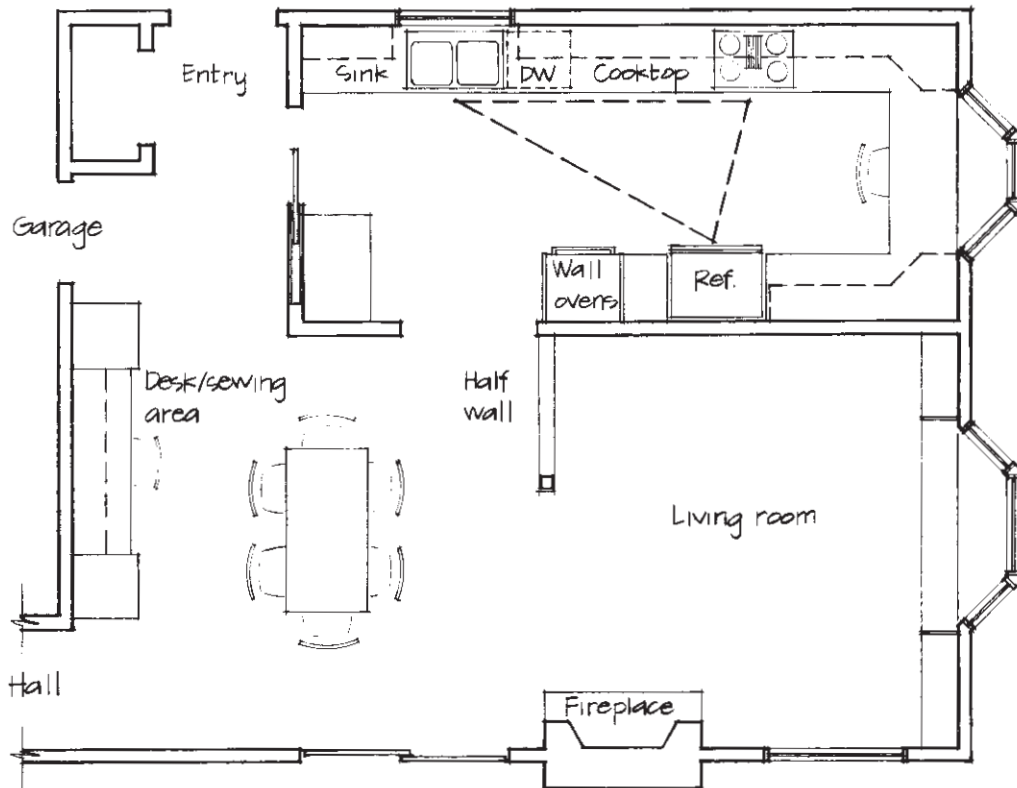
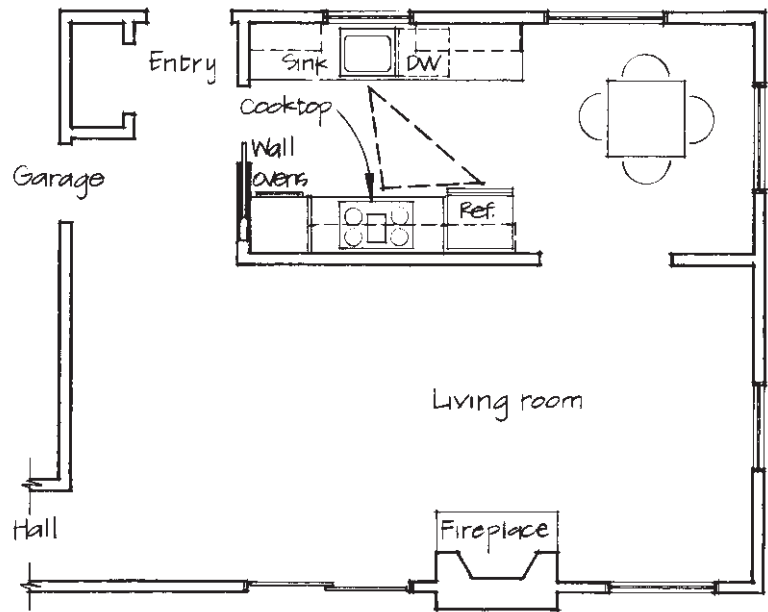
The designer's solution managed to work around existing constraints and still meet the clients' needs. First, the doorway from the kitchen to the butler's pantry was moved over so that two L-shaped counters could be created. This provides a much more workable arrangement between the cooktop and the sink, and allowed for an L-shaped entertainment bar. A 42-inch-high counter between the bar area and the kitchen area creates

separate spaces, although communication and conversation between the areas is now possible.

The soil stack remained in its original position, and is concealed in a decorative post that ties it to the pass-through between the cooktop and the bar. The water line was relocated, at minimal expense. The old brick chimney was repointed and left exposed next to the wall ovens, adding an interesting visual element to the finished space.

Before ►

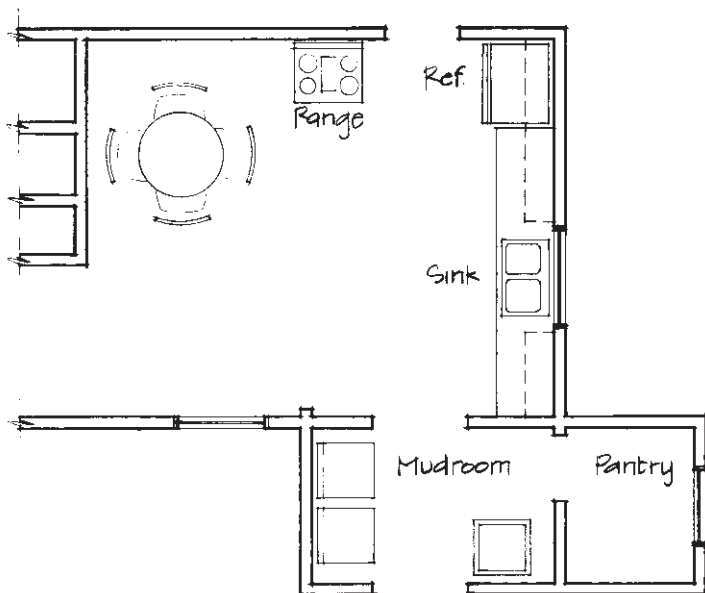
The owner of this rather mundane corridor kitchen had been told that the existing arrangement was “all that you could do with the space at hand.” But after living in the house for 20 years, the single-parent client still hoped for an improvement. She wanted a lot of storage space and a better dining area with a bigger table. This was important because the client was a teacher, and enjoyed crafts. She needed space for grading homework at night and for weekend craft projects, as well as a space for her small family to stretch out in.



After ▲

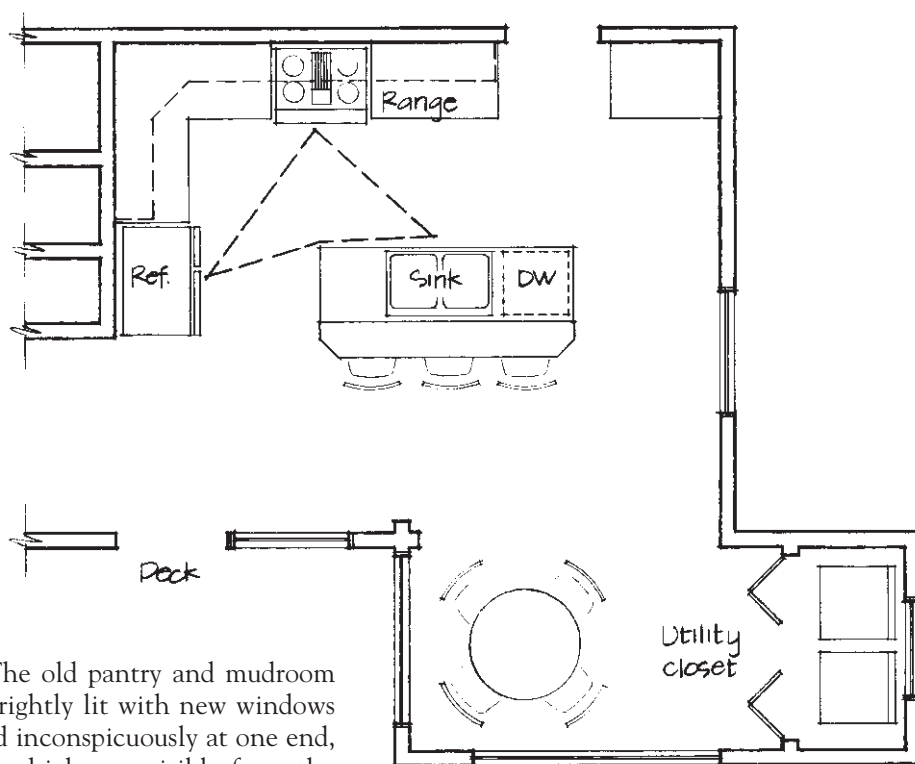
In this case, the designer had to think about the entire public area of the home. The new plan eliminates the kitchen dining area, moving it to the living room zone, and moves one kitchen entry to create a large U-shaped kitchen work area. A desk

designed from standard kitchen cabinets flanks the dining table and provides desk, craft, sewing, and hobby storage. Twelve-inch-deep wall cabinets at the end of the living room provide additional book storage.



◀ Before

The owners of this large, stately Victorian home were planning a major remodel. Because the home was in a historic district, they were limited by zoning regulations regarding exterior changes to the building — which somewhat limited what could be done with the kitchen. The main complaint with the kitchen was the lack of storage and counter space in the work area — typical of unrenovated Victorian homes. Traffic also cut through the middle of the kitchen work area.



After ▶

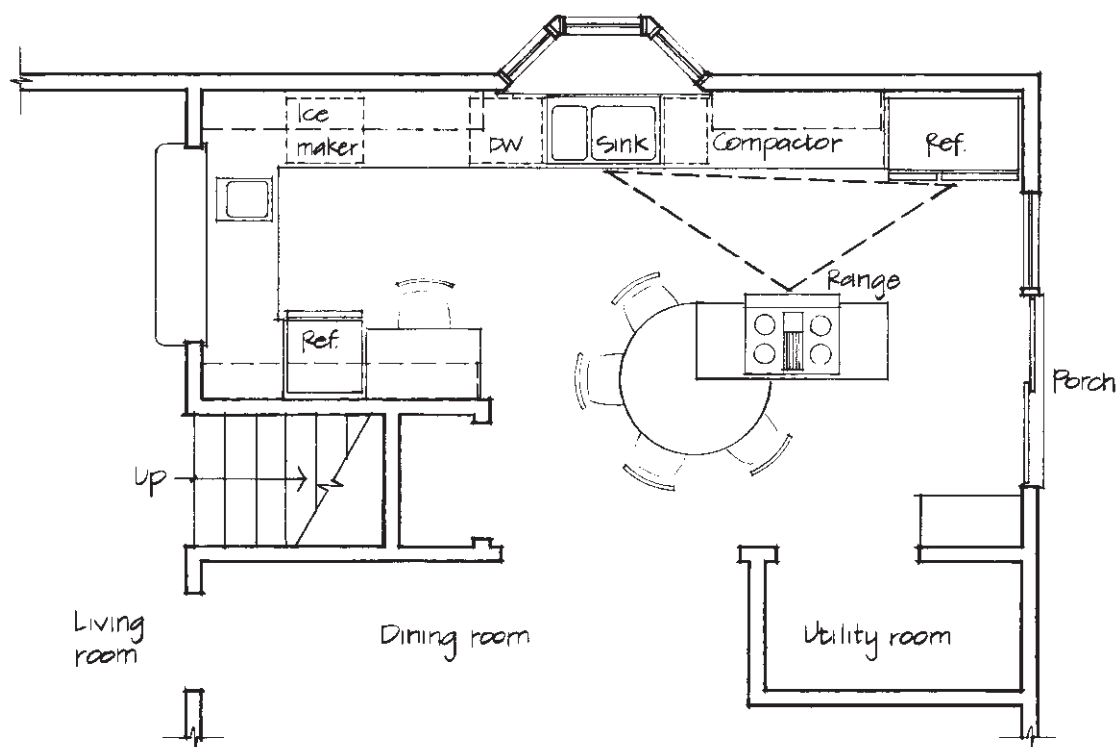
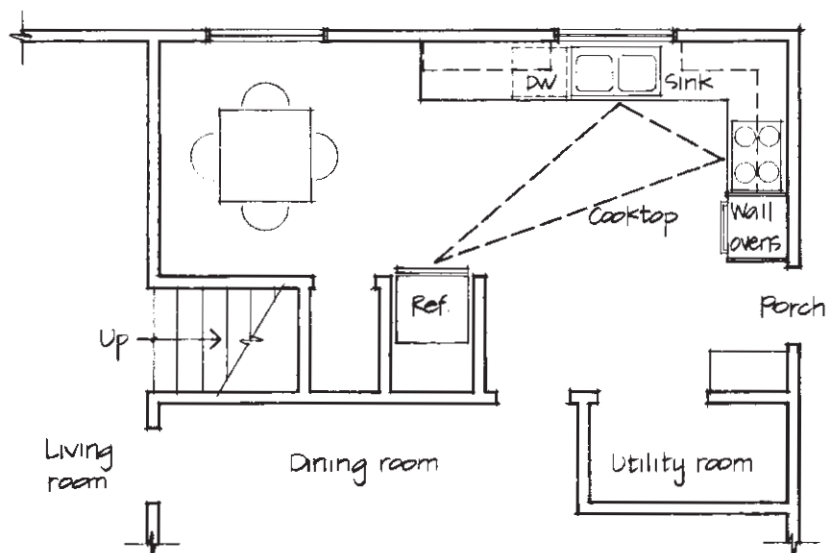
The designer's solution was simple. The old pantry and mudroom were converted into a breakfast nook, brightly lit with new windows on the back. The laundry closet is tucked inconspicuously at one end, preserving the original pantry window, which was visible from the street and had to remain so that the Historical Society would approve the renovation.

A new atrium door to the rear deck helps to reduce the amount of traffic from outside into the kitchen. People entering the back door can now turn left directly into the living/dining area of the house.

Moving the breakfast table into the nook made room for a gracious L-shaped kitchen with an island. This created an ideal working kitchen, with no traffic through the work triangle.

Before ►

The designer of this project was challenged by a long, narrow kitchen that was completely isolated from the dining and living rooms. The clients frequently entertained and wanted their new kitchen to flow more naturally into the living and dining areas, so they could include their guests during the preparation stage. Another complaint was that the refrigerator was in an awkward place, too far from the main work area, and had no adjacent counter space. The existing kitchen was also poorly lit.



After ▲

Because of the location of the staircase, the kitchen could not be completely opened to the other rooms. So the designer created a “great room” feeling for the kitchen itself. A wider doorway to the dining room and a serving bar opening into the living room help connect these spaces to one another, which greatly enhances the sociability of the

space. A new greenhouse window over the sink and a wall of glass leading to the porch allow for natural light to stream into the space.

Moving the refrigerator made a convenient work triangle possible. The bar and desk area at the end of the U-shaped kitchen are out of the traffic path and well out of the way of the primary cook. ■

Ellen Cheever, CKD, CBD, has been prominent for many years in the development of industry standards for kitchen and bath planning. Formerly Director of Educational Services at the National Kitchen and Bath Association, she is now Vice-President of Dealer Development at Heritage Custom

Kitchens in New Holland, Pa. This article was adapted from *Beyond the Basics: Advanced Kitchen Design*, published by the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA, 687 Willow Grove St., Hackettstown, NJ 07840; 908/852-0033).