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Designer Heidi Piron's transitional style for this enlarged kitchen incorporates a nod to the traditional as seen in the three-piece crown molding — fitting for a historic home with “amazing millwork,” she says. A large lantern-like light fixture illuminates the dark wood table and gray leather chairs that echo the kitchen's white-and-gray palette.

from dark to bright, narrow to open

Designer and architect transform a historic kitchen

Historic homes have many charms, but the kitchen is often the least of them, Heidi Piron says.

The designer, whose firm is Heidi Piron Design & Cabinetry in Summit, collaborated with architect Diana Hoffman to transform just such a kitchen — small, dark and narrow, Piron says — into a bright, inviting space with maximum functionality for a family of five.

Key to that transformation were two additions that Hoffman, a member of the American Institute of Architects and owner of Hoffman Architects in Summit, designed for the 1895 Dutch Colonial home in Summit. The first addition, along the side of the home, incorporated an existing mudroom

and enabled the architect to design a spacious new kitchen and breakfast room.

A second addition, at the rear of the home, accommodated a new mudroom and rear entry portico plus a new powder room to replace one that had been located in the old kitchen space. The former powder room was turned into a butler's pantry. Hoffman also eliminated a large fireplace to increase the width of the room and open up space for a back staircase that leads to the second floor.

Hoffman located the new kitchen's work triangle — refrigerator, sink and range — on a common wall with



The kitchen's focal point is a custom range hood in brushed stainless steel with polished metal bands. The classic white cabinetry has beaded insets. At the owners' request the leaded glass window, original to the home, was retained above the sink.

the dining room for a better flow between the two. She placed the island in the interior corner of the kitchen, which allowed space for the breakfast table at the outside wall near French doors that open onto a deck and patio. In the new configuration, the island has become "a command center," affording views of the breakfast area, the outside and all the comings and goings in the kitchen, Hoffman says.

THE FOCAL POINT

Piron's "starting point" in designing a kitchen is determining the focal point. In this case, she chose a custom range hood that she calls "a unique element that makes the space special and one-of-a-kind." The brushed stainless steel hood is rounded at the top and has bands of polished metal trim. The island faces the

hood and range—a far better configuration than if it faced a cleanup area, Piron says. "People do not enjoy looking at dirty dishes when seated at the island."

Piron calls the kitchen design transitional but with "a nod to the traditional feel of the home as well as details tweaked for a fresher, contemporary feel."

The classic, white beaded-inset cabinetry, for example, has simple, clean-lined pulls. There's also a stainless steel farm sink—instead of the usual white farm sink—and stainless steel toe kicks. The perimeter and island countertops are white honed marble, a matte surface that contrasts with the glazed porcelain subway tile on the backsplash.

Part of Piron's "nod to the traditional" includes her use of three-piece crown molding instead of the more common two-piece crown she uses in other kitchens.

details make the difference



“This Dutch colonial home has amazing millwork throughout,” she explains. “Additionally the kitchen ceiling is 10 feet high. The challenge in a kitchen like this is scale and proportion and blending it with the rest of the home.”

‘A JEWEL BOX’

Piron’s favorite part of the project is the new butler’s pantry, a small, narrow space open to the kitchen. She calls it a jewel box. “It was a jigsaw puzzle where everything had to fit together just right to work,” she says.

The designer placed the pantry sink in the corner — although it’s usually centered — to allow space for appliances, including an undercounter bar refrigerator and dishwashing drawers. She used the same style of cabinets as in the larger kitchen, but these include a mix of open and glass fronts to keep the room from feeling boxy. The countertops are wood; they provide warmth in the space and also evoke the wood countertops in historic kitchens. The backsplash is marble.

Perhaps the most distinctive design element, though, is the curved shape of the cabinetry, which “speaks to the capabilities of working with a custom cabinet maker,” Piron says. “It allows the eye to glide around the room.”

Robin Amster, a regular contributor to Design NJ, is a Madison-based writer and editor.

SOURCES design, Heidi Piron Design & Cabinetry in Summit; architecture, Hoffman Architects in Summit; custom cabinetry and range hood, Heidi Piron Design & Cabinetry and Premier Custom-Built in New Holland, Pennsylvania; cabinetry hardware, Merit Metal Products in Warrington, Pennsylvania; kitchen countertops, Atlas Marble & Granite in Springfield; butler’s pantry countertop, Grothouse Lumber in Germansville, Pennsylvania; kitchen and pantry backsplash, Waterworks; breakfast table and chairs, homeowners; breakfast area light fixture, Remains Lighting in New York City; appliances, Viking range, oven, microwave and warming drawer; Sub-Zero refrigerator; and undercounter refrigerator, Miele dishwasher.

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From left: Long, clean-lined pulls on the cabinetry are one of the contemporary details that are part of the kitchen’s transitional design. • Another is the stainless steel — instead of white — farm sink.

• The new butler’s pantry is a “jewel box” of a space, Piron says. Its curved cabinetry houses an undercounter bar refrigerator and dishwashing drawers. • A desk with ample storage above it serves as a message center for the home’s multitasking mom, Piron says.