

HGTV

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house



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kitchen chronicles



all i want for
christmas...

kitchen chronicles

...is a lively, festive kitchen!

When a Connecticut couple redid their kitchen, it became the whole family's favorite holiday hangout.

most days Robin and Ken Gestal's kitchen is where the couple cooks and eats dinner together, just the two of them. But come Christmastime, their six grown kids descend on their New Canaan, CT, home from all over the country. Along with playing catch-up over coffee and prepping meals, the family also makes the kitchen the headquarters for their 20-year-old cookie-baking tradition. But the room wasn't always so welcoming. When the Gestals bought the 1910 Colonial, the kitchen was the last place they wanted to be. "It was completely dated, with ugly white tile countertops, wood cabinets that had a strange shiny finish, and a stove with only two working burners," says Robin. So the Gestals worked with designer Christine Donner to give the space a roomier layout, updated features, and lots of warm, homey accents. "Now if you walk into our house during the holidays, it's a safe bet you'll find everyone in here," says Robin. And Bear, the family's golden retriever, wouldn't have it any other way!

granite countertops

Honed black granite counters line the kitchen's perimeter. "Granite has a simple look, but it's hardy," says Robin. "It's fine to put hot things right on it, and I just wipe it down with soap and water."

reclaimed wood

Three of the wood ceiling beams were in the kitchen when the family moved in. The Gestals kept them and added a matching perpendicular beam. The original pine floors—which had been scratched up by the family's dogs—had to go. Robin replaced them with tougher flooring made from reclaimed heart pine.

cream-color cabinets

The upper and lower cabinet banks are painted Casa Blanca by Sherwin-Williams. "We looked for a color on the cusp of off-white but not yellow," says Christine. The paneled fridge (at far right) is painted the same shade to blend in.

bronze pendants

A pair of 17½-inch bronze pendants from Circa Lighting add a warm glow to the room. "I was skeptical at first because we don't have high ceilings, but I love them," says Robin. "They look bold and give off great light."

cookbook library

Custom shelving next to the refrigerator holds Robin's cookbook collection and hides a big set of steel pipes. "We created a cabinet space about as deep as the refrigerator. The books sit up front, and the pipes take up the back half," says Christine.

I hope somebody drops a cookie.

chunky square island

Wraparound seating lets people face one another as they eat. The 89-inch-by-76-inch island is topped with a 2-inch-thick slab of butternut wood coated with a marine varnish to prevent moisture damage. The base is painted black (try Tricorn Black by Sherwin-Williams). Robin found the stools online for \$99 each (for a similar look, try walmart.com).

corner ovens

Much of the wall space was taken up with windows. To keep the ovens near the cooktop, they were installed in a corner at an angle, a trick you can get away with in a roomy space.



cozy banquette

This area serves as the breakfast spot when the kids are in town, and as the cookie-decorating station. "We started a tradition of icing sugar cookies two decades ago with just the family, and then the kids began bringing friends," says Robin. "Word spread, and now people ask, 'Can I come next year?'" A mix of solid and plaid pillows tops the 24-inch-deep seat.

built-in bar area

Beside the banquette is a cabinet holding glasses, wine bottles, and other holiday hosting supplies. Hidden behind the two bottom doors are a small refrigerator and an ice maker. The upper cabinets' fronts are covered with an oil-rubbed bronze wire mesh, and the bronze countertop, with an aged finish, matches the knobs and pulls.

There's a mini fridge in here!



FOR ADDITIONAL SHOPPING SOURCES, SEE PAGE 152.