

home



Walls were knocked down to enlarge this kitchen and utilize the beautiful windows and the garden view beyond.

Cooking Up a Kitchen

An antique cape takes a journey fueled by inspiration and destined for glory. On board, a six-burner Aga stove, marble countertops and stainless steel finishes. By Victoria Shouldis

The update gives a taste of contemporary, but a carefully chosen vent hood, lampshades and an island made from wide pine boards preserve the classic flavor of this antique home.

If you're someone who has long found meaning in the inner nature of food and family, you might worry that the smallest change could do damage to the soul of the proud but woefully small kitchen in your historic home.

Liz Barbour knows better.

This spring, Barbour, a professional chef and teacher who makes sophisticated but close-to-nature food (you can count on munching on at least a couple of edible native plants if you spend time with her), said good-bye to her charming but inadequate 12' by 7' galley kitchen in her 1774 Hollis home.

In its place? A thoughtfully designed, modern space that incorporates elements of its past; more than three times the square footage; huge windows and French doors that bring in the natural light of the day; state-of-the-art appliances; and a perfectly crafted

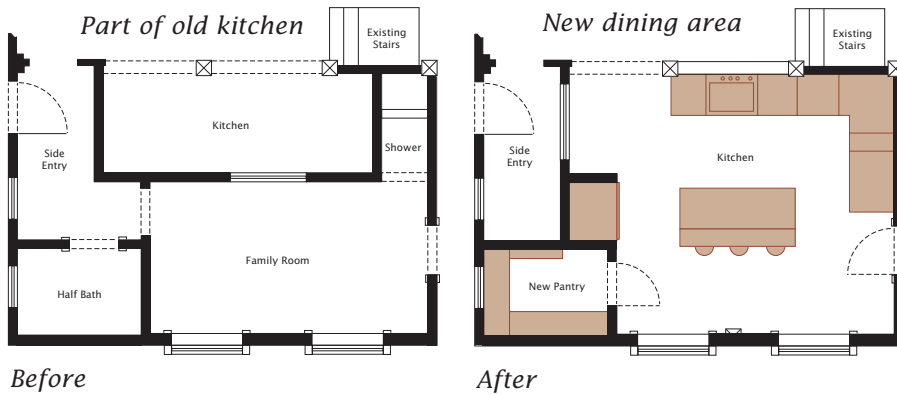
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The dining area is now adjacent to the kitchen. The painted floor ties the two spaces together with shades of yellow from the kitchen and gray from the dining area.



The six-burner Aga stove is not only functional for a gourmet chef, but an artistic statement, too. The backsplash is marble in a subway tile layout. The wall shelf is an antique that Barbour found and wanted incorporated into the new kitchen. All create the new-and-old look that she envisioned for the kitchen.



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Barbour could have had a cabinet installed beneath the stained-glass window, but preferred the look of antique furniture.

workspace that anticipates and meets every need Barbour could dream up.

Barbour bought her Hollis property in 1999. The home was built in 1774 by the Rev. Daniel Emerson, a cousin to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who also knew a thing or two about meditative surroundings. Best of all, Barbour found the home surrounded by land that could serve as the cottage garden she'd dreamed of having — replete with nearly infinite varieties of edibles.

Just as Barbour knows that everybody isn't born with the innate skill to grow sage, calendula (that's a tasty marigold used to enhance soups, rice and salads or as a burst of color for butters and cheeses) or to create rhubarb and raspberry crêpes for 100, she knew that redoing her kitchen the right way was going to require help. The kind of help she found at Vintage Kitchens in Concord.

"We went into their showroom and were walking around and we met Sue Booth. She has lived in older homes and done many renovations and kitchens and bathrooms in older homes; she got it right away," says Barbour.

A professional chef since 1992, Barbour made the decision three years ago to combine her cooking and communication skills. Through her business, The Creative Feast, she spreads her gospel: demystify, make cooking fun and keep it clear so that all skill levels catch on.

While Barbour doesn't generally offer lessons from her Hollis home, her kitchen there serves as her unofficial laboratory, recipe center and inspiration.

"I do a lot of recipe testing — I'm always dropping off one of my kids with a bag filled with samples and instructions 'Tell me exactly what you think,'" says Barbour. "My kitchen door is always open to anyone."

Barbour's kitchen also serves as the center of home and hearth for her four-person family. Or at least that's what she was hoping.

"I wanted a kitchen that met the needs of a working chef and was also functional and fit into the rest of the home," Barbour says. "We were able to accomplish all those goals."

Barbour found a kindred spirit in Vintage Kitchens' Sue Booth.

"She convinced us that we could do this without making too many structural changes and maintaining the level of charm," says Barbour. "At the same time, she knew a lot of design tricks to make quirky things stay in the house and work to my advantage."

Booth worked collaboratively with Barbour on design. On the Vintage Kitchens Web site (www.vintagekitchens.com), Booth talks about finding that balance with her customers: "Clients generally know how they want to work in their space. I consider myself a facilitator in helping them get there." The first step in getting there was deciding on the big structural changes.

Barbour's family happily agreed to give up a small family room off the kitchen in order to allow for expansion. Space from a half-bathroom would be home to a recessed pantry.



The pantry that looks like it has always been there features open shelving for display and conventional storage.

“I wanted a kitchen that met the needs of a working chef and was also functional and fit into the rest of the house ...”

One of Barbour’s main priorities was that the lovely, old stained glass window over the sink that served as a separator for the two rooms should be incorporated into the new space. Booth and Barbour also saved the two oversized, southern exposure windows in the old family room by designing around them and allowing garden views and natural light to flood in.

Beginning in January of this year, Barbour temporarily surrendered her chef’s hat — just figuratively, of course, as she continued offering lessons and demonstrations — while her old kitchen was gutted. The stained glass was removed mindfully and stored; inner walls were knocked down to make room for expansion; and the old ceiling — with its potentially troubling, overly wide rafters — was replaced.

Major electrical additions and upgrades were completed, plumbing rerouted and initial wallboard went up. And what did Barbour do with all that

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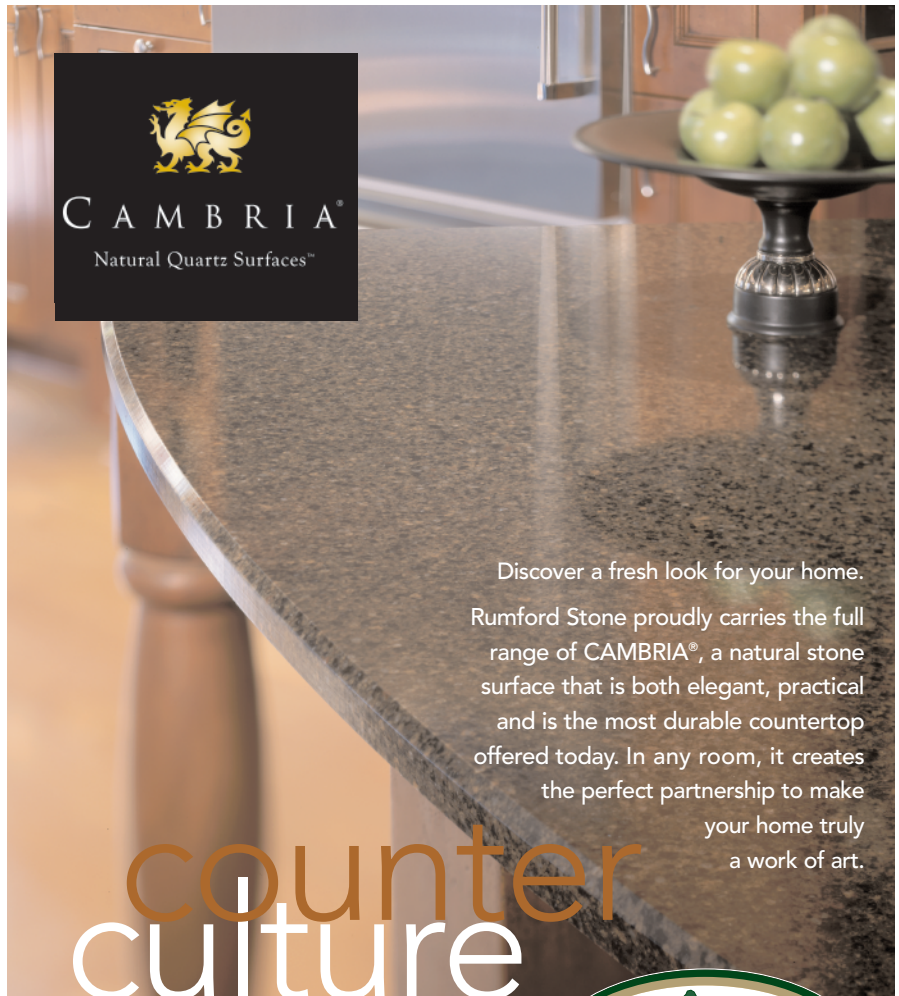


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“I’ve thought about all this a lot because I cook in other people’s homes regularly and I see all these beautiful kitchens ...”

time that she would have been spending slaving over a hot stove? She went shopping — shopping for countertops, cabinets, lighting fixtures and islands (the kind for your kitchen, not Gilligan’s).

“I’ve thought about all this a lot because I cook in other people’s homes regularly and I see all these beautiful kitchens — I’d work out how big the island should be, this many feet from sink to island, and I didn’t want to have to run around for any reason,” says Barbour. “Those experiences helped me make very important decisions. And it felt important to have a good designer to stop me from making mistakes.”

For appliances, Barbour ultimately chose high quality and understatedly elegant stainless steel: a dishwasher from Kitchen Aid; an Amana refrigerator (the kind with the freezer compartment on the bottom); clean-lined and sharp Whitehaus

faucets and sinks. And for her stove, an Aga Legacy: a six-burner, steel and high-gloss enamel, multi-function range that includes convection oven capability, special broilers and separate timers and delays for each function. This is a piece of equipment for the serious, serious cook.

“I love that I can be cooking multiple things at multiple temperatures at multiple times,” says Barbour, with a touch of glee that would make Rachael Ray proud. “It calls for a unique way of cooking — you almost have to change your style.”

Barbour’s work was far from done. There were workspaces and countertops to be chosen, cabinets to consider and a flurry of floors.

Barbour went with Carrera marble countertops, which were cut to order and installed in a week. (It pays to have a designer who is on good terms with the stone man, Barbour notes on her

Web site.)

While the new design gives her family a formal space to dine, a drop leaf was added to the island so guests could pull up a chair in the kitchen.

“While working at the island you can look out through the large windows, out back into the gardens. We live on a busy corner and we’ve created this oasis back there, an espalier of apple trees through there, bird feeders,” says Barbour.

Barbour seems most proud of the lights over the island and illuminating the workspaces, which incorporate an unusual use of shades.

“For two or three years I kept a notebook and cut out pictures — and finally I found this one woman’s kitchen where she had designers do regular lampshades and hang them over the island,” says Barbour. “So I went to a lighting store and they worked with me and came



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up with lampshades that would work. I really wanted that, and it works, and that's one of the most satisfying things."

Frankly, though, Barbour's list of satisfying things is a long one: the new built-in bookcase nestled in between the two paned windows, the reinstalled stained glass, the painstakingly painted geometric designs on the floor.

"I really wanted a painted design — we settled on large diamonds joined by smaller squares. It's really hard to find someone who will paint your floors like that, but Rich Addonizio from Old World Finishes was willing to try," says Barbour. "We put the cats in the office and Rich painted ... and the end result is gorgeous. We chose a California paint called Tufquik, an industrial, high-gloss enamel."

In the end, though, it is the new pantry that pleases Barbour the most — and takes her back to her most basic fond memories of family and food.

"The pantry keeps to the period of the home — it looks like it was meant to be there," says Barbour. "I've never had a pretty place to put things. It's like my grandmother's pantry, it has cupboards and open shelves. Sue put in shelves — 5-inch deep, the perfect depth for cans. And I bought an antique shelf that hangs, with spices on it."

After about two months, Barbour's new old kitchen was complete — meeting modern needs while honoring history. That was vital for Barbour, who honors a more personal legacy with the project.

"My mom passed away in 1999 and we were left a small amount of money; I called my sister and told her I was thinking of using it to do the kitchen," Barbour says. "My sister said that mom would have loved that — it gives her gift so much more meaning. It was the right thing to do." **NH**

CONTRACTORS

Builder: James Williams Custom Building

Appliances: Baron's Major Brands, Salem
www.baronsmajorbrands.com

Painted Floors: Rich Addonizio, Old World Finishes, www.oldworldfinishes.com

Counters: Rumford Stone and Capital Tile & Marble, www.rumfordstone.com

Painter: Dave Sullivan Painting

Lighting: Just Lights, Nashua

Tile: Artistic Tile, Nashua,
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