

Dreaming of Nantucket


An early love for cooking and Shingle-style architecture inspire a spacious kitchen design.

BY CATHERINE TITUS FELIX • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORGAN HOWARTH



CINDY MCMAHON FELL IN LOVE WITH COOKING and Shingle-style architecture at a tender age. One of her first jobs was editing cookbooks, "After a while I wanted to get out from behind the desk and get behind a stove," Cindy says. "So I moved to Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, and got a job in a restaurant kitchen." While living there, Cindy fell in love with Shingle-style architecture. "We often catered parties at big, beautiful homes," Cindy says. "I got to work in some wonderful kitchens."

Years later, Cindy, her husband, Joe, and their two young children were living in the Washington D.C., area. They bought an old brick Cape Cod in Arlington, Virginia. "It was a charming ivy-covered house more than 60 years old on a wonderful block," Cindy says.



A honed marble-topped island defines the work-zone in the kitchen of Cindy and Joe McMahon's Shingle-style home. A Wolf double oven with warming drawer, cook-top and hood make this a high-performance workspace.

Serious Shortcomings

It was an adorable house, but once their children became teenagers, its shortcomings became apparent. Cindy's passion for cooking outstripped their tiny galley kitchen's capacity. The kitchen was also isolated from the rest of the house. "You had to go through three other rooms to reach the kids if they were in the living room. It was great at the time we bought it, but we basically outgrew the house."

Since the entire family loved the neighborhood the McMahons decided to renovate. "We hoped to work within the existing structure," Cindy says. "We thought that would be less traumatic, but at the end of the day it wasn't possible." They discovered structural problems with the basement, and their small lot made it impossible to incorporate Cindy and Joe's ideas within the original framework.

A Long Wish List

"We wanted a dining room with a butler's pantry, among other things," Cindy says. But

most of all, she longed for a great kitchen with a built-in banquette. "We wanted to be able to hang out in the kitchen," she says.

And then there were those memories of the Shingle-style homes on Nantucket. "For years I bought every shelter magazine I could find," Cindy says. "I tore out everything that I liked and threw the pages into a box. When the time came to really start working on a design I organized everything with sheet covers into a ring binder."

Shingle-Style Solution

Bruce Wentworth, AIA, had a lot of experience with historic neighborhoods in D.C. He designed a simplified Shingle-style home, with a large hip roof and shed dormers. "Bruce came up with the design pretty quickly and created a 3-D model so we could really get a feeling for how the house would look on our lot," Cindy says. The dormers provide the house with plenty of space on the second floor, without the house appearing tall, bulky

or out of harmony with the neighborhood. The ground floor incorporates the rooms the McMahons hoped for in an airy, flowing space. Light pours through the French doors that open from the master bedroom suite and family room to a stone patio. The patio is a perfect spot for fine-weather dining and entertaining. "We have no backyard," Cindy says. "But with the kids being older, this works for us."

A Forever Kitchen

In Cindy's high-performance kitchen, the work zone is defined by an island that doubles as prep space and sitting area set across from the cooktop, sink and dishwasher.

A microwave is built into the island. "That keeps it off the counter. It's a perfect location," Cindy says. "Originally, the island was going to be more furniture-like, with substantial legs at the ends, but by eliminating those we can fit more stools there and two corbels support the top."

The McMahons also considered adding a prep



Transom windows visually unite the open floor plan. A cozy banquette offers a spot for family meals, homework or just hanging out.

Style File

TYPE OF HOME: Nantucket Shingle

MAJOR UPGRADES: Total home rebuild. Galley kitchen redesigned as open-plan combination kitchen breakfast nook. Island and banquet seating added.

DESIGN ELEMENTS: Transom windows, evocative of 19th-century Shingle-style homes span the family room and kitchen, visually uniting the airy space. Oak flooring with a custom-blended stain further pulls the rooms together. Polished chrome bin pulls and knobs, and subway tile backsplash complete the look.

DECORATING SCHEME: A mostly white backdrop of white tile and marble create a neutral palette that can be updated with the seasons. Cheery bright-green café curtains and coordinating cushions add a splash of fresh color.

INNOVATIVE IDEA: A wall of appliances makes for a high-performance work triangle in the kitchen. The microwave is flush-mounted on the island—a perfect solution for keeping the counter clear.

It All Works

Cindy recently cooked a sit-down dinner for 35 people to celebrate her mother-in-law's birthday. "We were able to set up tables throughout the first floor," Cindy says. "It worked so well." The McMahons had hoped for a home that would evoke Nantucket but would still blend into the neighborhood, with a great kitchen and comfortable living space for their family. "At the end of the day, I am extremely pleased," she says.



The stone terrace is reached through French doors from the family room and master bedroom suite.

sink to the island, but Cindy felt it wasn't necessary. "I can walk in and dump the groceries right on the island, and I wanted to be able to use it as a buffet when we have big parties," she says. The fridge and wall ovens are perpendicular to the island. "It's kind of a wall of appliances," Cindy says. "But this is my forever kitchen." The bay with the built-in banquette is where the family gathers for everyday meals, homework or just to hang out, and it opens into the family room. Transom windows span the cabinets, bay and archway to the family room. These and the oak flooring visually unite the entire ground floor.

White With Black and Color

"I wanted a white kitchen with black accents and a shot of color," Cindy says. "I

was originally considering a green tile backsplash, but I wanted to be able to change it up, so I went with white. All the hard stuff is neutral but I can always add color." The window treatments have a subtle color that is complemented by the splashy green-and-white textile Cindy chose for the banquette and Roman shade. Custom cabinets in the kitchen combine solid and glass-paneled doors. "I didn't want all glass-paned cabinets," Cindy says. "I didn't want to have to be that perfect." Countertops in the kitchen are black brushed granite; honed marble tops the island. The butler's pantry also is fitted with white, glass-fronted cabinets with honed marble tops. "We've dinged the marble here and there," Cindy says. "But that just adds to the patina."