

ROOM TO COOK



REMODELING AN ENORMOUS KITCHEN SPACE REQUIRED BOLD DESIGN, FURNITURE-GRADE CABINETRY AND EXPERT GRANITE COUNTERTOP INSTALLATION BY ICM MARBLE & GRANITE

BY LINDA BARTH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIRO DVORCAK

LEFT: A copper milk can, water pump handle, liquor stills and fire extinguisher are part of the homeowners' collection of copper objects displayed in the kitchen.

Three years ago, Randy and Debbie and their teen-age daughter, Cristy, relocated from Greensboro, N.C., to Houston, where they found a newly built home they liked in Houston's lushly forested Memorial area.

"We loved the back yard and most of the house," says Debbie, "but we knew we would have to redo the kitchen. The island was pushed so close to the oven, you couldn't walk by if the oven door was open."

Moving from North Carolina's "furniture country," they were accustomed to furniture-grade cabinetry in their kitchen, so they wanted all new premium custom-built cabinetry for their Houston kitchen, as well.



ABOVE: Houston kitchen designer Kirk Craig specified a large island—5 1/2 by 10 1/2 feet—to anchor this kitchen with Tropical Green Granite countertops by ICM Marble & Granite, cherry wood cabinets by Osborne Cabinets and custom tile backsplashes by Architectural Design Resource.

BELOW: Cristy, 16, with ambitions to attend culinary school, and her red-haired Golden Retriever, Lucky, look right at home in the kitchen's baking center. Cool-to-the-touch granite countertops by ICM Marble & Granite are great for bread and pastry dough preparation.

Cristy, 16, loves to cook with her mom and plans to attend culinary school. They needed plenty of food prep space to allow them to cook together in the kitchen. Granite countertops, great for prep work and working bread and pie dough, were a must on their wish list, too.

In search of a good kitchen designer, Debbie asked her circle of friends for recommendations. One name kept coming up: Kirk Craig, who has more than 32 years' experience as a kitchen designer.

"He's fantastic," Debbie says. She and Craig met frequently through the project's planning phase, which took more than a year. Craig referred Debbie to three companies that could help make the plans for the kitchen reality: ICM Marble & Granite for countertops, Osborne Cabinets for new cabinetry and Susie Adkins of Architectural Design Resources for custom tile backsplashes.

BOLD DESIGN

For aesthetic as well as functional reasons, Craig chose to place a huge island, about 5 1/2 by 10 1/2 feet, in the middle of the kitchen. "We did a large island primarily because the space could handle it," Craig says. "It's an enormous room."

The island solved several work-triangle problems (proximity of stove, sink and refrigerator to the primary work area). Craig's plans rerouted plumbing and electrical lines under the slab to make the side of the island nearest the stove Debbie's "work kitchen" where she does most of her prep work. The part of the island closest to the breakfast room offers bar-chair seating. "They wanted their daughter to be able to do homework right there," Craig says. And the side of the island facing the cleanup sink and view of the back yard houses a dishwasher, making that area the cleanup center.

COUNTERTOPS

Debbie chose Tropical Green Granite with shades of verdigris and moss flecked with coppery reds for all the countertops in her kitchen, butler's pantry and wine cellar. Finding a slab of granite in that color large enough to top the kitchen island was a challenge.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT



ABOVE: The decorative diagonal corners of the kitchen island designed by Kirk Craig and fabricated by ICM Marble & Granite meant the granite had to be placed atop the base very carefully. The 700-pound countertop required six ICM workers to lift and set it in place.

BELOW: The wine room, with an ornamental wrought-iron gate in the window, sports Tropical Green Granite countertops.



"I hunted all over Houston looking for slabs that would yield the island without joints or seams," says Dollie Martinez of ICM Marble & Granite. "Then Debbie had to drive all over town looking at the slabs I located to determine which ones she liked best."

Ultimately, ICM picked up the slabs and held them at its shop for several months until the project was ready for measurement and the granite could be cut, edged, polished and installed.

"I'm so glad ICM wound up doing the job," Craig says. "Debbie is a perfectionist and so is Ivan (Martinez, of ICM Marble & Granite). I recommend ICM on jobs where customers are very particular or where it takes some special talent. Ivan has always done first-rate work."

Two different types of edge details were chosen for the countertops. Randy wanted to accentuate the massive island with a 2-inch Ogee over Bullnose edge. The remaining countertops were edged with another of ICM's signature edges, the Dupont. Craig gave the island special diagonal corners that jut out from the island.

The diagonal corners meant placement of the granite slab on top of the island had to be precise. "The granite could not be lifted, then rested on the frame and slid into place," says Debbie, who was present at ICM's installation of the granite. The 700-pound granite countertop for the island required six ICM workers who lifted and placed the slab perfectly on the first attempt.

CABINETS

One of the goals of the kitchen design was to accommodate Randy and Debbie's exquisite collection of copper vessels — among them, copper milk cans, moonshine liquor stills and water well pump handles — they have collected through the years.

"Displaying their copper collection was one of their requirements for the cabinetry," says Ines Lombardi, CKD, designer and sales representative for Osborne Cabinets. Debbie chose cherry wood, which complements her copper pieces, for the cabinets.

With a showroom in Houston and workshop in Beaumont, Osborne Cabinets is renowned for its craftsmanship that rivals the finest European cabinetmakers. In addition to building the cabinet framework, the company employs artisans who can hand-carve intricate corbels and decorative friezes like the hand-carved woodwork over the range hood in Debbie and Randy's kitchen.

BACKSPLASH

Tile design for the backsplashes is by Susie Atkins of Architectural Design Resource. Debbie decided she wanted a custom tile mural over her cooktop. She and Randy have three favorite wines they enjoy, so Adkins borrowed the wine bottles and had a mural custom painted incorporating the bottles and their labels in the tile mural.

PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

The kitchen finished, Debbie and Cristy now love cooking their favorite Southern traditional dishes together in their new kitchen. Cristy, a fan of the "Ace of Cakes" TV show, enjoys the kitchen's granite-topped baking center where she whips up homemade cookies, pies and breads with her faithful Golden Retriever, Lucky, at her side. Maybe it's just coincidence, but Cristy with her auburn locks and Lucky with his red coat look terrific — and color-coordinated — in the copper-filled kitchen with cherry cabinets and red-flecked green granite.

This month's In the Spotlight is sponsored by ICM Marble & Granite. Call them at 281.242.9009 or visit www.icmmarble.com.

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