



Before and After

LEFT The curved pattern of the flooring separates the kitchen from the dining room, while the island's L-shape solves the challenge of tight space.

BELOW The kitchen's natural elements come together in the mahogany cabinets with steel pulls, granite and recycled glass backsplash and carved wood accents.

BY CARRIE WHITNEY

Natural Curves Ahead

A couple's love for national parks puts exotic wood at the forefront of their kitchen renovation

AFTER ABOUT TWO DECADES SPENT in their Colts Neck, N.J., home, an empty-nester couple sought to renovate their kitchen's quirky layout into a more useable space that also reflected their appreciation for nature. They called on Chatham-based designer Heidi Piron of Heidi Piron Design & Cabinetry, whom they found through her regional win in the 2012 Sub-Zero and Wolf Kitchen Design Contest. It was Piron's use of wood grain in the winning kitchen that attracted the homeowners to her work.

"The feeling of the space was love of beautiful woods," said the designer. "The homeowners also had an appreciation for anything natural."

AN UNUSUAL LAYOUT AND MISMATCHED DESIGN

Although the homeowners had completed multiple renovations on the house throughout the years, including adding significant square footage and a garage, the kitchen had last been updated more than 15 years before and was not well structured. Additionally, as the house had grown, the size of the kitchen had not kept up so that it was out of step with the scale and style of the home.

"The actual work zones were combined," said Piron, which meant that only one person at a time could work efficiently in the kitchen. With a soffit above the cabinets, the storage area had not been maximized, and the cabinetry itself did not provide good interior storage solutions.

Throughout the home, rich and diverse woods and mixed metals had been incorporated into the design from a stairway of mahogany with blackened metal railings to the rosewood dining table and sidebar. This aesthetic needed to be incorporated into the kitchen for an artisan feel. A second aim, a request of the husband, was to add curves rather than making the space linear and geometric.



SPATIAL CHALLENGES

While she knew the kitchen's footprint needed to be increased, the designer was met with a roadblock of a fireplace, which sat on an exterior wall and could not be moved. By bumping out a breezeway, she added four feet to the kitchen, which allowed for an island, a must-have feature for fulfilling the homeowner's request for a gathering space.

However, the seating and design of the island were limited by the immovable fireplace, and there was no linear break between the dining room and the kitchen. Piron opted for an L-shaped island design and solved the delineation issue with a soft curve in the porcelain limestone flooring. This

curvature was repeated throughout the kitchen from countertops to the range hood to the integrated cabinet pulls.

DESIGNING WITH NATURE AND CURVES

The new kitchen blends with the home's homage to the great outdoors and the couple's frequent travel to national parks. The warm, inviting space features mahogany cabinets, designed by Piron and crafted by Premier Custom Built.

"The [cabinet] architecture has a beautiful curve on it that is integrated into a pull, and that integrated pull has been accented with hot-rolled steel," said Piron. "The cabinetry was absolutely the splurge."

Designing curving doors and incorporating the metal pulls offered a challenge to the manufacturer, as the designer explained that trying to get wood to bend truly shows the capabilities and passion of the craft. The material of the integrated pulls emerges in the custom metal hood and sink faucets, which feature a hot-rolled steel finish.

When she and her clients visited a slab yard looking for a charcoal countertop, the husband instead found a unique piece of granite, which offered swirling shapes and proved to be spectacular as an accent on the top of the island. The curves also appear on the whimsical stone backsplash by the refrigerator where the granite of the island intersects with recycled glass tile. Even the charcoal quartz countertops with a leathered finish in the rest of the kitchen have a soft ripple.

"The leathering effect allows the light to bounce," said Piron, adding that the texture complements the flat surface and adds interest.



FUNCTION MEETS STYLE

Meeting aesthetic goals did not minimize the need for workable space. The homeowners wanted room for multiple people and the ability to visually interact with the backyard when at the sink. In this still compact kitchen, special consideration was taken in the planning so two people could work effortlessly.

Clever solutions, such as installing two dishwasher drawers instead of a full unit, provide flexible use and a nod to universal design. Double ovens were placed at eye level, and the drawer microwave in the island sits at waist level, so bending is kept at a minimum.

Items in the work zones are close at hand. For example, behind the sink, a 4-ft. drawer with a plate insert means that plates do not need to be lifted into a cabinet. The refrigerator's door was intentionally selected for a smaller door swing and less-needed freezer capacity.

"A kitchen first and foremost has to function," said Piron. "The new space allows for two work zones with one being a clean-up area and the other being a cooking or prep area."

SOURCES

DESIGNER: Heidi Piron, Heidi Piron Design & Cabinetry;
PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian Garibaldi; www.garibaldiphoto.com

CABINETS: Premier Custom Built, Inc.;
COOKING APPLIANCES: Wolf; **COUNTERTOP:** Santa Margherita; **DISHWASHER:** Fisher Paykel; **GRANITE:** Typhoon Bordeaux; **LIGHT FIXTURE:** Customer's Own; **RANGE HOOD:** Custom by Heidi Piron Design & Cabinetry, LLC; **REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero; **SINK:** Franke; **TILE:** Short Hills Tile and Marble

BELOW LEFT The custom range hood with a hot-rolled steel finish and granite backsplash complements the kitchen's curves.

BELOW Rather than adding hardware, steel pulls were integrated into the cabinets, melding the homeowners' affection for natural wood and mixed metals.

