New spot, new style

Switching locations with the family room, a rebuilt kitchen gets the free-flowing space and updated finishes its owners crave BY JILL CONNORS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLEN McDERMOTT

→ **THE 1920s TUDOR** was lovely save for one thing: The warren of rooms just didn't work for a couple with three young children. Having moved from a Manhattan apartment, Jamie Donner lasted two years in the Summit, NJ, house before crying uncle. "I fell in love with the charm of the house and the beautiful yard," she says. "But the kitchen was like a closet, sequestered at the back. And you couldn't see the backyard."

Working with a creative team that included architect Michael Chiarella, interior designer Magda Chiarella, and kitchen designer Heidi Piron, the Donners reworked the core of the first floor. In the end, they swapped the locations of the kitchen and family room, turned the former breakfast room into a wet

bar, and exchanged a home office for a butler's pantry, adding a built-in desk near the wet bar. The result is a more open plan with cooking, serving, and gathering areas—plus a fresher, more informal look that still suits the traditional house. "The rift-cut oak plank-style cabinetry feels casual and somewhat contemporary," says Piron. "Then there are traditional elements such as the painted island with turned legs."

Having to decamp to the basement during almost nine months of construction and rely on an ad hoc kitchen complete with hot plate was all worth it, says Jamie. "Now we spend 98 percent of our time in the renovated spaces, and we can see that beautiful yard all the time."

BEFORE

BEFORE The old kitchen was turned into the family room. Its U-shaped layout was cramped for a family of five, and its heavy, traditional look didn't suit their style.

AFTER In the new kitchen, rebuilt in the family room space, rift-sawn oak plank-style cabinets and a marble-topped island create a contemporary-traditional mix. A wet bar went in where the breakfast room had been. *Cabinetry: Premier Custom-Built, Inc. White countertops: Caesarstone. Island top: Calacatta marble*
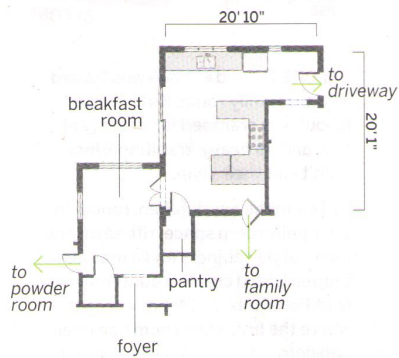
The new window-lined breakfast nook opens up backyard views. It is the main dining space for the family (from left): Kevin Donner; Riley, now 10; Quinn, now 6; Jamie Donner; and Duke, now 4. *Windows: Kolbe. Table: Restoration Hardware*

A load-bearing wall was opened up for the sink island, which has seating on the family room side and views outdoors. A beam overhead and posts wrapped in millwork provide the needed support. *Farm sink: Blanco. Faucets: Waterstone*
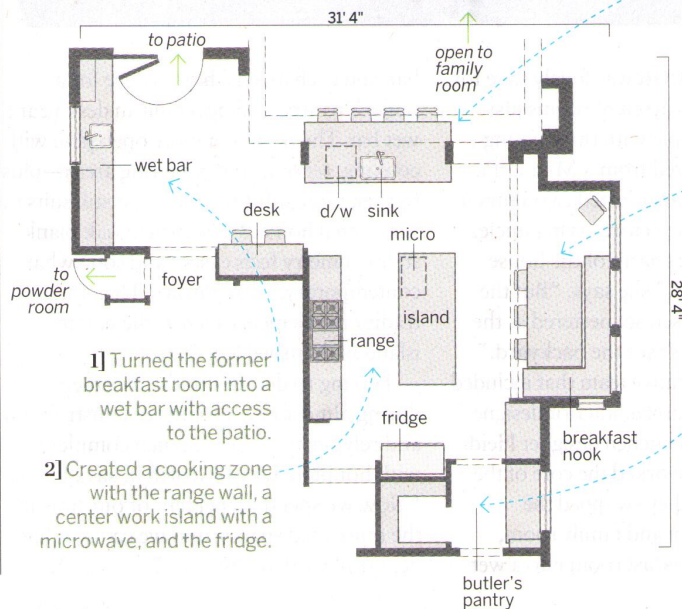
before

A U-shaped cooking zone was isolated at the back of the house and was separated from the eating area

20' 10"

20' 1"

breakfast room

to driveway

to powder room

pantry

foyer

to family room

after

After swapping spots with the family room, the kitchen got a more open and functional layout

31' 4"

28' 4"

to patio

open to family room

wet bar

desk

to powder room

foyer

d/w   sink

micro

island

range

fridge

breakfast nook

butler's pantry

3] Added a second island that holds the cleanup zone, with a sink and dishwasher—and seating on the family room side for snacks.

4] Turned a 12-by-6-foot alcove into a nook that's the family's main dining area, "even when the grandparents are over," says Jamie.

5] Connected the kitchen to the formal dining room via a butler's pantry (the old home office) for staging big meals.

1] Turned the former breakfast room into a wet bar with access to the patio.

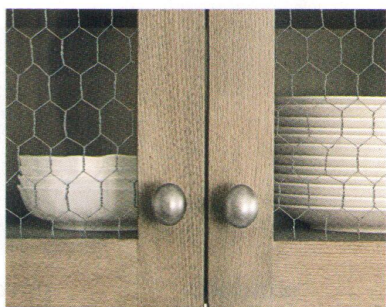2] Created a cooking zone with the range wall, a center work island with a microwave, and the fridge.

FLOOR PLANS: IAN WORPOLE

A coffee station is conveniently set up next to the breakfast nook. New wood casement windows have flat muntins that mimic those on the house's existing metal windows. All the lower cabinets hold drawers.

The wet bar provides a staging area for cocktails on the patio just beyond the nearby back door. The built-in desk offers a spot for recipe browsing or homework. *Countertop: Honed black granite*

The sleek look of the stainless-steel range and hood is enhanced by the white quartz countertops and backsplash. Deep drawers provide storage for pots and pans; the random-width planks on their rift-sawn oak fronts are perfectly aligned. *Range: Wolf. Range hood: Vent-A-Hood*

Cabinet doors on the range wall feature chicken wire encased in glass, a casual look that's easier to clean than exposed wire. The rift-sawn oak is wire-brushed and stained so the grain shows through. *Knobs: Top Knobs*