



# a cook's dream

**function is as important as style in  
this topsfield saltbox kitchen**



Like many baby boomers, the owner of this house in Topsfield was at the stage of her life where she was deciding between downsizing and moving into a new condo, or making some much needed changes to her current home and staying put.

She weighed the pros of a new condo and its maintenance-free living to the cons (and hassle) of listing her current home for sale and moving. The owner of the house, who asked that her name not be used, liked the location and size of her home, but hated the dark and outdated kitchen. According to the homeowner, her decision came down to this: "I needed to either redo the kitchen or move. But to move, I would need to redo the kitchen in order to sell."

The house was built in 1963 and is an exact replica of the Solomon Richardson House that was built in East Brookfield, Mass. in 1748 and known as the "Parsonage." The original Parsonage was moved to Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Mass. in 1940 where it remains today as part of the living history museum's attractions.

The Topsfield home is charming and full of character, but the kitchen had an awkward and confining layout, insufficient storage space, no ventilation and no overhead lighting.

Once the homeowner decided she wasn't going to move, her first call was to friend and contractor Ed Bisson, who was familiar with the house. Over the years Bisson's company, EJB Construction, had replaced its rotted windows and siding, and performed the general maintenance that an older home requires.

It was important to the homeowner and to Bisson that they create a modern kitchen while preserving the character and charm of the house.

Bisson began the renovations by taking down a wall that separated the kitchen from the family room. This created the open kitchen the homeowner had always wanted, and also enabled her to see the home's beautiful fireplace. A large picture window in the dining area of the kitchen was replaced by three energy-efficient windows. The homeowner is now able to open them and get air circulation in that spot for the first time in the 20 years she's lived in the home.

To determine the layout and details of her new space, the homeowner worked with Janet Maglia of Jackson Kitchen Designs in North Andover. Most of Maglia's clients arrive with armloads of magazine photos, but this homeowner had no preconceived idea of how she wanted her kitchen to look. She knew exactly, however,

how she wanted it to function.

The homeowner loves to cook and entertain. She requested a classic cook's triangle (having the stove, sink and refrigerator within easy reach of each another), as well as cookbook storage, out-of-sight appliance storage, an area for storing wine, and a separate cabinet just for spices. It was a big wish list, and Maglia's guide to producing a design. According to the homeowner, "After meeting with Janet for just one hour, the design came back perfect."

Once the design had been determined, the homeowner got to work choosing a cabinet style and finish. To tie in with the home's existing wainscoting and mantel color, she chose Shaker-style,



Opposite page: The homeowner's new kitchen is in perfect harmony with her 1748 reproduction salt box home. Cabinets from Jackson Kitchen Design, hanging pendants from Restoration Hardware and kitchen chairs from Homegoods. Above: The kitchen build/design team - From left: Bob Reddish of Bisson Construction, Janet Maglia of Jackson Kitchen Designs, North Andover, and Ed Bisson, Bisson Construction, Merrimac.

wall-mounted cabinets complemented by bead-board base cabinets. The cherry wood cabinets are finished with a matte amber stain and a black gloss topcoat. A deep farmer's sink and an oil-rubbed bronze faucet also blend with the style of the house.

The renovation project took four months from start to finish, and cost 50 percent more than the homeowner had anticipated. But now that the kitchen is complete, the homeowner says she wouldn't do anything differently. "It is absolutely perfect just the way it is," she says.





Top: View of the original kitchen as seen from the dining area. The long peninsula created a confining layout and inefficient work space. Middle: a separate storage area for wine bottles and glasses was at the top of the wish list for the homeowner who loves to entertain. Bottom: The home's original fireplace is now visible from the kitchen where it was previously hidden by a wall. Large photo: The granite-topped island is the centerpiece of the new kitchen. The homeowner had it angled so that the sink, stove and prep area formed the classic work triangle.







*Below are some valuable tips from the homeowner, Bisson and Maglia for anyone taking on a kitchen renovation.*

**1. The homeowner:** Working with local professionals is important. If a problem arises, it can be solved quickly with a couple of phone calls or a face-to-face meeting.

**2. The homeowner and Bisson:** Budget for more than you think you are going to spend. The homeowner decided that since she was only going to renovate her kitchen once, she didn't want to compromise on what she truly wanted. Bisson says that 99 percent of the time his clients will add additional work or features once the project gets under way.

**3. Maglia:** Do your homework. Look through magazines or design websites to help you decide what type of look you want your kitchen to have.

**4. Bisson:** Take the time to really think about how you want your kitchen to function. That is just as important as how you want it to look.

**5. Bisson:** Don't be pressured into buying something you don't love. Better to wait until you have the money to get what you really want.









Top: The family room is now open to the kitchen after Bisson removed a wall that was just beyond the dining table. Far left: A new white farm house sink and oil-rubbed bronze faucet are in keeping with the historical character of the home. Middle: open shelves on the kitchen side of the island allow for display of decorative items and cookbook storage. Right: Small individual drawers keep the homeowner's frequently used spices handy and well organized.