

beautiful & dutiful

A modest-size kitchen lives large for a downsizing couple, thanks to restaurant-style efficiency, sumptuous materials, and delicious details.

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this photo: At 14×13 feet, the kitchen is compact, yet its openness to adjoining living space lets it live larger and eases entertaining. The flooring is recycled hardwood that was stained on-site. “We knew we wanted a dark, dark floor,” says homeowner Cheryl Smith. **opposite:** The marble subway tiles on the backsplash are polished and beveled for greater sheen and depth.



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ere's a math problem: What do you get when you add 30 years in the home-building industry to 25 years in the restaurant business?

Answer: a couple who have seen a lot of kitchens. So by the time custom builder Jeff Smith and his wife, Cheryl, built a new beachfront home in Del Mar, California, they had plenty of design inspiration for the kitchen. "We knew exactly what we wanted," Cheryl says.

Working with architect Richard Bokal and interior designer Doug Dolezal, the couple created a space that combines efficient function with elegant materials and detailing. The layout reflects Cheryl's extensive restaurant experience. She designed the space from the perspective of a cook, setting up distinct work zones—food prep, cooking, and cleanup—and saving steps wherever possible. "In a restaurant kitchen, everything is designed for efficiency," Cheryl says.

It helped that the couple were downsizing. With their five children grown, Cheryl and Jeff didn't need a huge kitchen, and a modest-size space fit the proportions of their 2,400-square-foot house, which sits on a tight lot in a densely built area. At 14×13 feet, the kitchen is compact but lives larger than its size, thanks to an open floor plan and many amenities.

One is the island, which is the main prep area. Though it's only 2 feet wide to allow plenty of clearance on all sides, the island holds a prep sink, offers a chef-friendly butcher-block top, and provides storage underneath and on the ends. Classic-look columns on all four corners of the island reflect an emphasis on furniture-style design.

Another amenity is the professional-grade range that anchors the cooking zone. Accustomed to restaurant-caliber cooktops and ovens, Cheryl wanted the same kind of power and capacity at home. To eliminate cooking smoke and odors, she paired the range with a

opposite: Textured windows on the sink wall help preserve privacy in a beachfront neighborhood where homes are close together. The couple placed tall plantings on this side of the house, too. "When we open the windows, it's like a wall of green," Cheryl says. **above right:** A plate rack close to the sink and dishwasher drawers reflects the kitchen's restaurant-style efficiency, while the marble countertops and backsplash convey old-fashioned elegance.

right: Beveled-glass panels in some of the upper cabinets add another layer of detail as they foster a feeling of greater openness in the compact kitchen.

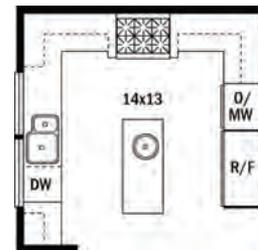
far right: The island prep sink's high-arc faucet accommodates big pots and pans. The surrounding butcher-block surface is nice for slicing and dicing.





powerful hood. “It pays to get the biggest, beefiest hood you can,” Cheryl says. A custom surround integrates the hood into the cabinetry.

A third amenity is the spacious cleanup zone, which is bathed in natural light and blessed with generous counter space. This side of the kitchen holds the main sink and a pair of dishwasher drawers. The main-sink faucet, like the one on the island, has a high-arc spout that is both stylish and practical. “When you’re washing dishes, you’re less likely to break them,” Cheryl says. The dishwasher drawers are practical, too. With the kids gone, the couple don’t generate as many dirty dishes, and they can use just one of the drawers



to wash a small load.

Windows in the cleanup zone are paned with vintage-look art glass. The pebbly, ripply texture of the glass obscures views in and out, creating a striking effect that, like so much of the kitchen, stems

from practical concerns. “The houses are really close to each other,” Cheryl says. “We did it for privacy.”

For being so unflinchingly practical, the kitchen is stunningly beautiful. The custom white cabinetry incorporates elaborate details, the countertops and backsplash are both made of rich Calacatta gold marble, and the flooring is dark-stained hardwood salvaged from a chocolate factory in Boston.

Given that Willy Wonka-esque touch—and the kitchen’s efficiency—you might think you can even eat the dishes. OK, the plates aren’t edible, but this is a place for preparing the kind of dishes that people devour. One of the Smiths’ sons is now a chef, and the kitchen meets his approval. “He loves it,” Cheryl says. As do the couple—especially when the space is serving its intended purpose, Cheryl says. “I like it when it’s full of food.”

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above left: Cheryl wanted a professional-grade range similar to the kind she used in the restaurant business. The high-performance vent hood above is disguised by ornate moldings. **far left:** No space goes to waste in this efficient kitchen. A spot beneath the hood is just big enough to store salt and pepper close to pots on the stove. It’s easy to fill those pots, too, thanks to the swing-arm faucet on the backsplash. **left:** Pretty meets practical again in these spice pullouts flanking the range. The columns match those on the island.

opposite: In addition to the power of a professional-grade range, Cheryl enjoys the convenience of a separate wall oven and a built-in microwave. The cooking appliances are close to the refrigerator-freezer for maximum efficiency.



TAKEAWAYS

1

An island can work in a smaller kitchen if it's scaled to suit the size of the room.

2

No matter what size the kitchen, point-of-use storage saves steps for the cook.

3

Dark flooring visually grounds a mostly white kitchen and helps hide wear.

4

A second sink makes it a lot easier for two cooks to share a modest-size kitchen.

5

Glass-in windows, cabinets, lighting, or appliances—helps open up a space.