

HOME & GARDEN

Great Falls kitchen redo creates extraordinary 'chef zone'

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to *The Examiner*

When Michelle Kansky's friends see the renovated kitchen in her Great Falls home, they want to know where the extra space came from. "They think we extended the house or something," Kansky said.

Amazed by the transformation, friends are shocked when they learn the new kitchen, which appears more than twice the size, has the same square footage of the old one. "The footprint of the room is the same," said Francisca Alonso, co-owner of AV Architects and AV Builders, designers of the new space.

The previous kitchen had granite counters, upgraded cabinetry and a large angular island; all the attributes of a gourmet kitchen. "It just wasn't working," said Kansky, who shares the home with husband Bill and two kids, ages 11 and 9.

"Basically anytime you wanted to prepare a meal, you went through the main path, which goes from the garage entrance to the living room," Alonso said. "The classic mistakes were here. You see this in many large homes. There was a lot of empty space. Everything was far apart. The refrigerator, the main sink and the dishwasher were too far apart. In order to get to anything, you had to cross circulation."

The remedy: Alonso created a family zone and a chef zone. The family zone includes a prep sink on one side of the island, the refrigerator, a hidden pantry, a butler's pantry and microwave. Alonso said it is important to place a refrigerator in the family zone, away from the cooking area.

"People have to access the refrigerator all the time. You don't want that interfering with your cooking," she said. "The refrigerator is like a candy stand. Everybody wants to go there and they don't just open it, they stand there and stare, like something's going on sale."

The chef zone includes a 36-inch Wolf cooktop with six burners. Alonso removed the existing double



BEFORE:
Michelle Kansky's kitchen had granite countertops, upgraded cabinetry and a large island, but it just wasn't working.



PHOTOS COURTESY STACY Z. GOLDBERG PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC



AFTER: The new, surprisingly spacious kitchen is a gourmet chef's dream. The space has a 36-inch cooktop, double oven, antique-style cabinets, granite countertops and a massive 9 foot by 9 foot island that is made of dark cherry.

oven, realigned the wall behind the desk area, and tucked the new double oven near a window and away from all traffic.

"When you are opening an oven,

you don't want people walking behind you," Alonso said.

Alonso also repositioned the dishwasher and main sink away from the flow of traffic and in the

same area near the cooktop and ovens. This allows Kansky to cook, prep and bake without interruption. "I love it," Kansky said. "It's my domain."

Resources

Design

» **AV Builders and AV Architects**
avarchitectsbuid.com

Cabinets, plumbing fixtures and appliances

» **Ferguson Kitchen and Bath**
ferguson.com

Tile

» **Lansdowne Tile**
lansdownetile.com

Countertops

» **Granite Source**
granitesource.net

The new island is massive. Made of deep cherry, it is 9 by 9 feet with storage on all four sides. The previous island, backed with drywall, had storage only on one side. The color of the island contrasts with the creamy antique-style Bertch custom cabinetry with inset doors and exposed hinges. Crown molding tops the cabinetry, creating an Old World feel.

Kansky chose Arctic Cream granite counters with an ogee edge. "I had to find granite that worked with the backsplash," said Kansky, who fell in love with the glass backsplash design behind the cooktop before she selected the granite.

The backsplash, from Lansdowne Tile, combines a white travertine Roman pattern with a gallery design glass tile. The glass tile is framed by an arched pencil border above the range and under a Dacor hood with custom hood insert to match the cream cabinetry. The handles, knobs and exposed hinges are finished in an oil-rubbed bronze.

The floor in the kitchen matches the exotic dark Brazilian cherry, which exists throughout the first floor. Two of Kansky's favorite features are the hidden pullout pantry near the refrigerator and two pullout spice racks that flank the cooktop. Kansky now has more storage than she can use. "I still have spaces that are empty," she added.

"It's better storage and easier to access," Alonso said. "It's the same space, just a better design."

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