

SMALL ROOM, **BIG REMODEL**

In renovating their Manhattan kitchen,
one couple learns that living in close quarters
doesn't have to cramp your style

BY VICTORIA VON BIEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLES MARAIA

before



after

KITCHEN NOTES

The biggest challenge of the remodel was creating a space with modern comforts that felt at home in a 1920s apartment. The couple chose cabinets and fixtures that remained true to the original architecture, but opted for a warmer ivory color scheme instead of sterile white, and replaced outdated linoleum with hand-painted oak floors.



KITCHEN NOTES

Functionality is the theme, with wider counters that offer more prep space and include a kitchen sink deep enough to hold large pots. More storage was created by wrapping the cabinets around the corner. This provided enough room to install a Sub-Zero wine refrigerator and an easily accessible built-in alcove that holds cookbooks.



before



after

“I’ve never had a kitchen I really liked,”

says Susan Kessler, co-editor of the *Zagat London Restaurant Survey*.

Until now, that is. Susan and her husband, Larry, have just completed a two-year renovation of the kitchen in their 1920s New York apartment—some 17 years after having moved in—and looking around the new space with its ivory cabinets and hand-painted blue-and-white oak plank floor, she’s glad she waited. When they first bought the apartment, she worked from home as a food editor and recipe developer and got to know every outdated, inconvenient inch of her old kitchen. She also had plenty of time to dream about what she’d do with the space given half a chance.

Her plans for a new kitchen were put on hold when she and Larry moved to the United Kingdom in 1992, but with the decision to spend more time in their New York apartment, Susan launched into remodeling—directing much of it from her home in London, ordering appliances online and e-mailing pictures to the contractor in New York.

Her first concern was to keep the original feeling of the 1920s design. “I wanted the new kitchen to look as if it had always been here,” she says. “The cabinets we have now are almost exactly the same as the original ones—except these ones close.”

And while the kitchen looks true to its roots, Susan has added some 21st-century comforts: A red goatskin banquette and table are tucked in one corner for cozy breakfasts, and under the window, a small desk provides a quiet area for Susan to work. A washer and dryer are hidden behind built-in cabinets.

Functionality was Susan’s next concern. She knew she wanted the 48-inch range to be the focal point of the kitchen, but that was just the beginning. She drew up a three-page wish list that included a tap on the stove for filling large pots; a custom hood with heat lamps for keeping food warm; an 18-inch or wider sink; a Sub-Zero wine refrigerator; a hidden microwave; marble countertops; and lots of storage.

So was it worth the 15 years of waiting and two years of hard work?

Definitely, says Susan. “It feels fun,” she says. “I walk in here now and smile.” ►

TOP: In the original kitchen, bulky appliances took up valuable floor space. The remodel incorporates appliances beneath counters, making use of the light-filled alcove for a home office. OPPOSITE: A chrome rail along the length of the cabinets ensures that dish towels are always at hand.



ABOVE: Spices and other baking essentials take cover in one of the tip-down cabinets. The marble countertop next to the sink is grooved to allow water to drain. **RIGHT:** A cold-water tap above the stovetop makes filling large pasta pots a breeze. **OPPOSITE:** Susan designed most of the breakfast nook elements herself. The mercury glass mirror is based on a vintage model she saw in an antiques shop on London's Pimlico Road; the red goatskin banquette is inspired by similar ones in Osia restaurant, also in London; and she designed the oval maple table to seat four. ■



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
SEE "KITCHEN SOURCEBOOK"
ON PAGE 168.



KITCHEN NOTES

Every corner maximizes space, from the compact pull-down cabinets near the stove to the shelving by the breakfast nook that holds more cookbooks and a discreet flat-screen television. The mirror creates the illusion of a larger space. A chic plastic chair adds a note of whimsy—yet because it's transparent, it doesn't clutter the room.