



# Masterful Blend

Transition spaces help bridge the differences between a modern kitchen and a Mediterranean-style home.

The owners of this 1925 Minneapolis home didn't want to be bound by tradition. They loved their Mediterranean-style house, full of warm colors and period details, but the last thing they wanted was a traditional cooking space to match. Instead, they dreamed of an efficient, contemporary room with lots of storage and smooth, no-fuss finishes.



before

**THIS PHOTO:** Flush cabinets with brushed-steel pulls dominate the contemporary center of the kitchen. The upper cabinet to the right of the sink includes an appliance garage; the base cabinet extends about an inch to make the two parts read as a single piece of furniture.

**OPPOSITE:** The breakfast bay addition protrudes from the side of the house, allowing maximum views of the garden while remaining faithful to the 1925 home's Mediterranean style.



It could have been a recipe for disaster, but architect Martha Yunker and project designer Bryan Meyer rose to the challenge. They designed a fresh, modern space that fits in beautifully with the traditional-style house.

To ease the transition between the two parts of the home, the design team divided the kitchen into three areas, each with its own functions. A sleek cooking area slips between a more elaborate and traditional-looking butler's pantry and a cozy new breakfast nook. Because all three spaces share the same palette of colors and materials, the stylistic transitions aren't readily apparent.

The pantry, an existing space, was fitted with built-in cabinets painted white, like the home's trim, so they blend with the architecture. Doors on the bottom keep liners and silverware out of sight, while glass-front cabinets above display the couple's collection of china and crystal.

While the glass doors boost the aesthetic appeal, they also increase the function. The homeowner says she's more apt to use the dishes if she can see them. Paneled doors and crystal knobs instill a sense of history; a barrel-vaulted ceiling (built beneath the existing 9-foot ceiling) helps distinguish the pantry from the adjoining space.

Guests often wander into the pantry from the neighboring dining room, a practice the homeowners encourage by establishing a bar in one of the cabinets. The room also functions as a serving area for parties and as a place where guests can linger while the homeowners put the finishing touches on a meal.

In the former cooking area, wraparound cabinets and a peninsula were confining and made it difficult for more than one person to work at a time. The new design features





**THIS PHOTO:** A celadon island anchors the kitchen and services both the cooking zone to the right and the cleanup area to the left. Built-in cabinets line the pantry, at the rear.  
**OPPOSITE:** The pantry's barrel-vaulted ceiling directs the eye toward the garden and helps distinguish the more traditional space from the adjoining streamlined cooking area.

**RIGHT:** The homeowners wanted an industrial work area, opting for a professional range equipped with two ovens, four burners, a grill, and a French top that offers a variety of cooking temperatures.  
**(OPPOSITE):** By bumping out the corner of the house, the owners gained a sunny breakfast nook. A lowered ceiling distinguishes the space from the cooking area and makes it feel cozy.



three parallel rows of cabinets: a cooking area along one wall, a cleanup area along the opposite wall, and a prep island that floats in the middle.

The zones make it easy for two people to work together, one of the homeowners says, noting that one cook can be toiling at the range while another cook prepares a salad or cleans up on the other side of the island—all without anyone stumbling over anyone else.

While the outer cabinets in the cooking area are white—as they are in the pantry—they're more contemporary in design, with flush fronts and sleek brushed-steel pulls. The island was painted celadon and edged with stiletto legs, "so it feels more like the central table in a room," Yunker says. Old-fashioned oak floors and carrara marble countertops temper the modern lines. Although both materials are susceptible to stains and bruising, Yunker considers that part of the charm. "Real materials look better with age," she says.

A new breakfast area was created by absorbing space from the back hall and bumping out a 70-square-foot bay that draws in light and opens views of the garden and Lake of the Isles beyond. Multipane windows, a vintage pendent light, and pillow-backed seating make this cozy corner a magnet for visiting grandchildren.

Straw-color wall paint helps unify the three areas, as do the green accents in the island and banquette. "Those two colors prevent this from being one of those white, cold kitchens," interior designer Carol Belz says.

While few people will mistake the resulting room for the 1925 original, Yunker says that's fine. "We weren't trying to fool anyone," she says. "We were trying to let it be contemporary and let it be somewhat of a contrast. But a happy contrast."

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**THIS PHOTO:** Multi-pane casement windows frame garden and lake views in the new breakfast nook. The drawers under the banquette hold bulky pans as well as toys for visiting grandkids.  
**OPPOSITE TOP:** Brushed-steel pulls echo the finish on the appliances. Roped glass was used on the cabinets in the cooking area; in the pantry, clear glass showcases china and glassware.  
**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Carrara marble adds a touch of traditional charm to the contemporary kitchen. Although prone to staining and chipping, such wear adds a patina of age that softens the hard lines of the room.



before

## The Change

An efficient, contemporary kitchen was inserted into a 1920s Mediterranean-style home without making the stylistic change feel jarring.

## What It Took

- Placing the modern cooking area between a more traditional pantry and a breakfast area to help smooth the transitions into surrounding rooms.
- Repeating colors and materials to unite the three spaces and soften the differences between them.
- Dividing the work area into three zones to allow several people to prepare a meal together.



after

The kitchen, featuring multiple work zones, easily accommodates more than one cook. Take a look at how the designers made it work.

**1** Cooking is consigned to one side of the island, with the refrigerator and range along the wall forming a work triangle with the island's sink.

**2** The island is large enough to serve as a prep area for a second cook—or as a spot for guests to linger.

**3** Cleanup is relegated to the window side of the island, where the island, main sink, and dishwasher drawers form a second work triangle. The cook can

leave dirty dishes here until a party ends, or someone can clean up while the cook finishes meal preparation.

**4** The end of the island near the pantry is outfitted with an undercounter refrigerator and an icemaker so guests can help themselves to beverages without disturbing the cook.

**5** The pantry, lined with glass-front upper cabinets, includes space for a serving table.

**6** The new breakfast nook is located away from the main traffic area and is positioned to take advantage of the best views out the windows. **RI**

