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scenic route

An old, gridlock-prone kitchen gets a new layout that eases traffic and a sophisticated style that could stop it.

SPLENDID SOUPS



JAMES
BETHUNSON

THE ARROW'S
COOKBOOK



THE ARROW'S
COOKBOOK

WITH IAN AND JONNYVA

the kid's cookbook



THE ITALIAN COUNTRY TABLE

From Italy's Farmhouse Kitchens

THE COUNTRY TABLE

Marcella Hazan
Essentials of Classic
Italian Cooking



THIS PHOTO: Removing the side entry and vestibule of a 1912 home in Portland, Maine, enabled the kitchen to expand. A new cleanup zone includes attractive china storage above the dishwasher. Leaded-glass doors mimic the look of vintage built-ins in the dining room.

OPPOSITE: A built-in hutch with beaded-board backing shows off pottery and cookbooks.



BREAD



ON BUSY, NARROW ROADS IN URBAN AREAS, YOU'LL SOMETIMES SEE signs warning about the dangers of head-on collisions. This kitchen, part of a 1912 Colonial-style home in Portland, Maine, could have used such a sign.

The long and narrow room was a busy thoroughfare, with three doors routing traffic. An entry and cramped vestibule dropped off people at one end, where they made a sharp turn to avoid the breakfast table. At the kitchen's midpoint, a swinging door green-lighted traffic merging from the dining room, steering it straight through the work triangle. At the other end, a busy back hall was the exit ramp to the basement and a home office.

The homeowners and their two children swerved to avoid one another for years, but when they decided to add a family room—and open it to the kitchen—they knew it was time to rethink their commutes. For help, they called in kitchen designer John Yates and interior designer Edie Stevens.

For Yates, the top priority was fixing the traffic problems while working within the kitchen's original footprint. Because the family room included a new side entry, the old vestibule entry could be eliminated. By claiming its

LEFT: A sink with farsighted bay views replaced a myopic breakfast nook. Contrasting cabinets, all oak, blend like cream and coffee. The diagonal floor pattern echoes the two-tone look. BELOW: A sleek oven-cooktop pair offers range convenience while maintaining the countertop edge. Quilted stainless steel on the backsplash repeats the floor's diamond pattern.





THIS PHOTO: Dark-stained oak ties the kitchen to the dining room. **OPPOSITE:** A peninsula separates the kitchen from a family room addition, part of a layout that eases traffic tie-ups in a space with three doorways.

We isolated the work area so traffic flows past it—instead

space, Yates gave the former galley a new L shape. The change was pivotal, allowing the expanded end of the kitchen to become an efficient space for food prep, cooking, and cleanup. "We isolated the work area so traffic flows past it—instead of running straight through it," Yates says.

Making a pleasant route mattered, too. In the old plan, the door to the dining room stood opposite the sink, "so you could be looking at dirty dishes when it opened," Yates says. Now, the same doorway frames views of a granite-topped peninsula with seating and the richly tailored family room beyond. Traffic flows smoothly across the intersection, and collisions are rare, especially with the old swinging door eliminated.

Styling the new kitchen to complement its vintage setting was Stevens' primary concern. "The house has beautiful, heavy, dark oak

woodwork, oak flooring, and oak beams, and there's hand-carved oak wainscoting in the dining room," she says. "We wanted to expand on that look." Initially, Stevens planned a dark stain for all the custom oak cabinets, but then she spied a beautiful hand-rubbed finish with a light antique-chamois color. Inspired, she suggested a more unfitted look—mixing light and dark—reserving the stain for the peninsula and a built-in hutch. "The chamois color is a wonderful complement to the dark oak, but it gives the kitchen an even warmer, richer flavor," she says.

Also changed was another initial plan to lower the family room floor, creating a step-down from the kitchen. This would have allowed a grander ceiling height in the family room while maintaining the kitchen's 8-foot-high ceiling. But Stevens lobbied against the idea,



of running straight through it.

— kitchen designer John Yates

favoring a more seamless transition between the two rooms. “Psychologically, it’s easier to move from space to space without steps as a barrier,” she says. And with a snack bar along the peninsula, a lowered floor would have necessitated a platform for seating—or very long-legged chairs. “I detest high stools,” Stevens says. “Ladies do not like to climb up on a high seat. We like to slide over gracefully.”

It’s a rather old-fashioned sentiment, recalling an era of greater refinement—like the kitchen itself. And that was no accident. **WDS**

Resources begin on page 128.

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The reconfigured kitchen opens to a family room addition. A peninsula with an eating bar and storage separates the spaces. Eliminating a side entry and a breakfast nook cleared the way for an expanded work core isolated from traffic. Enlarged windows above the relocated sink capture morning light and bay views, while a pass-through links to a sunroom. Appliance positions are convenient to the dining room and family room.