

## REMODELING



Karen Pearl, with son Connor, requested a stainless-steel sink so vast "it could hide all my dirty dishes when people come for dinner." The windows, set at countertop height, are flung open to take in the coastal air.

# VIEWING IT LIKE A PRO

BY SARAH EGGE PHOTOGRAPHS BY KING AU/STUDIO AU

A mom with culinary training renovates a Maine kitchen—getting the clever features she likes while having the space open to relaxing ocean views.

STYLED BY MICHELE MICHAEL



**W**hen looking for a new home, many people long to find their dream kitchen. Karen Pearl had the opposite point of view. “I didn’t want to buy someone else’s dream,” says Karen, whose culinary school education gives her a professional’s knowledge of what works and what doesn’t in the kitchen. “I was looking for a house that I could put the kitchen of my dreams into.”

That’s why a 1970s Cape Cod with cookie-cutter looks caught her eye. Karen and husband David, a school-teacher, recognized that the coastal Maine >> on 102

**Karen finds the island (left) to be infinitely workable:** “I can make toast for the boys, butter it, cut off the crusts, and feed it to them all in one spot. A lot of times, they just eat right off the butcher-block with no plates.” On the back wall is a commercial-grade range. The renovation opened the back of the house (right) to the ocean.





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home could be an inspiring setting for raising their children. The back of the house overlooks the ocean, and when the tide ebbs, the remains of a shipwreck are revealed. Although the layout was cramped and dark, they knew the right architect would see the potential.

Architect and interior designer Linda Banks proved to be that person. After a quick tour of the house, Banks recognized its flaws, recalling, "I knew the house needed a better flow, one where all the rooms connected and you could circulate." As a mother who loves to cook, Banks also connected with the Pearls on a personal level. "I understand how families work and coexist in the kitchen," she says.

Karen identified a very specific list of desires for the hard-working family space, including a >> on 104

To lighten the house, Karen had dark floors refinished in a golden color, with the kitchen getting a harlequin pattern accent (*top left*). Conner, 6, and Benjamin, 4, lounge with their dog, Cordelia. The storage behind the pantry's glass doors is attractive (*top right*); not-so-pretty foodstuffs are tucked away on shelves hidden to either side of the doors. The home's former dining room is now command central, where Karen has her desk and computer (*left*).



From the kitchen, the view toward the back of the house reveals a dining room that used to be a family room and a family room where the garage used to be.

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versatile island where sons Conner and Benjamin could snack or do art projects. She wanted the dishwasher to the left of the sink. “I’m right-handed, and I like to load toward my nondominant side,” she says. “I also wanted the trash drawer right next to the sink to dump stuff in.” Banks kept her eye on the overall picture—and the view. The old kitchen had been marooned inside the house, trapped between the dining room and laundry room. Banks’ plan called for pushing the kitchen into the laundry room space and filling the back wall with windows. The new vista allows Karen to watch the boys playing outside while she’s working at the sink.

“Upper cabinets are not worth much to me—I would rather look out a window,” says Banks. “So I am a big fan of walk-in storage pantries.” The Pearls’ new pantry, along with the new breakfast bar, are highly functional spaces out of the main work area. “The work triangle is a myth in new kitchens,” Banks says. “There should be several work areas so people don’t bump into each other.”

Because Karen had clipped many style ideas from magazines, she had a strong aesthetic vision for the kitchen as well. “I knew I wanted a Tuscan yellow kitchen, something very warm and welcoming,” she says. Color-washed walls, wood floors, and a butcher-block top on the island keep the kitchen feeling toasty even when the sky turns gray. For a seamless look on the range wall, Banks extended the stainless steel up the backsplash and along the countertops on either side. The cabinetry’s beaded board and old-fashioned bin pull hardware take the chill off the cool stainless steel.

“I’m really proud of what we did here,” says Karen, who, when she needs a pot lid, now knows right where to get it. “Now I can cook up a storm, I can entertain up a storm. I love to be in my kitchen.” ♡

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