

Beautiful KITCHENS & Baths

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Simplicity
Why Less Is More

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Neutral Palette**

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Summer 2012
Display until September 17

\$7.99 U.S.





Light and bright, this Michigan kitchen's style is highlighted by multiple windows capped with an arched transom. White cabinets contrast with honed black granite countertops and a black-stained walnut floor. Polished-nickel hardware and stainless-steel appliances add sparkle.



SETTING THE SCENE

With a wall of windows, crisp white framework, and open outdoor access, this lakeside kitchen puts the views at center stage.





From the onset, Michigan homeowner Penny Parmalee knew the look she wanted for her new lakefront home and its kitchen. Her inspiration? The Hamptons beach house in the movie *Something's Gotta Give*. "That's me," Penny says. "I wanted a crisp, clean look that didn't come off as contemporary."

She enlisted a team to pull it off. Architect Elaine Keiser designed a kitchen-centered gathering space highlighted by windows with a room-spanning arched transom. Kitchen designer Liz Firebaugh and interior designer Laurie Seltenright collaborated to create a beautiful, effective kitchen (as well as a dining area and living room) in the 1,260-square-foot space. General contractor Ben Brower managed design and implementation, including custom finishes and millwork.

Everything is framed in white, from the glorious kitchen windows to the elaborately coffered ceiling. Elegant white cabinets line much of the window wall, culminating in a dual-refrigerator armoire at one end and a planning desk at the other. Glass-

front cabinets perch in front of two of the windows, letting sunlight flow unimpeded. "Those windows are like a piece of art," Penny says. "Every time we look out, we see leaves, trees, and color."

Against the glass framework stands a nearly 12-foot-long white island topped with 2½-inch-thick honed black granite, a seamless piece of stone weighing more than 1,000 pounds. The dramatic contrast repeats in a black granite backsplash and countertop on the sink wall, as well as a walnut floor, stained deep black for extra character. Silver nickel sparkles throughout via cabinet hardware and a three-fixture pendant above the island. "You need that extra pop when you do white," Firebaugh says.

Above: Next to the wall ovens, a small planning desk faces a nautically inspired round window. Slim cabinets store office supplies. Homeowner Penny Parmalee commissioned the colorful glass-top stool. **Opposite:** Designed to look like a piece of furniture, the china cabinet includes a walnut lip and glass-front doors with gothic-arch muntins. To the right of the cabinet is a doorway that leads to the pantry—just steps away from the cooking zone.

Color appears in subtle ways, Seltenright says, because Penny prefers neutrals. "Her idea of a color is adding a hint of blue," the designer says. Counter stools bear a striped fabric with hues that suggest the lakeshore visible through the living room windows. At the island's end, a sage green bench offers another comfy seating option.

Along with the crisp-but-casual style, the space needed to suit empty nesters who love to entertain. The floor plan is easy, Penny says. "Everything is wide." Those wide aisles, along with two sinks, a dishwasher, dishwasher drawers, and double pullout waste bins, make it simple for people to help. And the open floor plan allows the cook to interact with guests.

The kitchen design also boasts glass patio doors that push back into the wall to create a 12-foot-wide opening. Brower's crew built extra-thick exterior walls to accommodate that feature. "From an entertaining standpoint, having disappearing doors is a spectacular touch that triples the kitchen in size," he says.

The disappearing doors join other hidden details. There's a stepladder tucked behind the toe-kick. The planning desk is discreetly wired for

Internet use. And behind the range wall, a pantry offers more than 100 square feet of storage space for canned goods, dishes, and small appliances, plus an icemaker, a refrigerator, and a wine chiller. "Everything is visible," Firebaugh says. "It's easy to grab what you need."

Even with all the kitchen's special features, Penny says the room isn't about food. For her, it's all about the time spent with family and friends. "We entertain here a lot," she says, "and everybody hangs out in the kitchen. A lot of good times have been had in our kitchen."

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Opposite: Black wrought-iron chandeliers help define the dining area, which includes a custom walnut table. To the left, sliding glass doors tuck into the wall and merge the inside and outside for seamless entertaining. **Below left:** Appliances make a minimal impact on the room's transitional style. The microwave, wall oven, and warming drawer are stacked to create one rectangle instead of three. And the dishwasher, dishwasher drawers, and dual refrigerator and freezer-drawer combinations are integrated into the cabinetry. **Below:** Tucked behind the range wall, a 12x9-foot L-shape pantry keeps staples, small appliances, and serving pieces at the ready. A small refrigerator, icemaker, wine chiller, and countertop coffee station (not shown) are just inside the pantry's entry.





DESIGNER TIP

The Importance of Architecture

Kitchens with architectural details just exude character.

Bored with your oh-so-ordinary kitchen? Give it beautiful custom touches with architectural details. Here, design pros offer suggestions.

- Enhance with molding.** Crown molding, chair-rail molding, base molding: All of these architectural trims can play up your room's style while covering seams and uneven edges. "Think of molding as jewelry," says interior designer Laurie Seltenright. "It completes the look." Just make sure each piece of molding complements the room's design style.

- Make edges more interesting.** Cookie-cutter kitchens lose style points because of their monotonous stretches of wall cabinets and countertops. Upgrade your kitchen's look by staggering the heights of the cabinets, says general contractor Ben Brower. "Or pull your cooktop or sink base forward 2 inches so your countertop has a jog to it instead of a straight line," he says. Another interesting option:

Install end cabinets with detailed corners instead of square ones, says kitchen designer Mary Leibhold. "Or end the cabinetry with a nice panel rather than a big, flat side," she says.

- Move walls in or out.** Ordinary kitchens feature four walls with cabinets and appliances. "Think beyond the simple plane," says kitchen designer Bev Adams. Recess walls over a range to create a storage niche, she suggests. Or pull the walls out on either side of the range to create columns, which you can then decorate with corbels or molding.

- Add layers of lighting.** Lighting takes a kitchen from standard to awesome, says architect Elaine Keiser, because it adds layers of beauty. "Go beyond the eye candy offered by decorative fixtures," she says. Undercabinet lighting, in-cabinet lighting, and rope lighting across the top of crown molding can make your kitchen especially beautiful at night, she says.

