



REAL-LIFE REDO

Black-tie sophistication paired with modern conveniences brings a 19th-century Victorian into the 21st century.

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THE MISSION: WITH AN ORIGINAL KITCHEN SO SMALL THAT TWO PEOPLE COULD BARELY FIT, THE CONNECTICUT HOME BELONGING TO MIKE AND BECKY GOSS NEEDED TO GROW—AND STAY IN STEP WITH ITS 1873 ARCHITECTURE. Like most modern families, the couple and their two teenage daughters wanted to congregate in the kitchen. “We wanted a big island where we could sit and have dinner every night—pretty informally—and yet we wanted it to look good,” says Becky. To the Gosses, that meant rethinking their kitchen’s color palette to include black. “We like modern things, but because this is an old house, we wanted classic materials, too,” she says. They also dreamed of a fireplace, around which their family could hang out and talk.

Becky Goss is at home in the newly renovated kitchen she designed with the help of an architect, whose expertise was especially needed for a mudroom addition and structural challenges. The Carrara marble and ebonized oak cabinetry represent the classic and sleek elements she desired.

“WE WANTED THE KITCHEN TO BE SOPHISTICATED WITHOUT BEING SLICK,” SAYS BECKY GOSS. “WE WANTED IT TO LOOK RIGHT WITH OUR HOME.”

THE PLAN: Although the Gosses knew what materials they wanted to use, they relied on architect John Halper of Halper Owens Architects of Greenwich, Connecticut, to pull it all together. Halper rearranged the layout and kept the new architectural elements compatible with the rest of the home. What had been a big family room was turned into the kitchen, and the original small kitchen was made into a seating area. “We basically flipped the rooms,” Becky says. A porch was extended to the back of the house, allowing for a mudroom at the back entrance. “John made the outside entrance look as if it had always been there,” Becky says. “It ties in so well with the rest of the house.”

THE PALETTE: Black and white. In pulling together the two-tone color scheme, Becky found that the black-stained (ebonized) oak cabinets, which were custom made by Jonathan Podmore Cabinetry in Stamford, were warmer than a true black. “It has a real texture to it. You can see the grain of the wood.” The white comes from Carrara marble countertops and backsplashes. Modern styling comes from the brushed stainless-steel hardware on the cabinetry and the feet of the island, along with the oversize hanging lights, which give the space a hip bistro look. “The fabric shades soften the pendants a little,” Becky says.

THE HEADACHE: Finding a location for the fireplace. “We were hoping to put it on an internal wall, but just couldn’t make it work,” Becky says. Instead, the

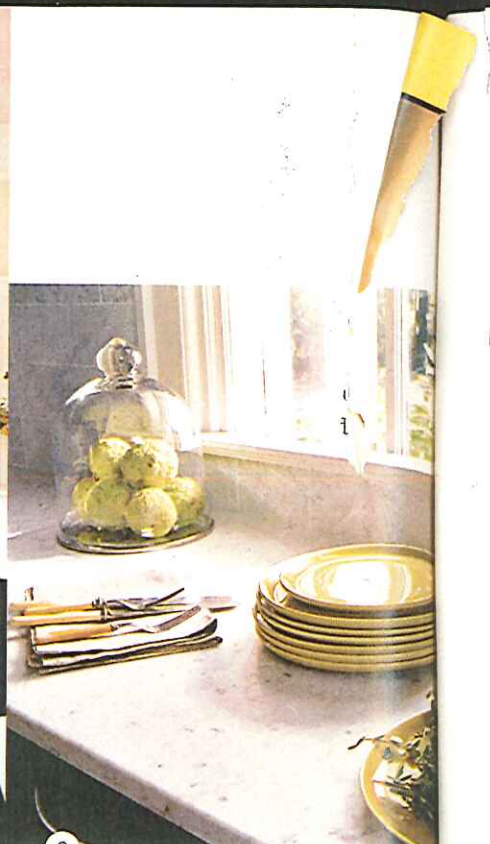


The color scheme may be the most obvious use of contrast in the room, but the Gosses also mixed high-end furnishings with relatively affordable ones. The lamps are from the Italian firm Flos, while the chairs are Pottery Barn. The appliances are all high end from various manufacturers. The antique Oriental rug, seat cushions, and herbal topiaries add splashes of color to the palette, which is firmly grounded and warmed by the cherry-stained oak flooring.

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Gosses placed it on an exterior wall, where it looks at home in the middle of the seating area.

THE HISTORY LESSON: The one idea worth keeping from the old kitchen was its built-in drawers for place mats, linens, and silverware. "I loved that feature," Becky gushes, so she had it re-created in the new room.

THE SPLURGE: "I was absolutely insistent that the architectural details match the old part of the house," says Mike. "I did not want 'off the shelf' materials in these areas." So the Gosses splurged on custom trim and custom windows with 6-inch moldings, which are "unique to that period," Mike adds.

THE BONUS: Kitchen cleanup is more convenient with two dishwashers and two extra-deep sinks. The smaller dishwasher, a Fisher Paykel, is great "if you want to wash a small load, like breakfast dishes," Becky says. A full-size Bosch sits in the island next to a deep Franke basin perfect for holding plates and dishes waiting to load. The other sink, a Franke stainless rendition of a traditional farmhouse sink, sits under a window where the cook can work while viewing the yard.



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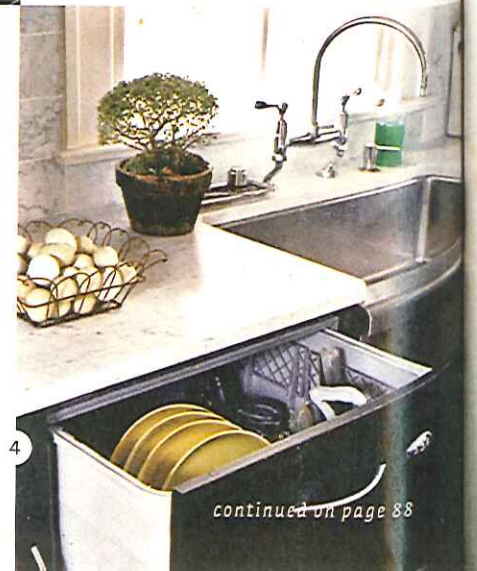
1) The adjacent keeping room includes a seating area and fireplace with French doors on either side leading to the patio.

2) Part of a collection of Russel Wright dinnerware sits on the unsealed marble countertop.

3) The built-in drawers for linens and silverware do away with the need for a freestanding hutch and give a fitted look.

4) A dishwasher drawer next to the sink blends in with the bank of cabinetry.

5) The second, larger dishwasher is located in the island.



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“BEFORE THIS REMODEL, YOU WOULD WALK INTO THE KITCHEN FROM THE BACK DOOR. NOW, YOU WALK IN THROUGH THE MUDROOM,” SAYS BECKY GOSS. “WE HAD THE DOOR CUSTOM MADE TO RESEMBLE AN OLD DOOR FROM OUR VERMONT HOUSE. WE WANTED IT TO LOOK AGE-APPROPRIATE.”

- 1) With places for both seating and storage, the mudroom addition provides a smooth transition from the backyard to the kitchen. Peg hooks around the window keep this busy family organized. The heater below, disguised by old-style brass grating, is flanked by storage drawers.
- 2) Friends and family find it hard to resist a moment of self-expression on the slate blackboard. (“Thank you for a nice dinner,” one guest recently scribbled.) The 1950s cowhide stool was found in Vermont.
- 3) The pantry is part of the sitting room, just steps from the main kitchen area. The landscape painting is by Massachusetts artist Margaret Gerding, whose work the Gosses collect. ☞

FOR MORE INFORMATION, TURN TO THE SOURCE BEGINNING ON PAGE 160.

