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# COUNTRY DANCE MIX

RUSTIC AND REFINED  
MERGE IN A FRESH,  
FUNCTIONAL KITCHEN

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF MCNAMARA  
STYLED BY INGRID LEES

The dark walnut island is a workhorse not only from the standpoint of everyday kitchen duties but also from a design perspective. Its dark color contrasts with the white cabinets and backsplashes, providing a visual anchor. The finish also acts as a transition from the cabinets to the Brazilian-walnut floor.

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A hefty refrigerator is easily accessible to everyone. The cook can remove fresh ingredients and place them on the island opposite, and hungry passersby can grab a snack or a beverage without invading the primary work area. Thanks to custom panels, the appliance blends in with the cabinets.



## DESIGN DETAILS

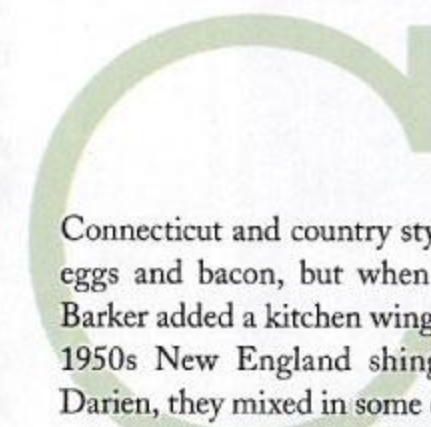


**SOAKING UP EXTRA SPACE** A brief gap in the base cabinets becomes an open, pull-out towel bar. Those particularly sensitive to clutter will appreciate having towels stashed away but still easy to reach.



**LOOSENING A TIGHT SPOT** A narrow, mesh-paneled door makes this constricted corner cabinet a fine display area. The drawer below provides bonus storage space.

FLOOR PLAN: STEVEN STANKIEWICZ

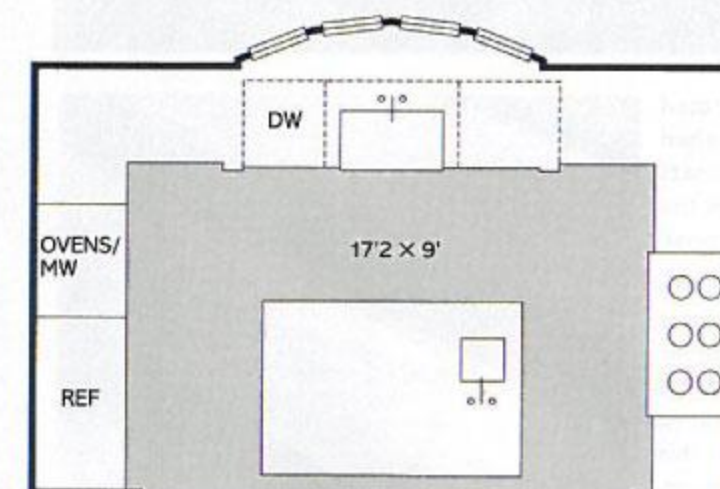


Connecticut and country style go together like eggs and bacon, but when Katie and David Barker added a kitchen wing to their multilevel 1950s New England shingle-style home in Darien, they mixed in some city sophistication.

The addition, which includes an eat-in kitchen, desk area, mudroom and butler's pantry, is bathed in a classy palette of white, black and espresso, while a host of metal finishes provide additional layers of refinement. The white New England-style cabinets are adorned with sleek polished-nickel hardware. Above the stainless steel stove is a brushed stainless hood with a wide rim and straps of polished chrome. And the door panels of the corner cabinets feature a diamond-pattern double-wire mesh made of polished chrome.

"I call it New England with Park Avenue chill," says kitchen designer Christine Donner, whose eponymous design firm is based in nearby New Canaan. "It has just the right amount of bling."

Other key features play off the traditional with high style. The farmhouse sink, for instance, has a fluted apron. The backsplash, covered with mini-subway tiles, has a herringbone pattern, and the vintage-style crystal pendant light fixtures are trimmed in polished nickel.



**ABOVE:** The practical benefits of the island become even more apparent when looking at the floor plan. The island acts as a bridge—uniting the refrigerator, range and primary sink—and as a barrier to keep traffic from wandering into the cooking area.





ABOVE: An understated desk area was crafted from the same cabinets used to outfit the kitchen proper.

RIGHT: Tucked into the desk area is a charging station for cell phones and digital music players—a great touch for this high-traffic space.



The 375-square-foot kitchen's focal point is the dark walnut island, which echoes the Brazilian walnut floor. Surrounding the island is a powerful perimeter of cooking, storage and food-prep areas. "The marble countertop—Calacatta gold—has a border that is a double thickness that gives it prominence," Donner says. "And the sink in it that faces the range makes it particularly convenient for cooking and filling pots."

A round dining table, where the Barkers eat meals with their toddler, Gracie, softens the geometry of the space. "It's much more sociable than a rectangular one," Katie says. "And it makes the space feel more open."

The kitchen works as beautifully as it looks. Katie is particularly fond of the high-speed oven, which Donner considers a must-have item for every makeover. "It only takes 20 minutes to cook a raw chicken to crispy," Katie says.

Whether the Barkers are feeding breakfast to Gracie, hosting backyard barbecues or entertaining connoisseurs from their gourmet cooking and wine clubs, their new kitchen is at the center of all the action. "We always serve hors d'oeuvres and wine in the kitchen," Katie says. "I can watch the trees in the backyard change with the seasons. And Gracie can play there and in the lower family area, which opens off the kitchen." ♦



ABOVE: Like the desk, the adjacent dining area blends in beautifully with the kitchen. It carries on the kitchen's mixture of warm wood and simple colors with dashes of modern elegance such as the pendant fixture over the table.



The seamless integration of laid-back and modern is amply exhibited here. Sharp, bright metal hardware jazzes up no-nonsense cabinet doors, and a fluted front adds character to the farmhouse sink. A bowed window ushers in the sun.

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