



TAKE IT OUTSIDE

ABOVE Designer Monica Boldea of Kowalske Kitchen & Bath chose Café appliances with a matte-black finish that fit well into the space without being obtrusive.

Clever ideas resulted in an indoor-outdoor kitchen that accommodates the whole family

By Chelsie Butler

A WISCONSIN FAMILY WHO LOVES spending time doing outdoor activities would have benefited by opening up their kitchen to the screened-in patio they use often when weather permits. The other designers who viewed the space were not sold on the idea of installing a window to accomplish this goal, but Monica Boldea of Delafield, Wis.-based Kowalske Kitchen & Bath came up with the idea of installing a pass-through window, which the homeowners loved.

The former kitchen was also in need of an update, as several soffits were taking up space, and the placement of the fridge blocked the countertop when the doors were opened. The small peninsula only sat two, which meant one family member was always left standing up during meals.



LEFT AND BELOW Because the wife wanted to keep her pantry in the new kitchen, the designer did not have enough space to accommodate an island, so instead she installed a peninsula with room for three seats so the family can enjoy meals together.

Boldea made smart choices to maximize storage and countertop space, including changing the refrigerator location, which allowed her to create a larger and longer peninsula. An appliance garage hides everyday items when not in use, which eliminates clutter and allows for more countertop space.

“The kitchen needed a better layout and flow, and the homeowners wanted a contemporary, clean-lined design with elements of nature,” said Boldea.

IT'S ALL IN THE PROJECT DETAILS

The designer's main goal was to install a bi-fold window that opens and connects the kitchen to the sunroom, which accomplished two things. One, it allows the homeowners to cook while interacting with guests on the patio and pass appetizers and cocktails to them from the kitchen. Two, the indoor-outdoor kitchen provides more entertaining space and connects to the backyard garden.

At the onset of the project, the wife had a gray shade in mind for the cabinet color, but the designer suggested instead a darker green/black hue. Since her client is an art teacher, Boldea wanted her to go bolder with a more black-and-white vibe with organic texture. The 4-in. by 4-in. glossy white backsplash adds this, and quartz countertops with a thicker vein round out the neutral color palette. Two angled power strips on either side of the range allow for a seamless backsplash.

The designer balanced the black-and-white kitchen with some warm wood elements, including shelves the husband made and refinished and a piece of barnwood the wife acquired from a family friend's farmhouse to adorn the hood. Boldea replaced the previous tile floor with oak to match the rest of the home.



The custom cabinets from local shop MKE Cabinetry feature slab doors with discreet hardware, and the designer explained that flush crown molding makes the cabinets appear inset, keeping their lines simple. There is a combination of dark lower units and white uppers, and expanding the peninsula gave the homeowners an additional base cabinet. An appliance garage with a fold-up door was installed to hide smaller items when not in use. Boldea chose a workstation sink because she says they are perfect for a smaller kitchen.

“The workspace is multiplied by using the sliding platforms that hold cutting boards and colanders,” she added. “You can chop, rinse, dry dishes, hold hot dishes and clean up more efficiently.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND LEARNING LESSONS

One hurdle Boldea had to tackle during the project was to create a seamless countertop from inside the kitchen to outside the window. She was originally going to install one slab with the window placed in the middle but realized that in the winter, the countertop outside would transfer the cold to the inside. She ended up using two pieces – one for inside and one for out – that are seamed and disguised under the window. It was a bit of a challenge to coordinate the installation of the two countertops with the window, but it was worth it in the end.

When asked if she would do anything differently if she had the chance to revisit this project, Boldea said she might try and talk the wife out of keeping the pantry. That way she could add more cabinets and maybe an island instead of the peninsula, but she did admit that the pantry serves its purpose well. Because the pass-through window was a major investment, the designer and her clients had to decide where to cut back elsewhere, and preserving the pantry helped keep the budget in check. ●

RIGHT The main goal in this kitchen renovation was to open it up to the screened-in porch. A large bi-fold window achieved this and allows the homeowners to interact with guests on the porch while cooking in the kitchen.



SOURCES: DESIGNER: Monica Boldea, Kowalske Kitchen & Bath (NKBA Member); PHOTOGRAPHER: Kyleen DzPloch Photography ● BACKSPLASH: Tilebar; BAR STOOLS: Amisco & Facebook Marketplace; CABINETS & HOOD SURROUND: MKE Cabinetry; COUNTERTOPS: ENVI Surfaces; DISHWASHER & RANGE: Café Appliances; FAUCET & SINK: Kohler; HOOD VENT: IKTCH; MICROWAVE DRAWER: Sharp; PENDANTS: Crate & Barrel; WINDOW: Weather Shield