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This Old House

RENOS THAT
IMPROVE
LIFE AT HOME

SPRING
2023

INDUCTION RANGES / WET ROOMS / LASER LEVELS / COBBLESTONE EDGING / POTTING BENCH

Kitchen & Bath

- INSPIRING DESIGN IDEAS
- PROBLEM-SOLVING LAYOUTS
- BEST NEW PRODUCTS

The Atlanta
project house
kitchen revealed!
See more,
page 9

PLUS

Comfort and charm
in Newburyport

Move-in time at the
Mountain Modern Idea House

FIRST LOOK: the Ipswich
1700s project house



Send in the crowds

For the Ramachandran family, four of whom love to cook, an angled kitchen island in their suburban Washington, D.C., home made practicing their passion a pain. The cooktop hogged prep space, lower cabinets were impractical, and the angled island blocked access to the pantry, which felt miles from the burners.

RELOCATE THE RANGE Moving the cooktop off the island was key to improving flow in the 242-square-foot space. So Kate Adams, designer/architectural specialist at Case Architects & Remodelers, created a feature wall for a new rangetop, moving the fridge to the wall with the double ovens. She put in deep drawers below the rangetop for pots and pans, with racks to house the family's extensive collection of cooking oils and spices on both sides.

BIGGER AND SO MUCH BETTER A new rectangular island, its top nearly 10 square feet larger, offers more than 12 linear feet of slicing-and-dicing space on two sides. It was placed to create a path between it and the rangetop that's a foot wider—key to avoiding traffic jams. "With a 4-foot-wide aisle, there's now enough room for two people to work back-to-back," says Adams.

LIGHTER, BRIGHTER LOOK Further fine-tuning included demolishing a desk in favor of a baking station/beverage bar and replacing a cavernous builder-grade pantry closet with custom cabinets calculated to fit specific items. Hints of gold, gray-veined quartz counters, and handmade zellige tile add unique character. "We now have a dream kitchen that meets all three requirements—form, flow, and function," Jo Ramachandran says. "It's also very pleasing to the eye."



BEFORE "So many cabinets, not enough storage!" is how homeowner Jo Ramachandran describes the former kitchen's unorganized, inaccessible boxes. The angled island created a "pinch point," impeding circulation, and its cooktop crowded anyone sitting there.

▲ CENTRAL STATION

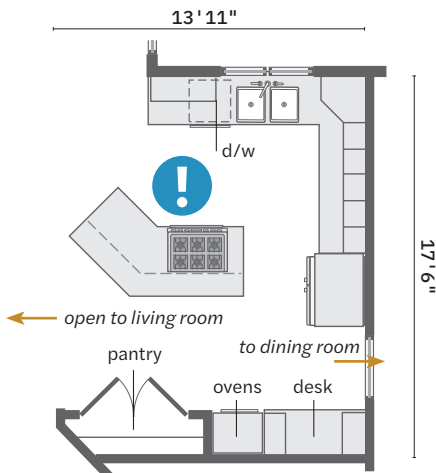
With 35½ square feet of countertop and seating on two sides, the ample island lets four people tackle KP while chatting with guests. "The larger island provides enough prep space so all four of us can work at the same time without impeding flow in the kitchen," says Jo. "And the quartz top is so forgiving—it handles everything from red wine to coffee to turmeric without staining."

WHAT THEY DID

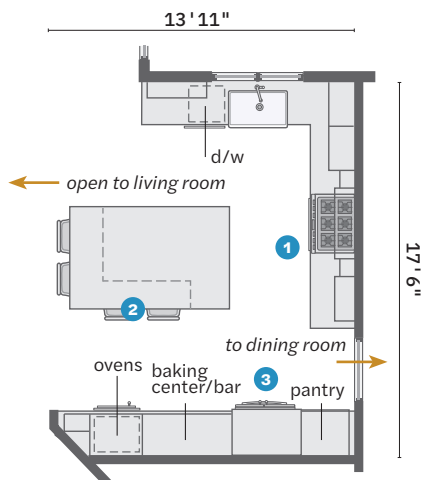
Ditching the angled island allowed for a larger rectangular one with a foot more clearance from the old fridge wall to ease circulation.

1. Placed a rangetop and its vent hood in a feature wall of cabinets along the back of the U-shaped layout; sink and dishwasher locations stayed the same.
2. Built a 4¾-by-7½-foot island with uninterrupted prep space.
3. Replaced an underused desk area with a wall of ceiling-high cabinets that includes tall pantry units with the fridge alongside, and a 4-foot-long baking station/beverage bar; double wall ovens shifted 63 inches to make room.

before



after



◀ TEXTURAL CONTRAST

A dramatic range hood descends from the 10-foot ceiling to hold its own with the sizable island. Its matte finish sets off the glossy backsplash of hand-cut and hand-glazed off-white terra-cotta tile.

▼ HARDWORKING LINEUP

With the refrigerator moved to the pantry wall, the rangetop on the back wall, and a new larger sink in the old one's spot, a wider aisle at the range end of the island creates an unimpeded path for food prep and cleanup. Doubling the number of base cabinets—including the island's—and taking the pantry wall units to the ceiling netted the homeowners significantly more usable storage.





UP TO THE CHALLENGE

For Jo Ramachandran, who admits to being “vertically challenged,” the specificity of the kitchen’s custom cabinet design provided a convenient spot to stash her step stool, which she needs to reach the tallest uppers. Photo Credit: Stacy Zarin Goldberg