

## Holiday-tested: Kitchen-centric, open floor plan well-suited for extended family



A food preparation island, well-organized work spaces and several strategically located "built-ins" allow the entire first floor to function as an entertainment suite.

BY JOHN BYRD  
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What a relief to be living in a "holiday-tested" house as the season approaches.

Such are the reflections of Gregory Brill causally critiquing the kitchen-centric floor plan introduced into his family's busy lifestyle just as the holidays commenced.

What can this baby do?

A sit-down dinner for forty or more. Family gatherings at Thanksgiving, Christmas. Open house parties. Birthdays. Anniversaries.

"We're the hub for our extended family," Brill explains. "So I appreciate a plan that makes it easier to prepare meals and spend time with guests. The visual connection really adds to the festivities."

A food preparation island, well-organized work spaces and several strategically located "built-ins" facilitate multi-tasking. Yet the kitchen finish work is so artfully integrated the entire first floor functions as an upscale entertainment suite.

The effect, Brill acknowledges, is a far cry from the compartmentalized warren of small rooms that dominated the home he purchased in late 2009.

Certainly, the original house--a circa 1980s center hall Colonial on a tree-shaded lot in Burke-- had potential for a young family that included preschoolers. There was the large backyard; the comfortable, well-located neighborhood.

"But when I took a critical look at the first level floor plan," Brill recalls, "I knew entertaining was going to be challenging."

For starters, there was the problem of the tiny 8-by-14 galley kitchen situated in the rear and sandwiched between a small dining room and an equally constrained family room.

With a front-facing formal living room, Brill pictured holiday parties as one endless trudge from the stove to the front parlor and back.

Complicating matters, several interior walls didn't so much confer privacy as inhibit circulation. A knee-high railing between the dining room and living room added nothing as a zoning solution.

And beyond this, Brill recoiled at the absence of sightlines, observing that "the whole purpose of having a party is for people to see each other."

What to do?

"We interviewed several remodeling firms," Brill recounts. "Sonny Nazemian, at Michael Nash Design Build, however, offered plausible solutions the first time we walked through the house together. When I stopped by his office a few days later, he presented me with detailed conceptual drawings. His ideas really worked."

### Reconfiguration and Upgrade

Since Brill was especially interested in a more "open" first floor socializing scheme, Nazemian—who is certified as both a remodeler and an interior designer—proposed a reconfiguration of rooms that places a gourmet kitchen squarely into the home's mainstream.

To augment the formal dining, the family room was "re-purposed" into the new dining room complete with fireplace. Space formerly allocated to the old dining room was, likewise, co-opted into the footprint of a substantially enlarged kitchen suite—which now boasts a sunny breakfast nook.

L-shaped granite-surfaced counters along the south and west elevations of the old dining room now define two legs of the cook's new work triangle. The third component-- a food preparation island-- includes a range oven, custom-designed storage and a two-stool dining counter.

Satisfying the homeowner's passion for enhanced visual linkage was another matter.

To open up sightlines, Nazemian removed a load-bearing wall between the family room from the kitchen, shifting upper level support to micro-laminate beams resting on vertical shafts. A wall between the old kitchen and din-



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

By replacing a load-bearing wall with a micro laminate beam attached to concealed vertical supports, remodeler Michael Nash introduced an "open" plan that has greatly facilitated holiday entertaining.

ing room was also deleted. As an interior design solution, Nazemian proposed decorative archways that conceal supports, keep sightlines clear and add dramatic mid-room accents.

A butler's pantry and china cabinet abutting the new dining room serve two roles. The elevation facing into the kitchen features a sink, a microwave, a warming oven and a generously-

sized granite serving-surface. In the dining room, glass-facing cabinetry provides easy access to china and stemware.

"I've found that a successful open plan demands a cohesive

interior design," Nazemian observes. "The point is to create a greater whole."

On this score, the design team replaced builder-grade linoleum  
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A "built-in" between the kitchen and the dining room provides cabinet storage for china and stemware, and also a two-level serving station steps from the food prep island. Cherrywood cabinet facings present a crisply refined finish. The Tuscan-style pendant lights provide a softly amber illumination.



Archways, flooring, color variances and other formal elements help to define primary gathering zones in an otherwise open plan that features clear sightlines and easy circulation.



The former family room was "re-purposed" into a new dining room complete with fireplace. The old dining room was, likewise, co-opted into the footprint of a substantially enlarged kitchen suite—which now boasts a sunny breakfast nook.

**HOMES**

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flooring with a diagonal pattern of soft beige porcelain tiles. Emerald pearl granite surfaces were deployed for the food preparation island, butler's pantry and counter tops.

Cherrywood cabinet facings present a crisply refined finish. Suspended above work and serving stations, Tuscan-style pendant lights offer a soft, amber illumination.

As always, inspired color combinations both particularize and unify. Earthy reds highlighting the breakfast room contrast

with the softer pastels of porcelain backslashes, drawing out the rich overtones of the cabinet and counter surfaces.

The white ceiling neutralizes the bolder statements—but also invites the eye to explore spatial expanses that unfold in all directions.

Other details demonstrate the surprising versatility of a contractor service that includes a well-endowed showroom backed with accommodating suppliers.

A unique slab of granite above the fireplace in the dining room, for instance, caught the homeowner's attention as a potential objet d'arte. Yet the surprising turn was that Nazemian's fabricator allowed a hand-drawn jagged outline for

the slab's topmost edge, shaping the piece to personal preference.

"The company was really committed to satisfying our aesthetic requirements," Brill observes. "The attention to detail is impressive."

*Michael Nash Kitchen and Homes periodically offers workshops on home remodeling topics. For information call (703) 641-9800 or visit MichaelNash-Kitchens.com*

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The homeowner found the granite slab above the fireplace in the remodeler's show room and was allowed to hand-draw the outline for the topmost edge to preference.

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