

French country kitchen is perfect for holiday entertaining

■ Springfield remodeling plan accomplished large goals with small, focused changes

BY JOHN BYRD
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Transforming a circa-1970s “builder-grade” kitchen into a French country style interior that incorporates a barn door won remodeler Michael Nash Design Build and Homes a string of prestigious peer awards when it was first completed several years ago. However today, the important news for homeowners Jeffery and Meg Levine is how well the makeover works as a place for entertaining friends and family during the holidays.

“This contractor really accomplished a lot with our budget,” Meg Levine acknowledges. “The suite of rear rooms that includes the kitchen and family room feels enormously expanded, yet we only borrowed a few feet from inside the house. The improvement has been great for family gatherings.”

Looking back, the original 143-square-foot kitchen and family breakfast zone presented a host of practical problems, Levine recalls, most notably all the appliances were crowded in a small, L-shaped work zone, and the counter surfaces inhibited thru-traffic.

The kitchen also lacked adequate storage capacity, and was too dark.

“It’s funny,” Levine reflects. “This was considered a modern kitchen when we bought the house...yet I couldn’t even open the doors to the dishwasher and the stove at the same time.”

Adds Sonny Nazemian, Michael Nash founder, president and CEO:

“The original space plan employed a lot of space dividers to define activity zones. 20 years ago, homeowners wanted lots of rooms—even small ones; today the highest priority is ‘open’ space, interactive zoning, storage and comfort.”

So what exactly did the Michael Nash team do to transform

a dysfunctional kitchen into an award-winner?

Consider:

- The existing kitchen’s L-shaped counter (which was intended to give the cook a privacy zone actually) was found to be one reason limited floor space felt quite constricted. Also, the HVAC system concealed ceiling-flush bulkheads that restricted cabinet height and reduced storage capacity.
- The Michael Nash solution-- replacing the L-counter with a stand-alone island-- introduced flexible work triangles while directing “thru- traffic” away from the cook. The island also doubles as a two-seat lunch counter.
- To gain inches, the remodeler moved the dining room door to the left. An 18-inch-by-8-foot niche was shelled-in into the former door aperture, borrowing a little floor space from an adjacent living room.

This provided a more sensible location for the refrigerator, and— as an added benefit— a new wet bar with overhead cabinets.

The change also opened up a pocket for re-routing heating and cooling ducts. Shifting the door, in turn, created wall surface for substantially taller cabinets to the right of the stove and microwave.

The upshot: more storage in all directions; clean sight lines throughout.

- The breakfast zone at the opposite end of the kitchen connected to a small family room which boasted a brick back wall with an open hearth. Regrettably, the door between the two rooms was too narrow for visual linkage between the hearth and the cook’s work zone. To open up sight lines, Nazemian enlarged the access.

The plan: an archway, 5 feet in width, which can be closed off via a unique interior design element: a barn door mounted on a cast iron rail.

To make this happen, Michael Nash craftsmen constructed a 430-pound Dutch-style barn door to owner specification. A pre-manufactured wrought-iron track was also installed by the crew, who took the time needed to assure the alignment would support load requirements.

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PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

Through a series of thoughtful changes that included replacing a single rear door with a double French slider, remodeler Michael Nash dramatically improved available light and sight lines in the Levine family’s circa-1990s center-hall Colonial.



To increase visual linkage between the kitchen and the family room, the archway between the rooms was expanded by five feet; a Dutch-style barn door mounted on a cast iron rail serves as a room divider when needed



BEFORE: Pantry space in the original kitchen was severely limited.



BEFORE: The existing kitchen’s L-shaped counter-- intended to give the cook privacy-- made limited floor space feel even more cramped. “This was considered a modern kitchen,” Meg Levine reflects, “yet I couldn’t open the doors to the dishwasher and the stove at the same time.”



BEFORE: Owing to its narrow door, the hearth in the family room was out of view from the rest of the kitchen.

THE TOP TEN SALES IN FAIRFAX COUNTY



MCLEAN

6814 FELIX ST,
MCLEAN, VA 22101
\$792,000
4 bed, 2 bath



MCLEAN

6539 GEORGETOWN PIKE,
MCLEAN, VA 22101
\$2,250,000
5 bed, 4 bath



VIENNA

406 TROY CT SE,
VIENNA, VA 22180
\$587,500
4 bed, 2 bath



VIENNA

2113 WOODFORD RD,
VIENNA, VA 22182
\$1,280,000
4 bed, 5 bath



RESTON

10802 HUNT CLUB RD,
RESTON, VA 20190
\$615,000
4 bed, 2 bath



RESTON

12369 LIMA LN,
RESTON, VA 20191
\$635,000
4 bed, 3 bath



FAIRFAX

3821 EGAN DR,
FAIRFAX, VA 22030
\$300,000
3 bed, 2 bath



FAIRFAX

3907 BAY HILL CT,
FAIRFAX, VA 22033
\$835,000
5 bed, 5 bath



CENTREVILLE

5709 HARRISON HOUSE CT,
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120
\$435,000
4 bed, 2 bath



CENTREVILLE

14404 VIRGINIA CHASE CT,
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120
\$649,900
5 bed, 4 bath

What's next in real estate? Markets, trends to watch in 2017

BY SUZANNE DE VITA

Real estate in 2017 is to be shaped by cities that meet not only the economic standards of a sustainable market, but also the demand for distinct neighborhoods within those markets.

This is according to the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) and PwC's latest report, "Emerging Trends in Real Estate® 2017," which analyzes trends-to-come in both the U.S and Canada housing markets. Ten "gateway" markets, as defined in the report—those with both a diverse economy and "niche" neighborhoods—will stand above the rest:

1. Austin, Texas
2. Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
3. Portland, Ore.
4. Seattle, Wash.

5. Los Angeles, Calif.
6. Nashville, Tenn.
7. Raleigh-Durham, N.C.
8. Orange County, Calif.
9. Charlotte, N.C.
10. San Francisco, Calif.

Dominating the report's list are markets in California, North Carolina and Texas, which have become ideal investment areas in both the commercial and residential sectors.

"Viewed as a fluke when it hit the study's top 10 list five years ago, Austin's rise to the top of the list signals the durability of the city's long-term appeal to investors," says Mitchell Roschelle, real estate research leader and PwC partner. "Austin, along with many of this year's top 10 cities, boasts attractive, niche neighborhoods and a vibrant, diverse economy."

Five up-and-coming markets, in addition to the top 10, are also on the rise, according to the report:

1. Columbus, Ohio
2. Richmond, Va.
3. Pittsburgh, Pa.
4. Charleston, S.C.
5. Salt Lake City, Utah

Market-based trends aside, 2017 will also be marked by construction labor shortages tightening affordable housing inventory—a trend that can be reversed if all real estate-related constituents contribute to a solution, the report's authors, Alan Billingsley, Hugh Kelly, Anita Kramer and Andrew Warren, state.

"This is a real opportunity for the real estate industry to lead a way toward solutions. Real estate in all its guises—construction,

property management, brokerage, and even finance—offer ample opportunities to create entry-level jobs that are not 'dead-end jobs,' but the first step on a career path."

Municipalities that have begun to address affordable housing shortages have set the example to follow in 2017, as well, according to the report. Many have resorted to a conventional standby: inclusionary zoning.

"The most widely used approach by far... is an old idea that has roared back to life: inclusionary zoning," the report's authors state. "Through such zoning, cities require or encourage developers to create below-market-rate rental apartments or for-sale homes in connection with the local approval of a proposed market-rate development project."

"Optionality," in addition—the ability for both landlords and tenants to determine the use of a space—will be a trend next year, according to the report.

"Both on the investor side and the user side of the market, optionality—not just one use, not just one user, not just one user profile—may be gaining favor as a way to navigate the cross-currents of volatile markets," the report's authors state. "Optionality from a user standpoint allows for the adjustment of space needs to vary in terms of size, location, and use on an as-needed basis."

Advancements in real estate-related technology will also occur, furthering the accuracy, speed and transparency involved in real estate transactions—"an 'auto-correcting' real estate cycle."

Content is provided by:



Contact Javen House or Kim House for more information:

Javen House
javen.house@gmail.com
703-201-3388

Kim House
kim.house@LNE.com
703-201-8860

homesbyhouses.com



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With new floor space now apparent, the remodeler redesigned the home's east-facing rear elevation to increase both natural light and visual connectness to the wooded backyard. A Double French slider was installed to replace the original single door. The window in the cook's station was, likewise, relocated and enlarged. The result: "the whole area is warm and light-filled," Meg Levine says. "The trees and the yard are all around us, and it's very peaceful."

All of which, Levine concludes, is a testament to her contractor's grasp of modern kitchen design:

"Sonny Nazemian came to our house in a courtesy call and pointed out some ways that we could meet our needs just by borrowing a little from existing rooms. I was skeptical, but when we reconvened at his show room a little later, he presented us with a detailed floor plan ...and we hadn't even signed a contract."

What equally impressed Levine was the fact that Nazemian offered a "flat rate with no contingencies."

"No one else would do that, and there turned out to be some unexpected wiring challenges. Sonny stuck to the agreement and did the extra work with no added cost to us. I don't know if that kind of service is considered by contest's judges, but it made us happy."

For information call (703) 641-9800 or go to MichaelNash-Kitchens.com

John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached by phone at (703) 715-8006, www.HomeFrontsNews.com or byrdmatx@gmail.com.



By shifting the dining room door a few inches, the remodeler created the wall space needed for a serving station with glass-facing cabinets.



Floor space borrowed from the adjacent, seldom-used living room created the square footage needed to accommodate a larger refrigerator, and a new a wet bar.



Replacing the L-shaped counter with a stand-alone island introduced flexible work triangles while directing "thru-traffic" away from the cook. The island also doubles as a two-seat lunch counter.