

# Home Life Style Holiday Tested

BY JOHN BYRD  
SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION

**W**hat a relief to be living in a “holiday-tested” house as the season approaches.

Such are the reflections of Marie Brill, on the kitchen-centric floor plan she and her husband introduced into their busy lifestyle just last year as the holidays commenced.

And 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 says. “So I appreciate a plan that makes it easier to prepare meals and spend time with guests. I can stand at the range oven facing the living room. The visual connection really adds to the festivities.”

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

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

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

“But when I took a critical look at the first level floor plan,” Brill says, “I knew entertaining was going to be difficult.”

For starters, there was the problem of the tiny (8-by-14-foot) 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.

“We interviewed several remodeling firms,” Brill says. “Sonny Nazemian, at Michael Nash Design Build, however, of-



**Removing a load-bearing wall by means of a high-tech beam, the Brill’s center-hall colonial in Burke now has open spaces suitable for entertaining.**

fered 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 the Brills were 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 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.

Satisfying the Brills’ 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 microlaminate beams resting on vertical shafts. A wall between the old

**Kitchen-centric, open floor plan well-suited for extended family entertaining.**

kitchen and dining room was also deleted. As an interior design solution, Nazemian proposed decorative archways that conceal supports, keep sightlines clear and add dramatic midroom accents. In the dining room, glass-facing cabinetry provides easy access to china and stemware.

“I’ve found that a successful open plan demands cohesive interior design,” Nazemian says. “The point is to create a greater whole.”

On this score, the kitchen floor is now a

SEE HOLIDAY TESTED, PAGE 14

PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY



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

## Creating the Holiday Table

**Local designers offer suggestions for dressing a festive table and caring for guests.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**A** festive holiday table requires more than prime rib and plum pudding. From incorporating natural elements to maintaining a consistent theme, local entertaining and design gurus dole out advice for creating a tablescape as enticing

as the food it holds.

Candlelight creates a warm ambience, but Ann O’Shields, owner of The Nest Egg in Fairfax suggests skipping tall tapers.

“Low candles set a really nice glow on the table and give it a really nice feeling as well,” said O’Shields. “I always recommend doing unscented candles so they don’t interfere with all the fragrances from your

holiday meals.”

Vienna-based design consultant Denise Willard of Décor by Denise suggests choosing a color scheme, but limiting the palette.

“A simple way to give your holiday decorations a designer look is to stick to two or three colors at most,” said Willard. “This year the silver and green color combination is hot.”

O’Shields agrees that simpler is better. “Whether you want to decorate with blues and browns and silver or go more tradi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF DESIGNER SHAZALYNN CAVIN-WINFREY

**Mixing sizes and adding patterns creates visual holiday harmony.**

SEE HOLIDAY TABLE, PAGE 14