

cottage kitchens

Timeless & Multipurpose

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A constrictive layout becomes a clean, classic kitchen you could stay in all day.



The original refinished sink in its new location offers its timeless character and functionality with the added bonus of an attached butcher block you can lift up to access the basin. Sheer drapery, white marble and cabinetry allow the natural light to star in the space.



Historic homes are charming, but when it comes to the kitchen in this Montgomery home, built in the early 1900s, the original layout did not suit the homeowners' needs. Alabama-based interior designer Ashley Gilbreath, however, worked with her team to transform the space, while still incorporating many elements original to the home.

ORIGINALITY

The present kitchen was actually two rooms before—a breakfast room and a kitchen—which made the layout constricting. Broadly speaking, kitchens in the past were viewed as utilitarian space rather than as a multipurpose hub for cooking, eating, working and hanging out. It shows in their layouts too, with small kitchens walled off from other rooms, in this case the breakfast room.

Ashley explains that the homeowners, a young professional couple, wanted to expand their kitchen's uses: "The goal of it was to give this couple a kitchen that could be lived in—a place they could have friends over and gather in. It was a very tight space before, so we had a lot of space constrictions. They wanted space to sit down and eat, but also a space to hang out. [Now] one can cook and sit and talk at the same time," Ashley says.

Ashley and her team moved and re-freshed the glass-front cabinets original to the house. The cool-mint-painted beadboard refreshes the cabinetry, creating contrast and the impression that the dishware is floating, which fits perfectly with the light-filled milieu.

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The island offers more classic, multifunctional space with inviting barstools for visiting, working or reading while cooking or hanging out with the cook. A chalkboard contributes to the timelessness and adds an element of playfulness.

It was a comprehensive process, but prominent original features still ground the home in its history, unconstrained by the historical use of the space. The pine-plank floors, sink and glass-front cabinetry are all original to the home. Ashley and her team gave them new life by refinishing them and relocating the glass-front cabinetry and the sink.

"The kitchen sink was previously in front of the window where the banquette is now. It's a way to be creative and use the space that's there and still make it function," Ashley explains. The window where the sink used to be is higher than the one where it sits now. "We creatively put the sink in front of windows that go down behind it ... The drapery falls back behind the kitchen sink splash to make it look intentionally made that way," she says.

Working within the space also meant some decisions were easy. "There was only one functional wall in this space," Ashley explains, leaving only the island for the stove.

KEEPING IT CLASSIC & CUSTOMIZABLE

When it came to material choices and the color palette, timelessness was the organizing theme. For the countertops, for instance, Ashley says, "Marble is a pretty timeless material; it dates to the same period [as the house]." With white as the base, the light color scheme keeps it clean, classic and helps reflect the light. This is one of Ashley's favorite features of the kitchen. "There's a lot of daylight in here," she says.



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The refinished original sink, in addition to its period authenticity, is also multifunctional, with an attached butcher block over one of the basins. You can lift it up to access the basin as well.

The dining area also opens up the space for multiple uses. The table, with its charming unfinished wood texture, is from Europe and folds out to accommodate guests. "The table adds great texture and great warmth," Ashley says. The custom-made banquette and a complementary wingback chair from Restoration Hardware make the space inviting and multipurpose. "You get the lounge feel because of the banquette, plus a place to eat, plus a comfy chair to work with the table smaller or larger, so you have the ability to seat more. Overall it ends up being a very functional space, from a space that was useless before," Ashley says.

By combining the former kitchen and breakfast room, Ashley and the homeowners created a kitchen that now functions as a central, spacious hub and complements the adjoining spaces. Ashley explains, "The breakfast room flows into ...the bar area, and then the double doors flow into the vestibule and laundry area, which then flows into the master bedroom. It all connects very cohesively." **CB**

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Before Ashley and her team got to it, this wall used to host the kitchen sink. The custom banquette blurs the line between where the window ends and the seating begins. Sheer drapery and white upholstery amplify the light. The table and chandelier from Parish contribute their warm wooden textures.