



photo by dan cutrona

“We wanted to keep the essence of the house,” says Donna Gryzwoc of the recent remodeling of her small Cummaquid kitchen in a historic 1850 home.

BY ANDREA E. MCHUGH

small spaces
BIG
IDEAS

Local professionals prove

even small kitchens

can boast big design.

"The truth is that big kitchens are just easier to design," admits David Flanagan, owner of Wychmere Woodworks in Orleans. However, Flanagan concedes that many homeowners on the Cape may lack the luxury of unlimited funds and abundant square footage for their dream kitchen. In this region in particular, small homes are de rigueur—saltboxes and seaside cottages, many historic, are often defined by confined spaces. When it comes to remodeling these kitchens with modern conveniences, woodworkers and kitchen designers can have their work cut out for them.



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The homeowners turned to Falmouth's Bayside Kitchen & Bath to fit a washer and dryer into the kitchen without compromising charm and convenience.

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Mark Lane of Bayside Kitchen & Bath in Falmouth (www.baysidekitchens.com) is familiar with the unique set of challenges that are presented when big ideas need to fit into small spaces. He recently completed a kitchen renovation in the cozy Wilson Ryder House in Cummaquid that delivers a deceptively spacious feel. Homeowners Donna and Mitch Grzywoc had done minor upgrades over the past 14 years since they moved in to the home. They installed wide pine flooring, replaced the countertops and painted the room. The next step on their wish list was to add a concealed washer and dryer in the limited kitchen space. The two turned to Lane to design and fit function and convenience into a tight space without compromising their elegant, if small, kitchen.

“[The space] raised a lot of issues,” says Lane. The circa 1850 home located in the Old Kings Highway Historic District (which is on the National Register of Historic Places) has a series of small rooms and multiple mini-additions commonplace for homes from the era. There were multiple uneven surfaces throughout the space. “Nothing matched up,” says Lane. It was very important to the Grzywocs to preserve the design integrity of their home.

“We wanted to keep the essence of the house,” says Donna. Though Lane could have corrected the irregular surface areas as best as possible, he decided the best approach was to completely reframe the space. Laying that foundation created a wholly level surface which made installing custom-made cabinetry an uncomplicated process.



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“Our job is the puzzle—

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Master woodworker David Flanagan designs and handcrafts cabinets and kitchen features that can be customized for small spaces such as these pocket-size shelves and storage areas, opposite, in the confined spaces of a compact Cape kitchen.

Though 12’ x 22’ may sound like limited square footage, Lane was able to craft a refreshingly airy kitchen that includes a top of the line 36” rangetop with six burners, a stainless steel French-door bottom-freezer refrigerator, a ceramic farm sink, and unbelievably, the washer and dryer under a countertop camouflaged behind matching cabinet doors. “I made it all work,” Lane says with a laugh. “Our job is the puzzle—it’s all about completing the puzzle.”

Lane knows a thing or two about making things work. He made extra money while attending Fitchburg State by remodeling apartments his landlord acquired. By his senior year, he had landed an internship at a custom cabinet factory. Those opportunities, plus more than 20 years of experience, make completing each project’s puzzle attainable. He has also become a trusted advisor to homeowners when making difficult, costly, decisions.

“Part of it will always be aesthetic driven, you know, what’s the newest thing,” Lane says, but he also knows that kitchen renovations are expensive, and trends should be carefully assessed. He says each kitchen project needs to be approached as an investment. “Budgets simply don’t allow you to change kitchens like you change your clothes,” he explains, noting that it’s important for each homeowner to choose appliances, amenities and accessories carefully.

Ranches, saltboxes, colonials, and cottages make up the majority of Cape Cod homes, the builder explains noting homeowners with unrestricted budgets and carte blanche square footage are not the rule Cape-wide. “Trophy homes are such a small percentage of our reality,” Lane stresses, noting that Bayside also works with homeowners to design and build bathrooms where space is at a premium.

Designer Ann Hebsch at Supply New England in Falmouth (www.kitchen-bathgallery.com) says she often works with homeowners who want the sophisticated amenities and aesthetics of luxury kitchens adjusted to smaller spaces, including condominiums. The key, she says, is finding appliances and designs that offer spatial solutions. The Kohler Smart Divide sink, for example, is a cast iron sink that features dividers half the height of those found in conventional double-basin sinks. Hebsch says that fitting a cutting board and draining basket atop the sink will make for less clutter and offer the homeowner more working space. Single-handle kitchen faucets with pull out spray heads also take up less space than traditional multi-hole faucets.



“You are looking for small space savvy,” says Supply New England’s designer Ann Hebsch of kitchens that need to deliver big performance in a limited space.

“I listen to what the customer’s needs are,” says Hebsch, who then designs a kitchen with customized space-saving answers for each homeowner’s needs. Manufacturers, she adds, are increasingly adding products with smaller spaces in mind. Counter-depth refrigerators sit flush with cabinets and microwave hood ovens are dual purpose when installed directly above an oven range, allowing for more open counter space. Islands can double as functional workstations and dining areas.


“You’re looking for small space savvy,” Hebsch explains. Wall color, cabinet designs, and countertop surfaces can also offer the illusion of a much larger kitchen. Hebsch says that on the Cape, homeowners offer gravitate toward clean and simple designs, perhaps because of the natural simplicity of our seaside environment. One of the most popular hues by Fieldstone Cabinetry, which Supply New England carries, is Aegean Mist, inspired by the sea. Color choice is more than aesthetic, it’s strategic, notes the designer. “These soft colors are replacing traditional white, and clean, simple doors show these colors off,” she says. The opportunity to jazz things up in a small space, Hebsch advises, is with a customized backsplash or in décor details.

“We do a lot of white or off-white because it’s timeless,” explains Eric Leckstrom of Kitchen & Bath Designs Unlimited in Osterville (www.designsunlimitedinc.net). Leckstrom works along side his father Thomas, a certified kitchen designer (a certification designated by the National Kitchen & Bath Association) and together the two have a combined nearly 50 years experience in designing fine cabinetry and countertops for kitchens and baths. “A lot of people are surprised at the options you can go with for a small space,” Leckstrom says. “You can make space for nearly everything.”



Barnstable Architect and custom builder, Keith MacKenzie-Betty, has a relatively unorthodox approach to kitchen design. His company, Barnstable Kitchens (www.barnstablekitchens.com), offers clients the choice of an array of design and build packages. The kitchen is supplied by a factory, he explains, and the savings are passed along to the homeowner. For example, one of his kitchen packages includes solid cherry wood cabinets and granite countertops with installation, for approximately \$8000.

“It’s gone really well so far,” he says with enthusiasm when discussing his business model. MacKenzie-Betty explains that on Cape Cod, many of his clients are looking to remodel or upgrade without spending a lot of money. By producing the design and relying on quality factory-made cabinetry, Mackenzie-Betty can deliver well-made kitchens that make effective use of space while increasing a home’s value. “It is a substantial difference in price, but the quality is still high,” he says. Armed with architectural know-how and years of experience (“I’ve worked for some very clever people,” he says with a laugh), MacKenzie-Betty says he walks into a project “with slightly wider eyes.”

For master craftsman David Flanagan of Wychmere Woodworks (www.wychmerewoodworks.com), custom is always the name of the game as he crafts kitchen cabinets and fine furniture in his Orleans shop. “A lot of people try to jam a lot into a small space,” says Flanagan, whose beautiful handcrafted cabinets and kitchen features have transformed many Cape kitchens large and small. To achieve each client’s wish list—especially for small spaces—Flanagan crafts solutions using every available square inch. Slide-out spice racks, built-in microwaves, wine racks—all merge function and beauty. “It’s a juggle really, but it’s always doable,” says Flanagan. 

To achieve each client’s wish list, Flanagan crafts space-sensitive solutions from putting shelves above microwave ovens to designing small in-kitchen seating areas with streamlined counters and stools.

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