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gold
STAR

Two designers join forces to create a kitchen made for precision cooking and entertaining – butler’s pantry bar and all.



Floor-to-ceiling black metal-and-glass cabinets, *opposite*, make for a special place to store serving ware. Custom cabinetry conceals two refrigerators and a breakfast bar between them. The bar’s pocket doors open and slide into the cabinet’s millwork to reveal extra counter space and shelves.

The kitchen's cooking zone, dining area, and butler's pantry all sample the same palette and materials in different measure. White, black, brass, and natural wood repeatedly commingle in various combinations of light to dark. The large central island is a natural gathering place, but drawers and appliances—like the microwave—ensure it's a workhorse, too.

A FEW YEARS AGO, JESS BECKERMAN FOUND HERSELF WITH AN EMPTY NEST AND A VERY FULL SOCIAL LIFE.

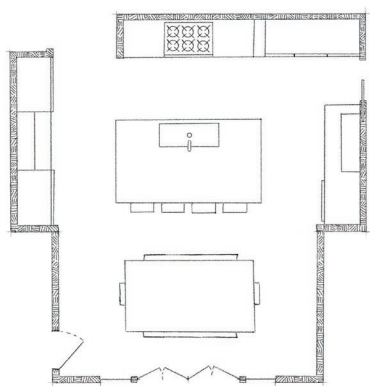
To make the most of both, she turned to designer Valerie Grant to transform her Mendham, New Jersey, Colonial Revival into an open, sophisticated space where she and her husband could both pursue their personal interests and host friends and family. "I let Valerie pretty much have carte blanche," Jess says. "She has wonderful taste, and she really pulled it all together."

As part of the renovation, the home's layout was reconfigured around a newly expanded kitchen and butler's pantry. While Jess gave her designer a lot of freedom, she had one firm directive: "I did not want a kitchen that felt like a kitchen. It needed to be something more formal—more like a nice room," she says. "I didn't even want people to know that a refrigerator and freezer were in there."

Appearance aside, the space had to be practical. "Jess has high standards for how she wants things to look, but she also loves to entertain, and she's an amazing cook," Grant says. "She needed a space where all of that could happen." To that end, Grant recruited kitchen designer Jim Dove to help maximize form and function. His appliance and storage decisions prioritized how the homeowners move around and actually use the space—and how all that works within the big picture.

the plan

To ensure supreme functionality for an avid cook, the designers limited extra steps by aligning the cooktop with the sink. The butler's pantry, which serves as a bar, is accessed through an open doorway to the left of cooking zone.



BELOW: The butler's pantry is stocked with all the necessary decanters and glassware of a prepared host. RIGHT: A wallpaper by Jane Churchill sets the stage for the rest of the pantry's moody elements.



Although surprises abound around every corner (dark-painted doors and transoms visually balanced by white shiplap, a large black metal-and-glass pantry, crisp white panels hiding those pesky appliances, and oak inlays in the tray ceiling), they all work in concert. "It's all about finding the right balance and being conscientious of layering," Grant says.

The same care was given to the butler's pantry, which the Beckermans use primarily as a bar. Because the space needed to connect to the kitchen aesthetically, Grant selected a zigzag wallpaper in muted tones. Black makes a return appearance in the room's custom cabinetry, alongside brass inlays and pulls.

While elevated details unite the adjacent rooms, there is one subtle difference between the two: The kitchen is outfitted with quartz countertops and backsplash, while the pantry's bar area is topped with quartzite. Guests are more than welcome to toast in the bar, Jess says, but placing a stain-resistant material in the larger room ensures guests can set down, say, a glass of red wine as they mingle. Now the Beckermans can rest easy—and clink glasses with peace of mind.

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DESIGNER INSIGHTS: PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

Professionals in adjacent fields, interior designer Valerie Grant and kitchen designer Jim Dove each brought unique expertise to the table, creating a kitchen with elegance and efficiency.

• **The macro and micro stay in focus.** While Grant concentrated on selecting hard surfaces and standout features that worked within the context of the entire home, Dove could focus on the details. "The homeowner is a good cook, so I wanted to get specific about how the kitchen could better work for her," Dove says.

• **The ideas get bigger and better.** "When you have a kitchen designer and interior designer, it makes for a richer room because everyone looks at it differently," Dove says. "In this room, the black metal cabinet led directly to the idea for the open shelving unit, while Valerie selected black metal-and-brass lighting and the pretty chairs."

• **The solutions are smarter.** Dove considers the cook zone a home run. "The bottom of the brass oven hood is stainless steel, so it's easy to clean and maintain," he says. "And that oak surround isn't merely a surround—the spice racks to the left and right of the range add another layer of practicality."

LEFT: The rectilinear lines of the oak island reappear in the dining room through the contemporary black table and custom light fixture.