

JUST-RIGHT KITCHENS


Kitchens are the hub of a home — but an open floor plan presents unique challenges. These three newly renovated spaces offer tips on how to achieve a highly personalized design that marries efficiency with cutting-edge style.



:: Into the Light ::

A DESIGN TEAM MOVES A HIGH-RISE KITCHEN FROM A DRAB CORNER
TO AN OPEN, AIRY SPACE WITH A VIEW

BY GAIL RAVGIALA



THE ISLAND serves many functions in this Boston Rowes Wharf kitchen. Combined with the dramatic stainless-steel hood floating above the induction cooktop, it becomes a visual focal point while also drawing the eye to the dramatic city view. And since there are limited overhead cabinets, the island was designed to provide much-needed storage.

BEFORE AN EMPTY-NEST COUPLE BOUGHT their penthouse *pied-à-terre* on Rowes Wharf, they had traipsed through condominiums in every major residential building on the Boston waterfront, hoping to experience that “Aha” moment. They had seen some stunning spaces, so it took them by surprise when they walked into the 20-year-old unit, which the husband described as “not very nice,” and thought, “This is it!”

“It was a beautiful sunny clear day, and the view was spectacular,” the husband says. “I knew it was going to take a lot of work ... but with the views and the fireplace, it doesn’t get any better than this.”

But it did.

They hired Robert Ernst, president of FBN Construction of Boston, who has years of experience reworking condos in buildings where immov-

able steel and concrete need to be met with ingenious but practical solutions. He suggested they relocate the windowless corner kitchen to a guest bedroom that overlooked the city. By removing a wall, the new kitchen would be open to the living/dining area, creating the

free-flowing floor plan the owners desired — and every corner of the room would have both harbor and city views. “I knew we could figure out a way to do it,” says Ernst.

Macro plan established, the owners turned to Boston interior designer Leslie Fine for aesthetic details and a modern minimalist approach. To fine-tune the kitchen, Rosemary Porto, senior designer for Poggenpohl Boston, was added to the team. Their forward-thinking design scheme

- ▼ **STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES** meet discreet design solutions when an immovable chase between the refrigerator and the wall ovens (BOTTOM LEFT) is obscured with stainless steel. Plumbing, wiring, and ductwork are hidden inside soffits. A Dornbracht tap (BOTTOM RIGHT) creates a fountainlike effect against the riverstone backsplash which adds natural texture to the room.
- **THE DIAGONALLY LAID** dark-stained walnut floor flows from the kitchen into the dining/living area where it draws the eye to the sweeping views of the harbor. Artwork was selected with Jacqueline Becker Fine Arts Consulting.

mixed hard-edged materials, such as steel and glass, with natural textures and colors such as river stone and teak in a gray finish.

To keep the plan open and the views unobstructed, overhead cabinets, the refrigerator, ovens, wine cooler, sink, and dishwasher were limited to two walls. The cook top is in an island, a sculptural statement with a glass surface, steel on two sides, and teak cabinets for added storage. The trapezoidal lines of the building’s outside wall made placing the island a study in geometry. Set at a right angle to the back wall, the island creates a triangular space between it and the window where a guest can stand and observe the cook or study the Customs House that dominates the view.

Also geometric in execution is the glass-and-steel breakfast bar that splays out from the wall, both defining the kitchen and connecting it to the living area, where the color palette is the dark blue-green of water and softer blue of the sky. The one windowless wall is sheathed in sandblasted mirror with thick glass shelves that inspired the opaque glass doors on the upper kitchen cabinets, further unifying the space.

“We bought this place thinking we would spend one or two nights a week here,” says the husband, who works nearby and had been commuting from a suburb north of Boston. “Now we are here five, sometimes six nights. It’s home.” ::



PIED-À-TERRE

INTERIOR DESIGN :: LESLIE FINE INTERIORS INC.
 KITCHEN DESIGN :: POGGENPOHL BOSTON
 BUILDER :: FBN CONSTRUCTION
 LIGHTING DESIGN :: LIGHT INSIGHT DESIGN STUDIO
 PHOTOGRAPHY :: ERIC ROTH





DESIGN DECISIONS
Glass Distinction

The “all is one” open floor plan interior designer Leslie Fine adopted for the penthouse meant the kitchen had to be seamlessly integrated into the overall design scheme. The



breakfast bar (FACING PAGE, FAR LEFT) becomes an elegant link between the spaces when it is topped with three-quarter-inch Starfire glass. Starfire is optically clear — that is, it has about 50 percent less green tint than ordinary glass. “We decided on glass for the breakfast bar so you could see the whole

stainless-steel structure and appreciate it,” says Fine. The decision was inspired by the dramatic feature wall surrounding the fireplace, where Fine also used the glass for shelves (ABOVE) set into sandblasted mirror. “I wanted the clear glass to have a floating effect,” says Fine, so her design had no support brackets. The engineering was left to Robert Ernst of FBN Construction. “We took down the original wall, reframed it so the vertical pieces were strong enough so we could cut notches for cantilevered slots for the shelves after the wall was plastered.” The clients liked the glass theme so much they added a Starfire top to the kitchen island.

FLOOR PLAN

