

Scientists add a light-filled kitchen to their Rockport home



elements of the sea

Eight years ago, scientists Adam and Kelley Hill saw the blue Victorian house that would become the perfect beach house for them and their five children. “It was love at first sight,” Adam says of their home in Rockport, Massachusetts. “It was a place where generations to come could walk to the beach and get away from it all, but be back in Boston within an hour. It had lots of bedrooms and big reception rooms on the first floor for entertaining. The only thing that was missing was a good-sized kitchen.” Other problems included outdated bathrooms and a crumbling fireplace at the center of the house, which was built in 1905. The Hills knew the house needed a major addition and renovation and spent five years dreaming about what they wanted.

When they were ready, they tapped interior designers Caitlin Flynn and Elyse Parkhurst of North Fork Design Co. and architect Charles Nazarian to develop a plan for an open, light-filled kitchen that was great for entertaining; updated bathrooms on all three floors; and interiors reflecting life at the beach. “For me, the big things were making sure that the whole concept of the beach was incorporated in the design,” Adam

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Previous page, left to right: Details such as booth-high shelving and under cabinet lighting make beach living easy. | An LED light in a drawer illuminates a glass countertop. | This page: The dream of an open, light-filled kitchen was achieved with three sets of skylights and new windows along the back wall to let in more light. Cabinet and ceiling lights help to keep the line of sight open and airy.



says. “The granite represents rocks on the shore, the floors look like sand, and the walls are blue. I really wanted to make sure that light was able to flood through the rooms, especially the kitchen.”

The new addition, measuring a little less than 500 square feet, removed walls that blocked light and included lots of windows, and used the existing basement for the entire footprint of the addition. They had builder John Gero from Kettle Cove Builders put in six skylights in the angled roof over the kitchen — three on each side. They also enlarged the existing windows that looked out onto the deck along the back wall of the kitchen. “The overall flood of light and airy feel was as we had hoped and possibly more than we imagined,” Adam says.

Since the clients love to cook side by side and to entertain, the layout of the kitchen was set up for multiple cooks who can face their guests as they prepare food. There are two sinks, two dishwashers, two trash compactors, two ovens — a wall oven and an induction stove — and a separate baking area. The height of the counters were customized according to their function — 36 inches high for cooking, 33 inches for pastry making, and 42 inches for eating.

Lighting was a big focus for the clients. “My wife, Kelley, was afraid to have a million holes in the ceiling,” he says. “What we came up with was the four-inch MR16 lights in the cans. That really helps in terms of reducing the Swiss-cheese appearance of the ceiling. And we wanted to make sure it was a warm light to counteract the coldness of the granite.” Another lighting detail was a blue-and-green glass countertop given to them by a glassblower friend. It weighs about 65 pounds and appears lit from within by an LED light inside the drawer below it. “We use it as a nightlight. It turned out so fabulous.” To use all of this great lighting, they chose an RA (remote access) Lutron system that lets them control all of the lighting, activating any light they want with the push of a button.

When laying out the cupboards, they wanted to display their flame-colored Le Creuset bakeware with LED lights above it. Flame orange became an accent in the kitchen, and the designers used mango-hued glass tile surrounding the raised portion of the island, then echoed that color in a custom paint color on the kitchen’s orange accent wall.

To bring in the colors of the sea, Parkhurst and Flynn selected shades of blue and gray for the wall colors. In the kitchen and breakfast nook, they chose Benjamin Moore’s soothing gray Eternity and used serene blue Cool Breeze for the entryway and half bath. Parkhurst says that the Hills wanted sand-colored flooring to look like the ocean floor and to hide the sand tracked through the new space. North Fork chose Dom Mesa Golden Blend flooring from Galleria Stone and Tile. “The critical piece that North Fork provided was the nuance in the palette,” says Adam, noting that the designers



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took the Hills' color preferences and helped them find the perfect shades. The designers also helped them select kitchen and bath products and materials. For countertops, they found Cambria's Talbot Gray quartz, which is black with white speckling. "Quartz is a worry-free stone that can stand up to a lot of use in a kitchen," Flynn says.

The breakfast nook off of the kitchen is one of the most beautiful elements in the addition. "The clients felt like they wanted almost a lighthouse-inspired addition," Parkhurst says. "They chose many of the elements to have a sailboat feel since the house is in Rockport." Nazarian suggested the octagon-shaped design to give the feeling of space and a focal point both on the inside and the outside of the house. Patty Svirsky from Lucia Lighting in Lynn, Massachusetts, helped them find lighting that complemented the ceiling. "The crescendo lights in the octagon needed to be really light and airy, and it almost had the look of sailboats with the small shades, so it was a perfect fit," Adam says.

The designers picked textured Ambra Gris tile from Discover Tile for the first floor bathroom off the entryway and the master bath shower. "It is a 24x24-inch, hand-carved stone," Parkhurst says. "It gets assembled in a wavy pattern, which is not easy to install. The lighting Patty helped us with accentuates the tile. The material takes on a different depth when it's lit and looks unbelievable."

In the upstairs bathrooms, the crumbling chimney that was removed gave the design team extra space. "The second-floor guest and third-floor master bathrooms were reconfigured around the hole left by the chimney," Flynn says. In the master bath, they also took space from a bedroom to create a larger area with a spa-like feel. They used Caen Stone, a yellow-toned tan by Sherwin Williams, on the walls, along with wave tile in the master shower and the sand-colored flooring from the entryway. When it came time to design the third floor bath and laundry, the pieces easily fell into place and they kept the spaces simple and practical.

The guest bathroom on the second floor is based on an iceberg-blue marble that the clients admired. "We found that countertop and I said, 'We have to have this,'" Adam says. "We bought the whole slab." When they had extra marble, they asked the cabinetmaker from the kitchen to add an additional cabinet for the bathroom. Parkhurst and Flynn matched the custom shade of blue paint on the walls to the blue marble. They also chose to have the new bathroom floor heated. "A nice perk," he adds.

The clients are thrilled with their airy, light-filled space by the sea and credit their team with pulling it all together. "From the concept to the execution, there is nothing we would change," Adam says. "With everyone's help we generated exactly what we wanted. When you open the windows, you can hear the ocean; the feeling created by those design elements ties everything together. That whole sense of satisfaction is amazing." ■



This page, clockwise from above left: Architect Charles Nazarian designed an octagon-shaped breakfast room to utilize a tight space on the floor plan. | The North Fork designers created a functional beach house with a basket for beach towels and a bench for sweaters and flip-flops. | Wavy glass in the guest bathroom lets light into the upstairs hallway. | Ocean wave tiles are illuminated with a strip of LED lighting.

