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FAMILY HEIRLOOM

A remodel creates space where a family can gather for generations to come.

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IN HIS 20 YEARS AS AN INTERIOR designer, Tom Sfisco has never had a project that resonated as personally as this one. His great-grandfather built this Somerville, New Jersey, house more than 100 years ago. His mother was raised here. And now it's Tom's home.

The house has been the scene of countless birthday parties, holiday celebrations, and special family meals. Tom is continuing the tradition, hosting gatherings of all sizes, and his passion for entertaining drove the kitchen redesign. "My main concern was to keep it clutter-free and very user-friendly when I had guests here," he says. "I also wanted to create a kitchen that paid respect to the home's early-20th-century architecture but wasn't a period replication."

Tom knew that getting the kitchen he envisioned would require more than a facelift, so he called on his friend Ray Ferraro, a contractor with expertise in space planning.

Improving the flow of the space was Ferraro's first hurdle. "I was concerned that the kitchen was self-contained," he says. "It stood by itself and did not connect to the rest of the home." His first idea was to take out the wall between the kitchen and the dining room, but Tom preferred to keep a separate, formal space for dining. A second pass at a new design yielded the solution: Remove a

ABOVE: Barstools offer a perch for informal dining and conversing with the cook. The corbels on the peninsula match those on the custom range hood for a cohesive look.



\$ BUDGET TIP

Place new fixtures close to existing water lines to avoid spending on labor-intensive plumbing changes.

powder room just off the kitchen and open the space to the family room.

Tying into the plumbing that had served the powder room, Ferraro added a bar sink next to the refrigerator. The main sink moved to a corner once occupied by a pair of wall ovens; a gently curving countertop on the nearby peninsula overlooking the family room offers plenty of prep space. Seating at the peninsula also lets guests chat with the cook without getting in the way.

Clean, classic white cabinets mesh with the period style of the house. Stainless-steel appliances mix in modern touches and a professional look, preventing the overall style from becoming too sweet.

The 4-inch white oak plank flooring was coated in a mixture of three stains for a rich, dark hue. Tom craved granite for the countertops, but he knew that the shiny stone would be too slick and new-looking for a century-old

house. So he had the granite honed. "It was already kind of pitted and dulled," he says. "So it has the effect of an old pastry board."

Simple subway tile with a glazed crackle finish gives the backsplashes a clean-lined, aged look. "You go to tile stores, and you see all this intricate, beautiful tile," Tom says. "And then you add your coffeepot, your toaster, and all of a sudden you have a cluttered look."

The family gathering spot now has a kitchen as proud as its history, and Tom knows his undertaking was worth the effort. "My siblings and I agree," he says. "Mom would have loved this." **KBI**

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TOP: A glass-front cabinet subtly adds a sense of space in a corner of the small kitchen. **ABOVE FAR LEFT:** Roll-out produce baskets add texture and a touch of old-fashioned style. **ABOVE LEFT:** With an extra sink outside the main work area, the new kitchen gives guests a place to serve themselves. **LEFT:** Custom cabinetry gives the refrigerator and microwave a built-in look.

