

Kitchen Confidential

There's no question about it: Designing or remodeling a kitchen can be the toughest, most complicated, and costliest home project you'll ever encounter. Happily, it can also turn out to be the most rewarding. ¶ In our first-ever comprehensive kitchen issue, we've done the heavy lifting for you by finding real-life examples of near-perfect rooms. These five Greater Boston kitchens represent a broad range of styles, finishes, and layouts. We annotate them down to the smallest detail—from cabinets to appliances to countertops—and pinpoint their smart design elements and problem-solving ideas. Read on for how to take your own kitchen from so-so to superb.

BY RACHEL LEVITT AND DONNA GARLOUGH
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT KNIGHT
RECIPES BY JJ GONSON, CHEF-OWNER,
CUISINE EN LOCALE

The Look: *Exotic* »

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION
Brookline
ARCHITECT
Charles R. Myer
& Partners,
Cambridge
CONTRACTOR
Columbia
Contracting,
Charlestown

North African touches warm up a well-proportioned galley kitchen.

OVEN

Thermador Pro-Harmony Dual Fuel, Yale Appliance & Lighting.

REFRIGERATOR

Stainless steel Sub-Zero integrated refrigerator/freezer, Yale Appliance & Lighting.

BACKSPLASH

Elements tile in dark fawn gloss, Ann Sacks.

STONE SPICE SHELF

Skyros gold, Marble and Granite.

FLOOR TILE

Mahal Medallion and Coloured Earth in mustard seed with Harlequin border, Ann Sacks.

LIGHTING

Translite Sonoma Basis track with Moto fixtures, Chimera.

COUNTERTOPS

Custom stainless steel with integral sinks, Weiss Sheet Metal.

FAUCET

Chicago Faucets' Kitchen Collection commercial wall-mount, Monique's Bath Showroom.

CABINETS

Custom design by Charles R. Myer & Partners, built by North Star Woodworking.

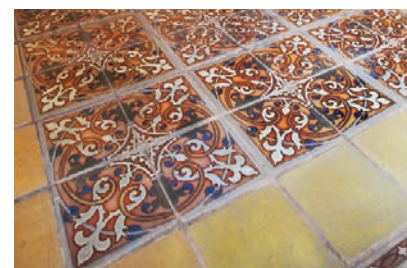
✓ *paint accents*

Cabinets with glass doors provide an opportunity for added color. Here, the back panel is painted blue to echo the dining room ceiling's bright hue.



✓ *tile "carpet"*

Myers opted for a tile floor with arabesque details to underscore the Moroccan theme. The solid-color tile border creates a carpetlike look.



✓ *interior window*

Because this Brookline kitchen had windows at only one end, architect Charles Myers built an interior window that opens to the dining room, so the owners wouldn't feel hemmed in by cabinets while working at the sink. To lend the opening a formal air, he used walnut trim and an arched ceiling.



drawers, doors, and racks

Addressing the age-old storage-crunch problem, Myers designed pullout drawers and door-mounted racks, while reducing shelf depth so provisions don't get lost. All the Shaker-style veneered cabinets were custom-built in Maine.



GET COOKING

PICKLED NECTARINES

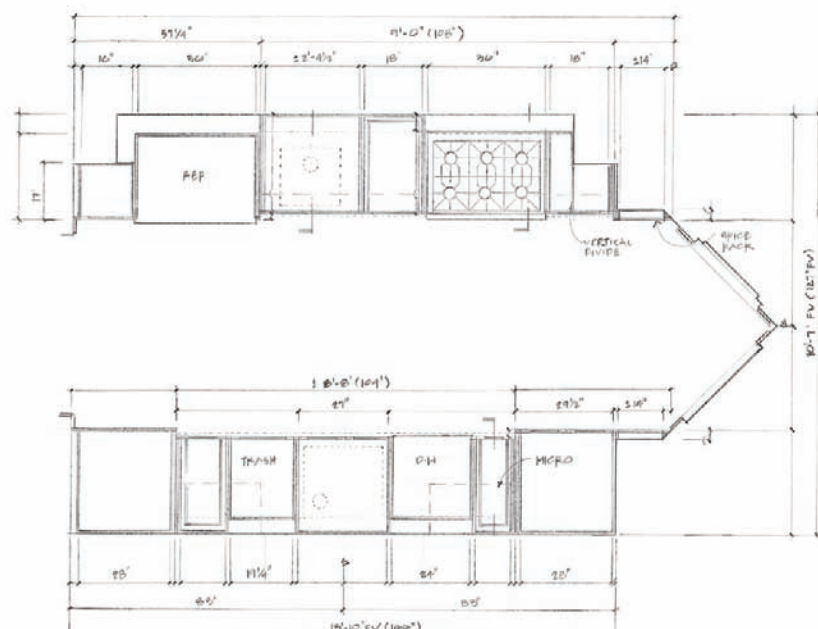
These fruity pickles go well with pork chops or baked ham. Harder nectarines work better; just make sure they are somewhat ripe.

- 12 nectarines
- 1 c. apple cider vinegar
- 1 c. water
- 1/4 c. maple sugar (available at natural-food stores)
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 1 thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 whole vanilla bean, split lengthwise and cut into chunks

In a large pot, boil enough water to submerge the nectarines. Meanwhile, prepare a bowl of ice water and set aside. Cut a shallow X on each nectarine opposite the stem. Boil nectarines for 30 seconds, then remove with tongs and drop them immediately into the ice bath. Once they're cool, you should be able to easily remove the peel.

Slice the fruit, and place in a large jar (or several smaller ones) with ginger and vanilla bean pieces distributed evenly throughout. In a medium saucepan, bring vinegar, water, sugar, and salt to a boil, then remove from heat and pour over the fruit. Let cool, close jar(s), and refrigerate. Allow the jar(s) to sit in the fridge for 24 hours or more before opening. Serve the pickles within two weeks.

THE PLAN: EXOTIC



The distance between the counters is slightly over five feet: wide enough for two people to work comfortably in the space, but not so wide that cooking solo requires too many steps.

concealed hood

The story here isn't about what you see, but what you don't see—in this case, a bulky ventilation hood above the stove. Myers installed a powerful recessed unit; its control panel is on the lower right wall for easy access. Since the back wall can be seen from the dining room, Myers kept things simple with a warm tile backsplash and a single stone spice shelf.



The Look: *Euro* »

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION
Chestnut Hill
KITCHEN DESIGN
Leslie-jon A. Vickory Designs, Boston
INTERIOR DESIGN
Simone Habermeyer, Chestnut Hill
CONTRACTOR
Robert Lawrence Builders, Westwood

Designed for kids, pets, and parties, this layout was heavily influenced by the homeowners' time in Switzerland.

HOOD

Décor island hood by Miele, Designer Cabinetry.

OVEN, SPEED OVEN, AND WARMING DRAWER

Miele Master ChefSeries, Designer Cabinetry.

COFFEEMAKER

Coffee System by Miele, Designer Cabinetry.

WALL CABINETS

Artika in gloss lacquer with grooved handle by Pedini, Designer Cabinetry.

FAUCETS

Tara Classic by Dornbracht, Splash.

COOKTOP

Master ChefSeries electric cooktop by Miele, Designer Cabinetry.

ISLAND CABINETS

Outline in matte zebrano by Pedini, Designer Cabinetry.

COUNTERTOPS

Calacatta marble, supplied and installed by Louis W. Mian.



^ *appliance wall*

Designer Leslie-jon Vickory herded all the major appliances and the pantry into a single recessed wall unit that appears to float above the floor. Since the three stainless steel Miele appliances didn't create a complete square, she added a Pedini stainless steel drawer (fitted with a Miele handle) to finish the look.

drawers within drawers

The Pedini cabinets have versatile and functional stainless steel drawer inserts that can be customized to store dishes, dry goods, or cooking utensils. Because the owner is an avid and extremely organized home cook, her storage needs were carefully considered during design.



islands

A family-friendly kitchen needs plenty of seating, easy sink access, and lots of counter space. Vickory's solution is two parallel islands: a narrow space designed for light prep and cleanup, and a wider counter with a cooktop that doubles as an informal dining area.



^ *maximum storage*

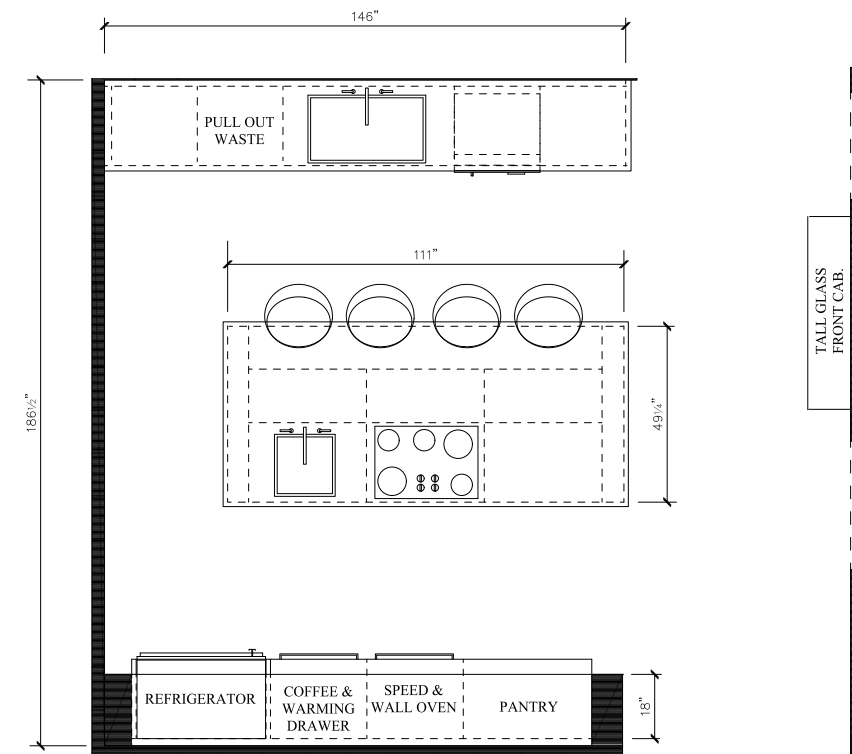
Instead of the typical under-sink wasteland, this Pedini design has U-shaped stainless steel drawers that fit around the sink's plumbing, maximizing storage space. It's the ideal spot for sponges and cleaning products—right where they're needed most.



^ *flush detailing*

Pivoting pulls disappear into the zebrano wood drawers; countertop overhangs are kept to a minimum; and Vickory avoided traditional moldings and trim. All these small details add up to reinforce the kitchen's clean, modern lines.

THE PLAN: EURO



GET COOKING

ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH ZA'ATAR SPICES

Za'atar is a Lebanese blend of dried thyme, sumac, and sesame seeds, and is available in the ethnic-food section of many grocery stores. If your eggplants are small, they do not need to be peeled and "sweated," but large ones can become bitter if you skip these steps. Serve this as a side dish or as a starter with bread.

- 2 lbs. eggplant, any variety
- 1/4 c. olive oil (plus more if needed)
- 3 tbsp. za'atar spices
- Salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. If dealing with large eggplants, remove the tough skin using a vegetable peeler. Cut off the stem ends and dice the rest into one-inch cubes. For large eggplants, toss the cubes with kosher salt and allow them to sit in a colander for at least 15 minutes to help reduce bitterness. (The cubes will release, or "sweat," a lot of water, which should be drained.) Rinse off the salt and pat the pieces dry.

In a large bowl, toss diced eggplant in olive oil and za'atar spices and spread loosely on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or foil. If you did not sweat the eggplant first, add a bit of salt as well. Roast eggplant in the oven for about 15 minutes or until the flesh is soft throughout. Serves four.

Left, Vickory's plan sets up three distinct zones: preparation, eating, and cleanup. A fourth zone to the right becomes a main thoroughfare at mealtime.

« The Look: Green

Big spaces *can* be eco-friendly—just choose your cabinets wisely.

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION
Lincoln

DESIGNERS
Karen Clarke Design, Lincoln; Michael Tcherniavski, Casa Design, Boston

CONTRACTOR
David Brookes Construction, Lexington

HOOD

Best stainless steel remote blower by Broan, Yale Appliance & Lighting.

OVEN, SPEED OVEN, AND DISHWASHER

Miele Master Chef Series, Yale Appliance & Lighting.

BACKSPLASH

Crystal glass tile and Siame porcelain tile in chocolate, Shep Brown Associates.

COOKTOP

GE Monogram gas range, Yale Appliance & Lighting.

CABINETS

Artematica in Fine Line walnut and glass by Valucine, Casa Design.

COUNTERTOP

Silestone in Capri limestone, supplied and installed by Boston Bluestone.

ISLAND COUNTERTOP

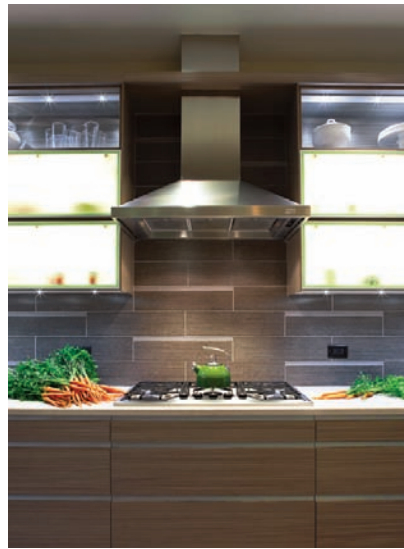
CaesarStone in mocha, supplied and installed by Boston Bluestone.

PENDANT LIGHTS

Mania with milk-white and caramel-brown diffusers by Studio Italia Design, Casa Design.

COFFEEMAKER

Coffee System by Miele, Yale Appliance & Lighting.



powerful venting

Open kitchens require strong fans to prevent cooking smells from seeping throughout the house. Architect Karen Clarke chose a hood with a 1,200-CFM roof-mounted fan to keep noise to a minimum.

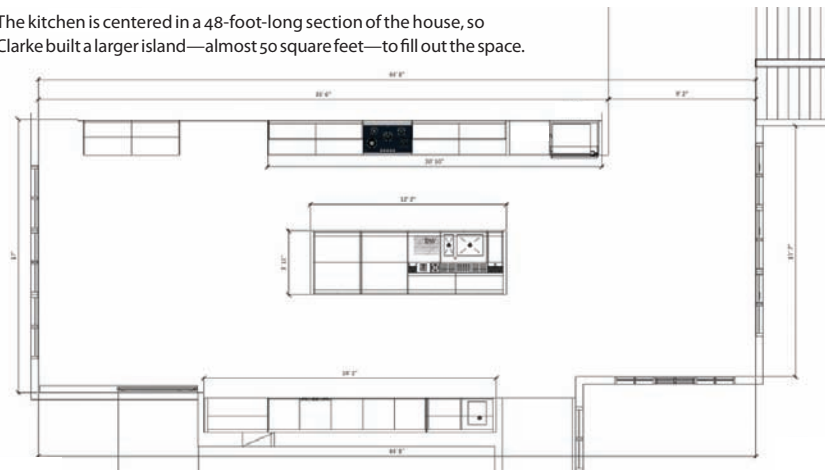


appliance storage

An aluminum roll-up door reveals a cabinet deep enough to hold a food processor or rice cooker. At that depth, interior lights are a real perk, as is the built-in coffeemaker. The glass cabinet doors are only five millimeters thick and surprisingly light.

THE PLAN: GREEN

The kitchen is centered in a 48-foot-long section of the house, so Clarke built a larger island—almost 50 square feet—to fill out the space.



glass and light

To encourage guests to gather in the kitchen, Clarke used Valcucine's backlit glass uppers to create appealing windowlike accents. When illuminated, they provide a soft glow.

functionality

This Valcucine cabinet system features an optional 6-inch-wide stainless steel insert called a Logica; it comes with options such as a drain board, knife block, and condiment tray.



environmental edge

Clarke wanted the cabinets to be eco-friendly, so she thoroughly researched various companies' claims. She learned that Valcucine plants trees to offset those used in construction, and its lightweight products, while still durable, consume 86 percent less material than the average kitchen cabinets. The company's innovative microlayered doors are made of veneer and fabric for strength and elasticity, requiring no formaldehyde, synthetic varnishes, or paints. The end result? This Lincoln kitchen is LEED-certified.



GET COOKING

CLASSIC CARROT-GINGER SOUP

This soup can be made in large batches and frozen for easy fall meals. Serve topped with a pinch of fresh thyme and a dollop of crème fraîche or cream.

- 1 bunch of carrots, scrubbed (not peeled) and cut into 1-inch chunks
 - 1 thumb-sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and cut into small chunks
 - 3 c. chicken or vegetable stock
- Salt and pepper

In a large stockpot, bring the stock to a boil. Add carrots and ginger, reduce heat to a simmer, and cook until the carrots are soft, approximately 15 minutes. Taking care not to splatter the hot liquid, transfer the cooked vegetables and stock to a blender and purée until smooth (or use an immersion blender to purée the soup while it's still in the pot). Add salt and pepper to taste. Serves four.

« The Look: Modern

A suburban Colonial gets a contemporary makeover in dark wood and a neutral palette.

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION
Newton

DESIGNERS
Leslie Fine
Interiors, Boston;
Rosemary Porto,
Poggenpohl,
Boston

CONTRACTOR
Poggenpohl,
Boston

LIGHTING

Tech Lighting monorail system with Small Nest pendants, Wolfers.

REFRIGERATOR

Sub-Zero 48-inch refrigerator in stainless steel, Poggenpohl.

COOKTOP

Vario gas cooktop by Gaggenau, Poggenpohl.

OVEN, MICROWAVE CONVECTION OVEN, AND WARMING DRAWER

All by Miele, Poggenpohl.

HOOD (NOT SHOWN)

Vario telescopic swivel downdraft by Gaggenau, Poggenpohl.

CABINETS

Dark oak décor and mineral beige matte lacquer, Poggenpohl.

BACKSPLASH

Selvaggio in crema, Ann Sacks.

COUNTERTOPS

CaesarStone in misty carrera, supplied and installed by GerrityStone.

WINE REFRIGERATOR

Sub-Zero wine cooler, Poggenpohl.

COFFEEMAKER

Gaggenau built-in coffee machine, Poggenpohl.

island and lighting

Because the island would get heavy use, designer Leslie Fine chose a durable Caesar-Stone countertop for easy maintenance and cleanup. Stools slide neatly underneath the counter until mealtime. A monorail lighting fixture with blown-glass pendants gives off plenty of ambient light. Fine also installed dimmable lighting around the cabinets.



backsplash

A mosaiclike stone backsplash brings texture to the kitchen, and lends a welcome counterpoint to the dark, minimalist cabinets.



storage

Poggenpohl's "magic corner" makes brilliant use of an otherwise unusable space. The pullout, with swiveling adjustable shelves, is ideal for storing small appliances and tall vases.

functionality

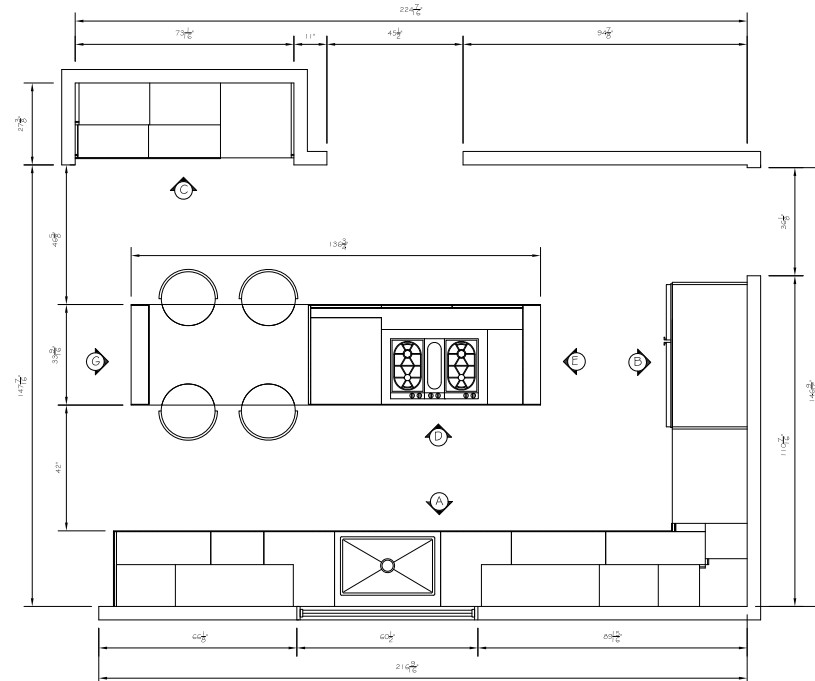
Fine put the wine refrigerator, cappuccino/espresso maker, and glassware cabinets all in one place, away from the cooking area, so that guests could gather in the kitchen during meal prep. The small counter provides a convenient place from which to serve wine, cocktails, and hors d'oeuvres.

concealed venting

To avoid placing a huge hood over the island, Fine chose this Gaggenau telescoping down-draft. When needed, it rises between the burners. The rest of the time, it's hidden below deck, leaving the island appliance-free.



THE PLAN: MODERN



The 228-square-foot kitchen has abundant counter space, thanks to an 11-foot-long island.



GET COOKING

SUMMER SQUASH AND BELL PEPPER FRITTATA

The vegetables' bright yellow color makes this dish a vibrant main course for brunch or lunch.

- 1 large yellow summer squash
- 1 medium yellow bell pepper
- 6 eggs
- 2 c. whole milk
- ¼ c. grated Parmesan or other hard cheese
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh herbs (such as oregano, marjoram, and thyme)
- 2 tbsp. olive oil, plus 1 tbsp. for sautéing
- Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Wash and cut the vegetables into thin strips, half an inch wide and two inches long. In a cast-iron skillet over medium heat, sauté vegetables in one tablespoon of the olive oil until soft. Transfer to a colander to cool and drain.

Whisk together eggs and milk in a large bowl. Heat remaining oil in the skillet over medium-high heat. Pour in half the egg mixture. As it begins to cook, sprinkle in half the cheese, followed by the vegetables, herbs, and remaining eggs. Top with remaining cheese. Place pan in the oven and bake until the eggs puff up and cook through, 30 to 45 minutes. To serve, place a plate larger than the pan on top. Quickly invert the pan to flip the frittata onto the plate. Serve hot or at room temperature. Serves four.

« The Look: *Classic*

SINK LIGHTING

Ellington pendants, Brass Light Gallery.

COUNTERTOP

Custom zinc, built and installed by Brooks Custom.

BACKSPLASH

4-by-4-inch white tile by Dover, Tile Showcase.

ISLAND LIGHTING

French ceramic rise-and-fall pendants by Hector Finch, Blanche P. Fields.

QUICK FACTS

LOCATION
Wellesley

ARCHITECT
John Tittmann, Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, Boston

CONTRACTOR
Robert Lawrence Builders, Westwood

French pendants, an enameled stove, and a marble island lend a distinguished air to a traditional kitchen.

HOOD

Hood Villa 90 by La Cornue in pure white with polished stainless steel and chrome trim, Dalia Kitchen Design.

REFRIGERATOR

Sub-Zero, Poirier Sales and Service.

ISLAND COUNTERTOP

Carrera marble, supplied and installed by Aldrich Stone Company.

FAUCET

Talia in chrome by Grohe, Poirier Sales and Service.

CABINETS

Custom design by Peter Winer, Winer Woodworking.

FLOOR TILE

6-by-6-inch clay tile by Seneca, Tile Showcase.

OVEN AND RANGE

Le Grand Castel 90 Range by La Cornue with gas burners and electric oven in pure white, with polished stainless steel and chrome trim, Dalia Kitchen Design.

▼ custom touches

Each drawer face extends beyond the drawer's width so that collectively they appear to span the full length of the cabinet. Elegant woodwork, paneled walls, a coffered ceiling, and dovetail joints give the kitchen a refined sensibility without seeming too ornate.



▲ counter detail

A utilitarian, industrial material, zinc can be shaped into any form. Architect John Tittmann took advantage of the metal's properties to add an unusual kitchen accent: a decorative ogee edge on the backsplash that gives the room a dose of glamour.

▼ plant trough

A shallow trench along the window wall behind the sink provides a perfect home for herbs, cacti, and flowering plants. Because it's lined with zinc and equipped with a drain, the owners never need to worry about spills from overwatering.



ceiling and color

Tittmann designed and installed a deeply coffered ceiling and outfitted it with three simple, perfectly scaled French pendants with counterweights. His overall kitchen plan includes more than 10 shades of white, from the ceiling to the painted cabinets and the wall tiles; the effect is harmonious yet subtly dynamic.



GET COOKING

SWEET AND SOUR SWISS CHARD

Naturally bitter chard leaves get a flavorful boost from honey and lemon. Separating the stems from the leaves allows both to cook until just tender. This makes an excellent side dish with pork or chicken.

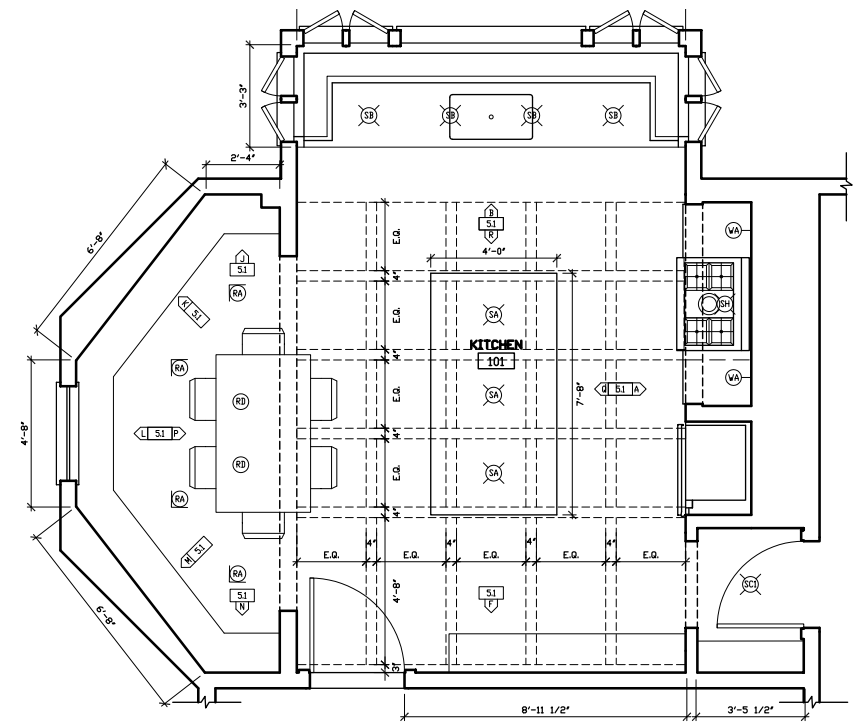
- 1 bunch Swiss chard (rainbow or plain)
- 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 1 tbs. olive oil
- 1 tsp. honey
- 1 tbs. lemon juice or vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Wash the chard and shake it dry. Strip the leaves from the stems. Keeping the parts separate, chop both into one-inch pieces. Heat a cast-iron or other heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high. Reduce the heat to medium; add the chopped stems, garlic, and olive oil to the pan; and sauté for two minutes or until the stems start to soften. Add the leaves and sauté for another minute or until everything is soft. Add honey and lemon juice and remove from heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serves four.

cooking area

Tittmann carried the kitchen's white theme to the cooking niche, where he put in a high-gloss white tile backsplash, white cabinetry, and a pure white enameled French stove. He also made sure the cookware was easily accessible by hanging it from a wall-mounted La Cornue stainless steel rack. Other metal accents—like the zinc countertop and the stainless steel teapot, toaster, and utensil container—add sparkle to the space, complement the stove's chrome hardware, and provide an eye-catching contrast to the room's light palette.

THE PLAN: CLASSIC



The 230-square-foot kitchen includes a 135-square-foot eating nook large enough to seat six, plus a long window seat that doubles as shelving for art and cookbooks.

