

{ PERSONAL SPACE }

COOKING + CONVERSATION

When redesigning his own kitchen in Asbury Park, a designer sought to honor its social function as much as its culinary one.

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Jon Martinez of Beautiful & Gracious Design in Asbury Park was both the client and the designer involved in redesigning this kitchen, which he and his husband wanted to make more inviting. "Everyone gathers around the island," he says. "It's a great place to sit down, chat and grab some cocktails."



The kitchen is often the hub of a home, but food preparation is its primary job, and sometimes its spirit feels imprisoned by that utilitarian agenda. When setting out to design his own kitchen in the Asbury Park residence he shares with his husband, James, Jon Martinez, owner of Beautiful & Gracious Design, wanted it to serve the same purpose as, say, the dining room or living room—a place where the couple could gather with guests, nosh, drink and display some of their personal items.

Thanks to an existing nine-foot-tall cathedral ceiling, that last part was relatively easy. Above the sink, Martinez extended the “white and airy cabinets” by Medallion Cabinetry at Ocean Bath and Kitchen almost all the way up and created open bookcases above them to display cookbooks, vases and tchotchkes. Another key element was the island topped with blue- and gray-veined quartzite by PMI in Marlboro. It seats five people on the comfortable Crate and Barrel chairs and includes what Martinez calls a “chef’s nook.”

“The stool across from the 36-inch Viking oven tucks into the island so that the chef can still be a part of the conversation,” he explains. Most of the main floor is open-concept, so the island is the gathering place for guests. But it’s also a work station for Martinez, who deliberately placed hidden outlets here so he can charge his laptop and his phone.

As for the aesthetic, Martinez describes it as “contemporary slash beachy, but timeless and unique.” Essentially, he and James wanted their primary home to feel like it was at the shore, but not be overly oceanic. “Because the house is located a few blocks from the beach and across from the lake and park, we used green, a happy color, in the curtains and accents to bring the outdoors in,” he says. Cherry-stained lower cabinets complement the existing chevron floors and the satin brass hardware by Belwith Keeler.

The backsplash also pays homage to the home’s location. “This glass picket-fence tile picks up the color of the inside of an oyster to reference the beach,” says Martinez. “It’s like you’re wrapped in an iridescent seashell coloration.”

Even while keeping the existing kitchen footprint, the designer/homeowner was able to increase storage space by 50 percent, organize everything to the couple’s liking and make it distinctly “them.” “We love this kitchen,” says Martinez. “Everyone who comes, their mouth drops, between the light fixtures, the details and the height of the open bookcases. It’s unique.”

This kitchen boasts special features, including a cabinet next to the fridge with a custom pop-up door to hide the microwave, an under-cabinet stem rack for easy wine-serving and a stainless-steel galley sink, which has a ledge that fits inside with a drainer, colander and chopping block for easy food prep.