



# come. sit. stay.

by sally finder-koziol  
photography by kim cornelson produced by aledia stevens

It's easy to linger in this fetching kitchen, which welcomes modern living while remaining true to its 1916 pedigree.



before

Papillons Dieter and Murphy are always ready to greet visitors, who often gather on the social side of the kitchen island. The heart of the room, the furniturelike piece is crafted in cherry and topped with honed granite to contrast with white custom cabinetry. Quartersawn oak flooring is used throughout the main level.





“Before, it wasn’t a place anyone would hang out. Now, it’s so inviting. People like to be here.”

— Michael Olafson

A few bones had been thrown its way—a coat of paint on the cabinets, green laminate on the countertops, and white octagonal tile on the floor—but they were 1960s stale. They did little to disguise the decades of neglect suffered by this once-proud house.

“It was pretty hideous,” Michael Olafson admits, recalling the bad updates and the arthritic mechanical system, barely able to manage a gasp of warm air on a chilly Minneapolis night. But he and partner Gary Bennett saw something worth saving in this 1916 structure overlooking Kenwood Park.

“It had a really neat feel,” Michael says. “It had high ceilings. It was open for a house of its age—you can look through six rooms to the park.

But what really interested us was the architecture.”

The combination of Arts and Crafts and Prairie style—with a bit of Asian nuance—compelled Michael and Gary to buy the beleaguered home. “We wanted to restore it,” Michael says. “And we wanted to modernize it, to do something more contemporary without ruining the character of the house.”

That was a daunting task in the kitchen, a rectangle so tiny that the fridge had to be banished to a back hallway. “We spent the first months figuring out the layout,” Michael says. “Gary and I each came up with our own drawings, and we also hired a kitchen designer and a contractor.”

The team decided that the answer was expanding the kitchen into a sur-

rounding warren of little rooms: a 1970s shed-style porch, a nook that had been used as office space, a pantry, and a hallway off the back stairs where a previous owner had put an elevator bank. “We gutted the entire space, floor to ceiling,” Michael says. “At one time, you could look from attic to basement.”

It gave them the clean slate they needed to create a kitchen that fits the classic house and their contemporary lifestyle. “Both Michael and Gary are sensitive to design,” says Connie Gustafson, a certified kitchen designer (CKD) and member of the National Kitchen & Bath Association. “We worked together to evoke the right period, the right detail. They also entertain a lot, so I wanted to create

**OPPOSITE:** Dieter waits for a treat in the renovated kitchen’s galley work zone. Eliminating a shed-style porch and office nook, *right*, opened up the space that culinary-minded homeowner Gary Bennett needed for serious cooking. It also enabled him and partner Michael Olafson to restore the home’s three-section curved window. **ABOVE:** The 1916 structure is a blend of styles. Prairie and Arts and Crafts features mix with Asian style, especially evident in the home’s exterior.







OPPOSITE: The reference to the traditional farm sink is clear, but in crisp stainless steel, the effect is modern. A tumbled-limestone backsplash updates the look of classic subway tile. ABOVE LEFT: Gary, a real estate agent, can check on the dogs and keep in touch with business deals during his lunch hour, as the kitchen caters to computers as well as cooking. ABOVE RIGHT: Reproduction period fixtures light the island, which has a two-level design that keeps the cooking zone clear of the gathering area.

both a social and a working space."

The key was planting a furniture-look cherry island at the kitchen's hub. On one side, Gustafson arranged traditional white custom cabinets around modern, stainless-steel-sleek appliances in an efficient cooking galley. On the other, contemporary barstools offer a perch out of the work zone yet remain conversationally close to the cook. "Before, it wasn't a place anyone would hang out," Michael says. "Now, it's so inviting. People like to be here."

Enhancing the appeal is a huge

three-section window that keeps the space bright and cheerful. "It's my favorite thing," Michael says. "It's beautiful."

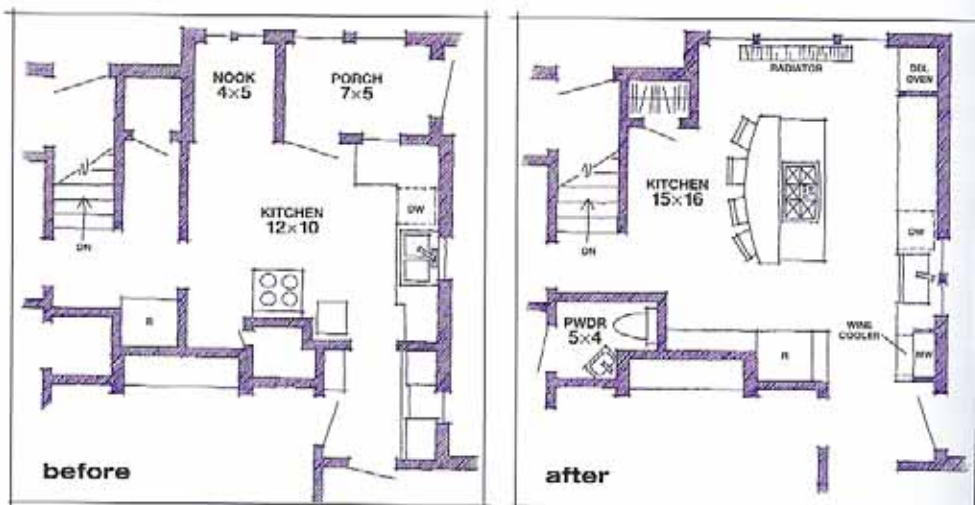
It's also "ridiculously expensive," he admits. That's because custom manufacturing was required to reproduce the curves of the original window, which had been defiled in a previous remodel. "Someone had cut off a third of it—the third in the office nook," Michael says. "They replaced it with a crank-out window."

But now the original window opening is back in all its glory, shining

a spotlight on the details—such as honed-granite countertops and quartersawn oak floors—that have refreshed this classic kitchen. "We spend so much time here," Michael says. It's a place he and Gary can take a quick lunch break with papillons Dieter and Murphy or linger with friends over a glass of wine. "When people come over, you can't get them out of here," Michael says. "The kitchen is now the soul of this house." ■

Kitchen designer: Connie Gustafson, CKD

For more information, turn to Sources on page 118.



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