

A photograph of a modern kitchen featuring a large island with a granite countertop and a dark wood base. The island is surrounded by white leather-upholstered bar stools. The kitchen has white upper and lower cabinets, a dark wood range hood, and a backsplash of light-colored subway tiles. A stainless steel sink and faucet are on the island. A small owl figurine sits on the countertop. The floor is made of light-colored stone tiles. Large windows with white shutters are in the background.

a family KITCHEN

BY SHERRI TELENKO

Photography by Stacy Newman

I was a bit surprised to find out people had islands of their dreams ... not the Fiji, Crete or even P.E.I. kind, but kitchen islands they seductively stroke in designer kitchen showrooms. Every conceivable convenience is available in these perfect model

versions. Granite gleams in different hues as these cooking enthusiasts visualize family and friends gathered around in the heart of the home munching perfectly blackened fresh shrimp or locally-grown grilled asparagus spears. ➔



This kitchen, built for a large family to cook and share, has not one but two islands. One is a ten-foot long stretch of granite lined with six white leather bar chairs. The other is near the oven, an area perfectly at hand while cooking and baking.

➔ Maybe, just maybe, after the kids have flown the nest and the savings has built up, it's possible to create a food prep palace fit for not only a king but dozens of extended family members, friends or work colleagues, all in one room. Some dream, while others plan, and the select few even actualize.

Helen and Peter Azevedo made that dream reality. The Azevedo's fantasy kitchen has not one but two islands – one ten-feet long and lined with six white leather bar chairs. The other is near the oven, an area perfect for rolling out dough or pastry for an abundance of Greek fare Helen remembers from her childhood working in her father's restaurant.

The Azevedo kitchen, a renovation/remodelling added to the family home 25 years after the house was purchased, contains two islands, granite countertops, marble floors, white custom cabinetry that extends to the nine-foot-high ceilings, dark espresso cabinetry below the islands that complement the custom-made 50-bottle wine rack, two sinks, a pot filler facet above the six burner gas stove, and Helen's personal favourite: a seven-foot long exhaust hood above the stove. "It really is the focal point of the kitchen," she says. The oven is in a different location, allowing pots and pans to be stored under the grill within easy reach, book-ended by pull-out spice and oil cabinets on either side.

"Without moving much, I can do everything here," Helen says. "The space is well designed for maximum convenience and efficiency." In fact, the two-in-one kitchen design is easily the envy of even professional chefs. One island is for the baking and the other, near the grill, is the cooking and gathering zone. Each sports its own fridge so minimal walking from one side to the other is required.

Helen's impressively detailed kitchen is proof positive you can both go big and go home. She cooks as a hobby and as a passion, and she's more than excited to describe (and even invite over) anyone who happens to inquire about her one-of-a-kind kitchen. The extra deep cabinets are made by K Cabinets, a family-owned business in Oakville, and the overall renovation and revisioning of space is thanks to Visual Design Build, owned by contractor and relative Doug Azevedo. The backsplash is dotted with many outlets to

plug in appliances where ever needed.

The entire floor plan had to be reworked, including moving windows and adding Milano glass doors leading to the outside patio area, which further increases the living space. The old library – a room Helen admits she wasn't using – became the new dining room and the former dining room was converted to the square footage of entertaining, eating and mingling space Helen always imagined her kitchen to be. "For years when I was cooking, I didn't want people in the kitchen with me because it was too cramped. But everyone gravitates there anyway – we all know that – and now I can easily be with everyone, sharing the space."

And that's ultimately what this project is about – creating a space big enough to entertain, host large family Christmas dinners ("I have eight siblings," she says, "and they all have kids."), and gather people in a place where they feel at home.

"My son's family lives blocks away," she says, "and neither he or his wife likes to cook. I cook a lot anyway so they come over with my granddaughter (and another on the way) at least five days a week. They really lucked out," she adds. Evenings have extra ambiance. When the flat screen television in the kitchen isn't on, the 52-pot lights can be. The top foot of cabinetry between the top shelf and ceiling is glassed in and light, bouncing off the gold and glass stemware inside, creating a warm glow.

This family is of Greek, Spanish and Portuguese decent so close ties are not only important, but an essential part of work and play. "My kids work with me at the bank," Helen says. "So does my sister and my niece. So, we have a lot to talk about. Meeting in my kitchen several times a week, sharing meals and asking: 'How was your day? What's going on?' is important." How the kitchen is intended to function is the first thing to consider – and it's her favourite part of the entire project.

An added bonus is the motivational impact of the space. She's been inspired to try new recipes and global cooking techniques. "I've bought even more cookbooks from all the different countries and regions people are inspired to travel too. In one corner, there's a desk with shelving which is great because I pull out any book I want quickly and easily." ➔



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Mixing materials makes this large kitchen seem cozy and approachable. K Cabinets of Oakville installed the two finishes of cabinetry, perfectly accenting the island and area surrounding the six burner cooktop.

➔ Clearly, the island of her dreams was just the beginning, then the kitchen. It all ended with the home she's always wanted, and a potential retirement retreat that will keep her busy baking and decorating fondant cakes, and preparing meals of lamb, stuffed peppers, cabbage rolls and even jarred preserves for all the family and friends she can pack into a space that rivals even the most thoughtfully designed store showpieces. 📍