

FURNITURE FEEL. The client wanted the china hutch to look like a piece of furniture, but it needed to behave like kitchen cabinets. Clear glass-fronted cabinets allowed Susan to display some favorite pieces given to her by a dear friend. The inside of the uppers has LED lighting, and there is also LED lighting underneath the uppers. The base cabinets have drawers behind the doors and a tall center drawer is used to store tall liquor bottles. The runner in front of the sink looks vintage but is actually a new rug Valerie sourced.

BY MERYL SCHOENBAUM | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH STRUNK | STYLING BY VALERIE HELGESON

Coastal Style in Oklahoma

You don't need a water view to create the look and feel of seaside living.

cottage kitchens



[TOP] GREAT HEIGHTS. Cabinets were built up to the ceiling to maximize storage and add height to the space. New wood floors were added to the kitchen area to match the adjoining dining and living areas. All the wood in the home was then sanded and refinished. **[BOTTOM LEFT] HIDDEN PANTRY.** The pantry is the homeowner's favorite part of the kitchen remodel. It also serves as a tea and coffee bar and helps keep the kitchen counters free of clutter. A pocket door was the perfect solution for this petite pantry, which tucks neatly away in the wall.

You may be surprised to learn that the coastal-style kitchen on these pages was not designed for a cottage by the sea but rather for one much further inland—in the middle of the Oklahoma plains. Homeowner Susan Balkenbush was starting a new chapter in her life as a single woman after more than three decades of marriage and hired a trusted designer she had worked with on a previous home remodel, Valerie Helgeson, to help her make her new house feel like a home.

Valerie is the owner, lead designer and general contractor at Design Directions, a full-service interior design and general-contracting company in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. "My inspiration for the home was definitely a coastal cottage, even though we were in the middle of the country," Valerie says. Susan's favorite color, navy blue, would fit in perfectly with the coastal-cottage palette. "We used a navy, white and light-blue color palette throughout the kitchen, dining and living room," Valerie says.

After hearing Susan's requests for the kitchen design, it became apparent to Valerie that the kitchen would need to be expanded. "The first order of business was tearing down the walls that separated the kitchen from the dining and living rooms," she says. "Susan wanted a more open concept so she could stay connected to family and friends, so we pushed out the bay-window wall and eliminated a small pantry closet, which allowed us to almost double the cabinet and counter space and create an open flow to the living area. The kitchen is now a bright, light-filled space with thoughtful storage and special features designed just for her."

STORAGE AND ORGANIZATION

Once the main design renovations were completed, Valerie was able to take the kitchen to the next level by implementing creative storage concepts. All the cabinets were built onsite by Valerie's carpentry team. "That allowed us to use every square inch of space and make some design decisions on the fly," she says. "Organization and space-saving ideas were incorporated, such as hidden toe-kick drawers, drawers within drawers, utensil and knife-block drawers, an appliance lift and spice drawers."

MAKING A SPLASH

"I didn't want the kitchen to look like we had just built it, so I designed the cabinets with simple Shaker fronts and used feminine Victorian features on the bases' feet and range hood," Valerie says. "Although it's a completely modern kitchen, it looks in many ways like it could have been original to the 1930s-built home. We mixed metal finishes in the kitchen, using brass, brushed nickel and Florentine silver leaf."

[TOP LEFT] DUTCH TREAT. An old Dutch door sourced from eBay is Valerie's favorite feature in the remodel, adding charm and character to the room. The kitchen side of the door is painted in Sherwin-Williams' Dockside Blue.

[TOP RIGHT] PRETTY & PRACTICAL. One of the additions to the house that Valerie's team built connects the kitchen to the garage with the Dutch door. "I wanted this space to feel like it had always been here, but also wanted it to have its own identity," she says. "Adding shiplap and a vintage patterned tile gave it some history and made it feel like it had always been a part of this 1930s home. Coat hooks hung on the wall are handy for jackets, baskets and shopping bags."



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|TOP| CREATIVE COUNTERTOP. A big white farmhouse sink was an obvious choice for this cottage kitchen. “We looked at so many slabs of stone before deciding on this Milan Gray Slate,” Valerie says. “Though slate isn’t commonly used for countertops, it had all the color and veining characteristics we wanted for this kitchen. The leathered finish on it just added to its appeal. With proper maintenance, slate can be a very cool choice.”

|BOTTOM RIGHT| CUSTOM HOOD. Coming up with the hood design took some time, but ultimately Valerie decided this shape fit well with the curvy Victorian cabinet bases.

Valerie found a creative way to incorporate Susan’s personal style in the kitchen design. “Susan has an admitted fascination and affection for old doors,” Valerie explains. “So knowing that, plus the fact that I wanted to use a Dutch door to separate the kitchen from the new utility-room addition, I looked on eBay and found one that was fairly close to our framed opening. Our carpenter had to make some modifications to it, but it really was a great find for the style and budget. We kept [the exterior] side of the door in the condition it was in when we purchased it, with multiple layers and colors of paint exposed, and we sanded the interior side to a smooth finish and applied a beautiful blue shade from Sherwin-Williams called Dockside Blue. I think that is my favorite feature in the house—and that’s really saying a lot since it was such a huge remodel.” **CB**

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