

**Kitchen Ideas You'll Love in "Connecticut Home"
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KITCHEN

TODAY'S DREAM KITCHENS ARE OPEN-HEARTED FAMILY CENTERS, WITH HANDSOME CABINETRY, EVOCATIVE ARCHITECTURE AND AMAZING APPLIANCES.

More than ever, family life revolves around the kitchen. It's become not only a place where meals get cooked, but also where homework gets done, families dine, the day's stories are told, and guests help out with the hors d'oeuvres. To accommodate all this—and more—a new breed of kitchen is being born. Here are three prime examples.

COOKS, KIDS AND COMPANY

Home: Large 1997 brick and clapboard colonial in Wilton.

Highlights: Three-cook kitchen with U-shaped plan; three-level island with two sinks and two dishwashers; pull-out storage and appliances.

Mark and Elaine Sullivan approached their kitchen enlargement from slightly different angles. Mark loves cooking for friends, so much so that, when dining out on his frequent business travels in Europe, he's not shy about poking into professional kitchens for ideas. Elaine cooks constantly at home and enjoys it, while keeping an eye on their five youngsters under age 17. For the sociable Sullivans, it's not unusual to host a houseful of weekend guests or have eight extra people for a weekday supper. Fortunately, they have a very big house. Recently, it got bigger.

"We needed a kitchen where everyone could congregate, with an open flow to rooms around it," says Elaine. She had her priorities: efficiency, storage, space for other helping hands, and sight lines that revealed which kids were doing what, where. Her husband wanted top-notch equipment and European styling. At Klaff's, located in South Norwalk and Danbury, they found their guru of custom design and detailing, Mark Leavens.



This deep farm sink, plus a sink on the opposite side of the island, provide sous-chefs with separate prep spaces.

BY KIM WALLER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT BENSON



The concept that he and the Sullivans came up with provides three distinct work stations in a U-shaped plan, so no cook or helpful sous-chef need bump into any other. At its center is a massive, 12-foot, three-level island of walnut-hued cherry. Each side has its own sink, dishwasher, waste compartment and granite counters. In the middle rises a plate-storage unit with sliding doors, so both dishwashers can be uploaded directly. The taller center is topped with solid-plate quarter-inch copper able to handle sizzling dishes just like a restaurant landing zone. ("Actually," Elaine admits, "we're more likely to use it as a buffet counter for hors d'oeuvres or desserts when we're entertaining.") That's not the end of the island's wonders. If you're sitting there on a stool, kibbitzing and sipping wine, you might see a homemade pizza emerge from the island's pizza oven, or warm string beans pop out of a microwave.

Meanwhile, the chef at his six-burner Wolf stove with double ovens is baking or sautéing or both. Or perhaps he's got a pot of fresh corn-on-the-cob simmering on the range's flat French cooktop, with a pan of butter melting at its cooler edges. ("Mark saw these in Belgium," says his wife, "and wanted to have one.") Then, with a quick turn, the chef slides open a hidden spice compartment that brings seasonings immediately to hand.

Notes designer Leavens, "We tend to put as much thought

into the interiors as into the aesthetics of the exteriors." For example, pot drawers flanking the stove have 150-pound ball-bearing slides to take hefty weights, and some countertop cabinets are actually garages for appliances. None of the cabinetry here is stock or customized stock; it was all crafted by Klaff's from scratch for the site.

Speaking of aesthetics, what do you do with cabinets too tall to reach? The Sullivans turned them into glass-fronted display units, each with its own soft lighting to illuminate their collection of handmade European ceramics.

This expanded kitchen is actually the mother ship for a convivial cluster of satellite rooms, including a wine-storage nook (Mark's fancy), the pre-existing pantry, a family dining area, formerly the family room, and a new great room overlooking an outdoor swimming pool. The kitchen is visible and accessible from them all (no wonder open kitchens hide their appliances), so guests can wander among them and no cook feels left out of the fun. For Elaine, this visibility has another benefit—she can see the children as they watch television or play outside. That's also why she insisted on a view window over the stove to the driveway and hall where her children run in after school. It may be a bit unusual, but, like the rest of this glamorous kitchen, it works.

Below: As if six burners and two ovens weren't enough, Mark Sullivan, an avid cook, opted for a flat French cook-top on his Wolf stove. The stainless pot-filler at left saves many a sloshing trip from

the sink. Opposite: Hidden by cabinets, the island's two dishwashers can be directly uploaded into the island's top level. Under its bow top, the refrigerator-freezer resembles an armoire.

