

heart OF THE home

DESIGNED FROM SCRATCH, THIS DREAM KITCHEN BOASTS COOKING AND PREP ZONES, AMPLE STORAGE, AND A STRIKING COLOR PALETTE

SANDEE AND DAVID KIRCHHOFF loved the land but not the house. The '50s ranch the stay-at-home-mom and her business executive husband bought in Darien, Connecticut, sat on a beautiful property. But the home had to go. Sandee, an avid cook, wanted a great kitchen, so the couple's architect, Kevin Huelster of Westport, Connecticut, positioned the space right smack in the center of the two-story, five-bedroom cottage-style home he designed for them.

"The kitchen didn't need to be fancy," Sandee says. "It just needed to work well." Throughout the planning phase, the homeowner brought folders full of research—on cabinetry, countertops, appliances, and flooring—to her kitchen designer, Briarcliff Manor, New York-based Jason Landau. Sandee had another wish, no less important than efficiency: The room had to be red. "I love that color," she explains, "and I'd had two white kitchens before. To make sure he understood, I brought Jason a paint chip."

"The red she showed me was pretty strong," the designer recalls. "I thought my clients could tire of it easily. So I suggested we use a red stain: Because it's translucent, the quality of the wood shows through and softens the color's impact." Sandee approved: "The color's not jarring; it lives very well."

She also requested a sizable island—3½ feet wide and nearly 8 feet long. Sandee and Landau placed the appliances so as to create two discrete work zones. One, for cooking, is centered on the prep-sink end of



A FREESTANDING 36-inch range dominates Sandee's cooking zone. Instead of a warming drawer, she opted for a warming shelf mounted above the burners. Heat lamps tucked into the exhaust hood keep plates warm when needed.

2008
best
NEW KITCHEN



SANDEE AND DAVID Kirchoff's new kitchen is a standout because of its two distinct work zones: Positioned at the prep-sink end of the island, a cook commands the range, counter spaces, and wall ovens. Zone two is the end of the island opposite the fridge.

BAR STOOLS (CRB), FOOD PROCESSOR (CUSHMART)

PRODUCED BY **ELIZABETH ROEHRIG** STYLED BY **DONNA PAUL** PHOTOGRAPHED BY **JEFF MCNAMARA** WRITTEN BY **MERVYN KAUFMAN**

the island and gives easy access to the range, wall ovens, and counter space. The other, for prep and cleanup, is at the end of the island near the fridge, in easy reach of the main sink and more work surfaces. The island itself also creates a subtle barrier between Sandee, when she is cooking, and guests and family members (the Kirchhoffs have two young daughters), who are encouraged to congregate in her kitchen.

Landau designed the custom cabinets with simple recessed-panel doors and brushed nickel hardware—including latches that recall kitchens of the early 1900s. There are also two appliance garages and a commercial-style chef's pantry with both fixed and adjustable (hinged) shelving inside, and a fixed unit on the back of each of the tall doors. In addition, on the wall behind the island's bar stools there's a beverage center with wine cooler, soda fridge, glass-door barware cupboard, and separate countertop.

"My kitchen works so well," says Sandee. "I love to cook and can spend six hours at a stretch making dinner for the family. Jason laid out the kitchen so people could come in, maybe grab a drink and sit with me while I work, but never be in my space." ■



FOUR CHAIRS pull up to a custom pedestal cherry table, above right, in a far corner of the kitchen.

A flexible commercial-style spray faucet, near right, serves the 30-inch single-bowl stainless steel undermount sink. The pantry doors, far right, are equipped with shelving top-to-toe. The beverage center, far right, below, is compact, efficient, and stylish.

why it's best

■ **Comfort.** "Beyond its efficiency and the color choice, this kitchen is incredibly comfortable. It really has become the heart of our home."

—Homeowner Sandee Kirchhoff

■ **Discrete work areas.** "Even in this modest-size, 20x16½-foot kitchen, we were able to create two distinct work zones and also keep cooking and cleanup areas separate, which is not always possible."

—Designer Jason Landau

