



Why settle for just one? One island handles food prep; the other dining in this handsome rustic-cherry New Canaan kitchen.

ISLAND HOPPING

No two kitchen islands are the same but all can enhance your kitchen exponentially. Here are four, each with its own island magic.

"I know an islaaaand . . ." Back in the day, these words (together with a visual of a vivid green lime) evoked a tropical paradise. But there are islands—and then there are islands. Here you'll get to know four that you don't need to leave home to enjoy.

A recent survey by *Qualified Remodeler* magazine found that the demand for kitchen islands remains strong. Just as with tropical ones, the crowd wants to go there. Yet some narrow kitchens don't offer enough clearance to accommodate an island; ditto, some with peninsulas. But if your kitchen can accommodate one, or you think it can, consider what these beauties offer. Our choices showcase both stylistic and functional ideas. Those shown have generous dimensions, but scaled-down versions can still offer multiple benefits. Which island destinations call to you?

by Nena Donovan Levine

block can be wheeled wherever needed. Ceilings soar to nearly 10 feet in this Westport kitchen by Jason Landau of Amazing Spaces LLC in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

As with any worthwhile destination, getting the lay of this land takes time. Each island locale supports its own activities. Clean-up and prep work are done at the copper countertop, with its integral sink and backsplash. The top has a raised (or "drip") edge to prevent spills. Below are stained, glazed maple cabinets from Heirloom Cabinetry, which custom-made all the cabinetry. Landau added a base with an arched valance to the sink cabinet, sending a furniture message while still providing a comfortable, recessed toe-kick area for the dishwasher.

A 48-inch-high cherry cabinet behind the sink shields it from the room. The cabinet and its matching wood top are finished with a pale putty-green stain. Cabinet doors at one end are fitted with antique bronze wire mesh, while a swiveling TV pops up from the other end of this long, narrow piece for easy viewing. A dark-stained walnut breakfast bar com-

prises another tier, its friendly L-shape inviting lots of use.

A hand-painted furniture piece sits at a right angle to the sink cabinet, offering 9 feet of deep storage. What look like carvings on its door panels are actually trompe-l'oeil garlands, one of several faux-painted details.

The homeowners wanted the kitchen to project a European built-up-over-time ambience, and that wish drove design choices for the island, too. Asymmetry and (the seeming) patina of age deceive you, because it's all new construction.

Hart Island

"White capped with green" describes the winter scene outside the bay window, as well as the island inside. Nordic White is the Wood-Mode finish, North Granby the location. Yet there is nothing chilly about the kitchen shown below, nor about its island centerpiece. Rather, the island is crisply architectural, bright and intriguing.



An architectural column that conceals a load-bearing support becomes a conversation piece in this light and bright North Granby kitchen.

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It's all about curves and craftsmanship in this stunning contemporary island in Meriden.

First, what's up with that column? Jim Corthouts, CKD, principal of Holland Kitchens LLC in West Hartford, which created the design, recalls a respected designer who said, "If you have a flaw, flaunt it." And so a load-bearing post becomes a conversation piece, hidden in a squared-column design with beveled edges and applied moldings. Here it cleverly houses electrical outlets and a switch as well.

Homeowners Martha and Richard Hart knew how the island had to function: as prep and work space, buffet serving area and eating spot for three. It needed storage for silverware, utensils, bakeware, cookbooks and place mats; phone books, pads and pencils; and wine. A microwave in the island (not shown) does not interfere with the cook at the range. Kerala green granite tops the multitasking 5-by-6-foot island.

Wood-Mode cabinets in the raised-panel, Hancock door style with beaded-inset construction read like classically detailed furniture. The fluted corner post supporting the breakfast bar and the column capital reinforce that look, as do details throughout, such as the cabinetry hood with keystone surmounting the range. Ceiling height is 92 inches, but the adjacent dining area (added during the kitchen redo) boasts a cathedral ceiling, so the island basks in some of that glory.

Natural-finish oak flooring surrounds Hart Island, while Persian rugs in red, black, cream and blue-gray ring it with warmth. The Harts say, "People always gather around the island." No surprise there.

Modern in Meriden

Immense. How else to describe the kitchen island shown above? At nearly 13 feet by 4 feet, it curves into an embracing surround in a 400-square-foot kitchen. It defines the work area, houses storage

and appliances (an electric cooktop plus downdraft exhaust vent), and provides generous seating for all five children and then some. It accommodates one, two or more cooks.

When a fire leveled their home in 2006, the owners worked with designer Joshua Simmons of Sanson Inc. in New Britain, builders of custom cabinetry and stairs, to design and build a dream kitchen in their new home. They specified a contemporary European look, including cabinet doors veneered with book-matched red birch, free of applied detail. Curved panels (the wood is bent to create them) wrap the front and sides of the island. All cabinetry received five coats of urethane, applied by an expert automotive-paint technician, and were buffed with a car buffer. Sanson built the island cabinets at their shop, assembling them into the curve on-site.

The island top is two slabs of Crème Bordeaux granite, joined almost invisibly. (Simmons describes the connection as "the best-looking seam I have seen.") An extra-deep (14-inch) breakfast bar required—and got—customized support. Steel angle brackets are visible on the underside of the granite, but the bracket arms attached to the island front are cleverly hidden beneath the veneer.

Storage on the island's "business" side includes Blum drawer systems for pots and pans; utensils and spices; and dishes in custom caddies. All free up wall cabinet space and are accessible to the children.

The two-tiered ceiling soffit directly above mirrors the island shape. This dramatic installation features up lights, recessed down lights and five blown-glass pendants. The soffit, also built off-site and raised to the ceiling using two Sheetrock™ jacks, is secured in place by 36 lag bolts and more than 200 screws.