

rural elegance

An interior designer and an architect update their farmhouse with modern amenities and also stay true to its history.

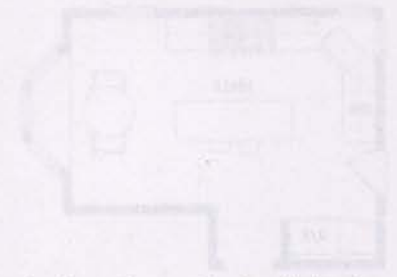
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THIS PHOTO: By mixing textures, finishes, and colors, Gary Holder and Michael Schoeller found a visually stunning yet comfortable balance for their kitchen. **OPPOSITE:** With the garden just outside the kitchen, it's easy to add a splash of color to the space.





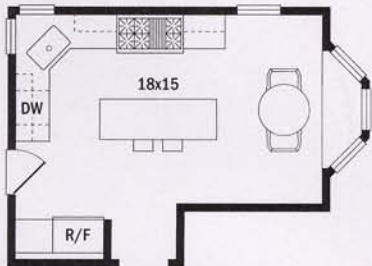
OPPOSITE: Textured subway tiles create visual interest on the walls, while glass-front cabinets make it easy to find dishes. With windows on three sides, the room is washed in natural light. **LEFT:** Gary has had plenty of opportunities to break in the professional-quality range. "I remember when we first got it, thinking how I didn't want to mess it up. We've crossed over that zone," he says. The warming shelf above ensures there's no such thing as a cold plate. **BELOW:** The couple opted to leave the sink in its original light-filled corner. Michael, who generally prefers symmetry in his designs, appreciates the asymmetry here. "I like that" detail," he says. "It's kind of quirky."

The 60-year-old kitchen in this 186-year-old farmhouse stood out like blight on a crop. "Let's just call it a bad renovation," interior designer Michael Schoeller says. Michael, along with his partner, architect Gary Holder, bought the house in Kent, New York, an easy drive from their weekday place in Manhattan, knowing full well that the kitchen needed work. "There were these huge track lights, lots of particleboard; the fridge was this big tan thing. It had a multicolor slate floor," Michael says. "Everything was pretty dark and dreary."

Even so, Gary says, the space wasn't all bad. He and Michael liked the windows, and the footprint was fine, so they decided to work with it. "We had an aesthetic in mind—clean lines, professional appliances, black stone—but we also wanted to be respectful to the rest of the house and its history," Gary says. "So while we cleaned it up and opened it up, we didn't make it ostentatious. It's very appropriate for the home's overall style."

The two tackled the project as a team. "Michael was the concept man," Gary says. "He came up with the grand plan, and then I did all the drawings, scaled it, and sort of dealt with reality." Michael remembers it this way: "Gary and I had some ideas that were exactly opposite. It was a lot like working with a client: They have ideas; you have ideas. He does all the cooking anyway."





OPPOSITE: Michael and Gary eat most of their meals by the bay window off the main cooking area. The table is topped with maple to match the island. Michael had the chairs reupholstered in linen. "I wanted something there that was comfortable, that looked like it belonged in a living room," he says. **RIGHT:** The stainless-steel refrigerator is paired with a down-to-earth pantry cabinet with farmhouse-appropriate chicken wire inserts. **BELOW:** The island offers plenty of storage for food and cooking essentials. Here, on the range side, potatoes and onions are kept in open baskets for easy access.



And cook he does. Gary says his favorite thing about the kitchen is the new range—"my baby"—with its double ovens and its convenient warming shelf. He likes how it's a quick turn from the island, where guests can "just relax and hang out as I cook."

Michael, meanwhile, is partial to the thick granite the two chose to replace the slate on the floor. He loves the simplicity of it, its soothing irregularity, the way it's rough underfoot. "That texture," he says. "There's this pull between it and the kind of high-tech stainless steel." The floor, much like the chicken wire inserts on one of the cabinets, is a nod to the home's history. "We wanted to honor its age while bringing it into the modern world," Michael says. "And so we brought in a few rustic elements here and there. It's a farmhouse look, but we like to say 'it was a really good year on the farm.'"

It's those bumper-crop touches, of course, that make the space what it ultimately is—bright, open, and functional: For example, the honed-granite countertops. Or the textured-tile backsplash. Or the cream-color cabinets with glass fronts and crystal knobs. The room is sophisticated, but just country enough for two busy professionals who spend most of their time in the city. Asked to compare their urban cooking quarters to their kitchen in Kent, Gary says with a laugh, "It's tiny! There's no counter space. It's totally night and day. Whenever we come up here it's like, 'Aah, this is our kitchen!'" **KBI**

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TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Textured backsplash tiles and granite flooring add a simple rustic appeal.
- 2 Glass-front cabinets make everyday items easy to find.
- 3 A creamy-white finish on cabinets, moldings, and wainscoting lets other features command attention.
- 4 Cabinetry feet and open shelves with baskets give the island a furniture feel.
- 5 Natural elements mingle with modern ones, creating a space both farmhouse-friendly and fit for entertaining.

