



Homeowners Amy Gregory and Mike Worth reclaimed a screen porch to give their dark, cramped kitchen room to grow. The new 12×15-foot space basks in light from windows on two walls. The long window wall marks where the original screen porch ended.

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# From Rustic to Refined

VERMONT HOMEOWNERS TACKLE A  
HANDS-ON REDO TO EXPAND AND BRIGHTEN  
THEIR DATED CAMP-HOUSE KITCHEN.



**THIS PHOTO:** New stainless-steel appliances maximize function in the small kitchen.

**OPPOSITE LEFT:** Handcrafted sturdy paint-grade poplar cabinets were outfitted with geometric pewter hardware that repeats the room's rectangular theme.

**OPPOSITE RIGHT:** The blackboard slate countertops were found at a salvage yard. Mike sanded and sealed all the slate, except for this 2×2-foot area. "It kind of hit us as, *Duh! We should keep part of the old slate as a blackboard to show its original character.* This is where we scribble notes to each other," Amy says.



Vermont's unheated seasonal cabins known as camps vary mainly in degree of primitiveness. Those with more than rudimentary indoor plumbing stand out as palaces. So even though the 1952 home of Amy Gregory, Mike Worth, and their college-age daughter, Ashley, had been transformed from camp to year-round cabin long before they bought it in 1999, plenty of room for improvement remained. The sluggish old furnace refused to raise room temperatures above 55 degrees, the pipes required a constant stream of tap water to keep from bursting, and the creaky roof threatened to cave. Then there was that little matter of the kitchen.

Only 10x8 feet with a single tiny window, the kitchen was lacking in both size and function. Not to mention that it was an eyesore. Aged appliances, knotty pine paneling, marine-blue cabinets, and a yellow faux-brick linoleum floor left the room lagging in the 20th century. "We needed to lighten and brighten it and open everything up," Amy says. But because of the home's location in an older area on the shores of Lake Champlain, tight building restrictions limited its room to grow. "The only way to expand the kitchen was to reclaim the screen porch that ran alongside it," Amy says—and that only brought the room up to 12x15 feet.

Yet disproportionate to the kitchen's small size, its remodeling—part of a 2001 whole-house redo—made a huge difference. Mike and Amy did the design and most of the labor, with help from close friend and builder Jim Huntington. "Jim is a finish carpenter, and at first he told us he wouldn't have any time to make

**THIS PHOTO:** One of Amy's favorite features is the island's sunken six-burner cooktop. It offers ample room to cook while keeping messes hidden from the opposite side.

**OPPOSITE LEFT:** The island was designed for both cooking and entertaining, with a raised eating surface on one side and sunken cooktop on the other. Deep drawers beneath the cooktop put large pots and pans close at hand.

**OPPOSITE RIGHT:** Above the microwave, a TV hides behind doors that retract into the wall.



## A CLEAN SLATE

Amy Gregory and Mike Worth salvaged old chalkboards from a schoolhouse to make their environmentally friendly kitchen countertops. (Using recycled materials is always easier on the environment than harvesting new resources.) And in this case, going green meant bliss for the family's budget. Instead of the \$8,000 Mike would have paid for new slate countertops, he only had to chalk up \$250 for the reclaimed slate blackboards at a salvage yard. His advice: Don't give up. It was only after repeated visits that he turned up the chalkboards. Preparing them for counter service was uncomplicated but messy work—sanding and rubbing the surface with mineral oil to close the pores. “We were sanding off 50 years of chalk dust,” Amy says. “It was so messy we had to wear gas masks.”

custom cabinets,” Amy says. “But then that changed, and he gave us a deadline.” After the couple pored over photographs from every kitchen magazine on the newsstand, they still had no idea what they wanted. “We ended up sending Jim to his workroom with a request to make something wonderful,” she says.

That was enough. The resulting cottage-style cabinets are not only beauties, but “they totally conform to the character of the rest of the house,” Amy says. Mike crafted all of the remaining millwork, including the columns, the island, the beaded-board ceiling, and all the window and door moldings. Except for the cabinets, “if it's white, I probably did it,” he says.

Amy was more than a silent partner. She filled in the gaps, painting, scraping, “and working as the odd-jobs person because I had no carpentry skills,” she says. And sometimes, as when she had to take up the linoleum floors, her share of the labor was no laughing matter. “They had been put in 50 years ago with a toxic, horrible, really aggressive adhesive. But it was such a tiny little area I thought, *How long could it take?*” The answer was days, with a blowtorch in one hand and a scraper in the other. The red oak floor underneath, however, was worth the effort. “Then we just had to match the floor in the expanded part that had been the porch.”

And Amy would do it all again in a heartbeat, she says, with only one change: “I just wish we had even more space to work with.”

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“I wanted plain glass with no divided lights so we could see the lake. Mike wanted divided lights. The compromise was perfect.”

—homeowner Amy Gregory



**THIS PHOTO:** An open floor plan makes the most of the home's small footprint. The kitchen flows into the dining room, which flows into the living room on the opposite side.

**OPPOSITE:** Mike handcrafted the entry's column and its paneled support wall, the staircase newel, the beaded-board ceiling, and all the other millwork, except for the kitchen cabinets, which were custom-made by finish carpenter, builder, and longtime friend Jim Huntington.







**THIS PHOTO:** A wall of built-ins in the living room displays Amy and Mike's collection of books and artwork.  
**LEFT:** Mike built the mantel over the fireplace to hide the 1950s "hideous brick."

### THE CHANGE:

Unchanged since its days as a knotty pine-paneled 1950s lakeside camp, the kitchen of a Lake Champlain cabin gains a little size and a lot of airy cottage style in a thoughtful do-it-yourself makeover.

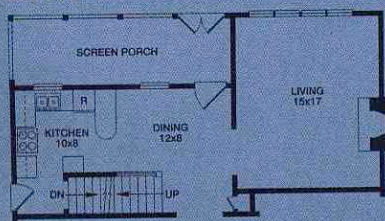
### WHAT IT TOOK:

- \* Increasing square footage by incorporating an adjacent porch as part of the kitchen.

- \* Appropriating space for a 2x4-foot pantry from an adjoining guest room.
- \* Enlarging the columned opening at the entry for unobstructed views into the kitchen.

- \* Removing linoleum with a blowtorch and scraper to reveal the original red oak floor.
- \* Handcrafting all new millwork and cabinets in a cottage style.
- \* Painting surfaces white for a sense of light and air.

#### BEFORE



#### AFTER

