The Winners of the 2023 *Maine Homes* Design Awards

Behold the winning projects submitted by pros and readers.

Photo by Trent Bell

Around here, Design Awards season feels a bit like Christmas morning on repeat. Every day, the handful of us overseeing the contest eagerly sifts through the online submissions and delights in the treasures we find there. Nearly 75 projects were entered in five professional and five reader categories: new home, remodel/addition, small space (houses less than 1,500 square feet), kitchen, and garden/landscaping. Narrowing the field to 10 winners was the task of our panel of accomplished judges, all of whom have ties to Maine. Nearly 1,000 readers had their say too, voting online to pick a Readers' Choice winner in each category. Thanks to everyone who shared their hard work with us. And a special thanks to Hancock Lumber for sponsoring the contest.

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PROFESSIONAL GARDEN/LANDSCAPE

Residence Inspired by Maine Quarrying History, Stonington
Richardson and Associates

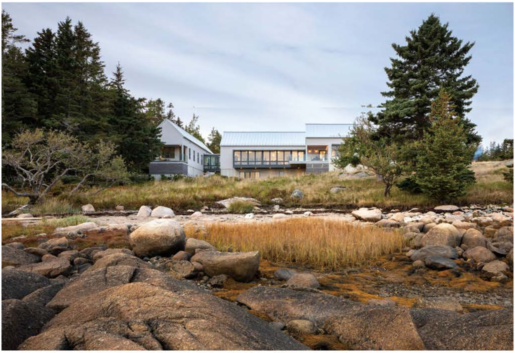


Photo by Trent Bell

Todd Richardson Says: The goal of this project was to create a summer residence that pays homage to its location. Stonington's historic quarries are referenced in the landscape design through the use of locally sourced stone, split using the traditional feather-and-wedge process, and exposed ledge. The architecture and landscape architecture create an intentional weave and weft, the architecture reaching across the site, parallel with the shoreline, the landscape design pushing toward the bay. Pathways connect disparate buildings and create a bridge across the landscape, comprising native plants, such as blueberries, fragrant sumacs, Northern bayberries, Shadblow serviceberries, and sweet ferns. Eclectic art, including a stone lion's head and a firehouse bell, serve as focal points. The resulting tableau juxtaposes materials in a harmonious balance of natural and man-made beauty.

Tara Kelly Says: Having recently taken a tour of downtown Stonington, including a visit to the Deer Isle Granite Museum, it is a delight to see such a thoughtful integration of local history into this landscape context. Stonington's quarries have contributed to landmarks across the Northeast, and here too the granite is a building block for the site, offering both texture and heft.

Landscape Architect: Todd Richardson
Architect: Elliott Architects
General Contractor: Jon D. Woodward & Sons
Lighting Designer: Peter Knuppel Lighting Design

READER'S CHOICE: PROFESSIONAL GARDEN/LANDSCAPE

Down East Coastal Residence, Blue Hill
Richardson and Associates

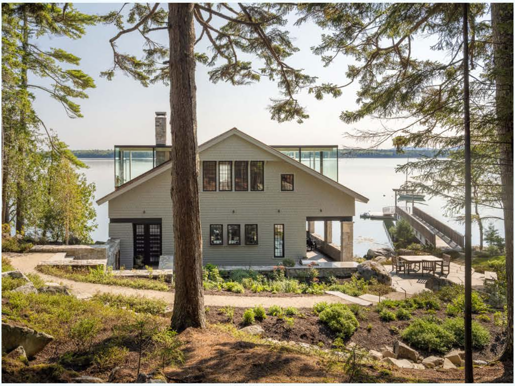


Photo by Trent Bell

positional and historic relationship between the building and the water was an important aspect of the design. Challenges arose from the site's proximity to the ocean's edge, which created significant grading and drainage issues and required bank stabilization. The project uses mossy boulders, locally harvested granite with traditional feather-and-wedge marks, and native plants, such as eastern hay-scented ferns, low-bush blueberries, northern bayberries, and sweetgale, to connect the site to its broader context. The driveway was redesigned to shield the house from the road, and a planted roof on the garage feathers the building into the surrounding trees.

General Contractor: Hewes & Company
Lighting Designer: Peter Knuppel Lighting Design
Structural Engineer: Thornton Tomasetti

READER GARDEN/LANDSCAPE

Our Elevated Garden, Yarmouth
Kerry and Chris Stetson

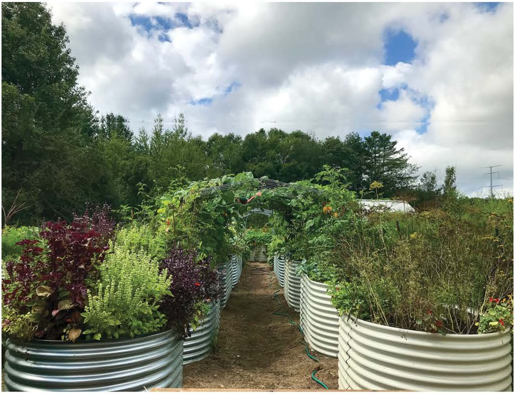


Photo by Kerry Stetson

Kerry Stetson Says: After spending more than a decade tending gardens on the ground, we had to find an easier way to grow our own food. We fabricated and installed 20 steel, 36-inch-high raised beds, allowing us to stop tilling and bending over to garden. We used the centuries-old Hügelkultur method to fill them, layering wood chips, leaves, grass clippings, compost, and soil. We created an arch out of wire cattle-panel fencing to grow climbing crops vertically, saving space and making harvesting easier. The walkways are covered in hay and wood chips to keep weeds at bay. Raised beds require less watering, fertilizing, and produce fewer weeds, saving us countless hours during the growing season. We love our garden beds and began selling them through our new company last year.

Loi Thai Says: These raised steel garden beds are so inspiring. Not having to bend down or crawl around on the ground is a game changer for many gardeners. Combining them with Hügelkultur means a more productive, eco-friendly garden with a consistent source of long-term nutrients and less watering over time.

Garden Beds: Ergonomic Gardens

This entry was also voted the Readers' Choice winner in the Reader Garden/Landscape category.

PROFESSIONAL SMALL SPACE

Hills Beach, Biddeford
Woodhull

Photo by Trent Bell

Caleb Johnson Says: This Hills Beach home underwent a complete transformation while remaining true to the unassuming spirit of the surrounding neighborhood. The process converted a beach shack into a character-filled home using locally sourced materials, including eastern-white-cedar siding and roof shingles, and handcrafted elements, such as rich walnut kitchen cabinetry constructed without fasteners, plywood, or hardware. Occupants can enjoy the affordability, ease of cleaning, and closeness that comes with living in just under 900 square feet, as well as the all-day comfort afforded by the energy-efficient design.

Loi Thai Says: Small, stylish, and smart! Despite being less than 900 square feet, this home looks roomy thanks to the open floor plan and abundance of light from the expansive windows and glass doors. Selections such as the armless sofa and floating kitchen cabinets take up less space, giving the interior an airiness. Certain walls have been papered or paneled, lending impactful pattern and texture.

Principal Architect: Caleb Johnson
Architectural Designer: Jason Colpitts
General Contractor and Millwork: Woodhull
Landscape Designer: Soren Deniord Design Studio
Landscaping Contractor: Pinnacle Landscape & Design
Metalwork: Tunnelwerks

READERS' CHOICE: PROFESSIONAL SMALL SPACE

Reflecting Cabin, Long Pond

Thoft Architecture

Thoft Architecture

Photo by Kirsten Thoft

Kirsten Thoft Says: Inspired by the desire for an energy-efficient, comfortable home that seamlessly integrates with the land and emphasizes the water, we opted to construct a new dwelling rather than renovate this property's existing cabin. The resulting 1,300-square-foot, two-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath cabin was thoughtfully designed to align with the original footprint, while adhering to height restrictions near the water's edge, ensuring its proximity to the pond remains unchanged. Through extensive restorative landscaping, the indigenous flora has been revitalized, reestablishing the harmony between the home and its surroundings. Approaching the unassuming entry, a glimpse of the pond first appears through the front door. Following the natural slope of the land, the house gracefully descends from the bedroom level to the lower living space, culminating in a deck that embraces the panoramic view. The gentle incline of the shed roof creates a dramatic ceiling height at the water's edge. Immersing occupants in the beauty of the pond and forest, the house opens up completely on the water side, inviting an abundance of natural light through expansive windows. Inside, reflections off the water dance on the spruce ceiling, and the ever-changing view fosters a sense of serenity and connection to nature.

Architect: Kirsten Thoft, AIA, LEED AP BD + C
General Contractor: Brian D. Shaw
Civil Engineer: G.F. Johnston & Associates
Electrical Contractor: Tracy & Hall Electric
Electrical Contractor: Tracy & Hall Electric
Kitchen/Bath Designer and Building Materials: Hammond Lumber
Landscape Designer: Acadia Landscape + Design
Plumbing Contractor: T. G. Dunn Plumbing & Heating

READER SMALL SPACE

1866 One-Room Schoolhouse, Shapleigh

Cristina Brow and Liz McDonald

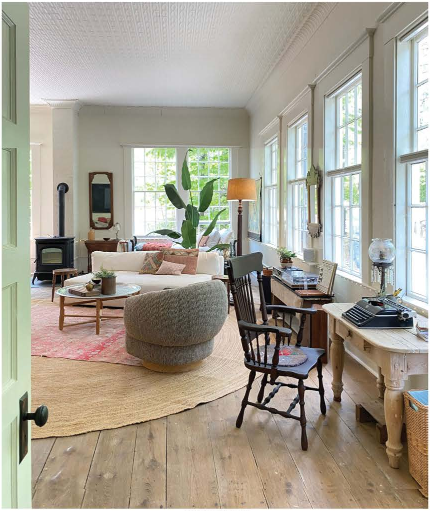


Photo by Liz McDonald

Liz McDonald Says: This 1866 one-room schoolhouse was an active school until the 1950s. It sat unused until the 1970s, when the town sold it to the adjacent landowner. It had no electricity or running water and the original woodstove was not operable. The room was a time capsule, and altering it seemed sacrilege. We decided to revive it with significant updates instead. But for whom? We imagined it could be the original teacher, who had come back to town. We painted, added outlets, insulation, a pellet stove, and antiques, such as a typewriter, converted oil lamps, and family photos on the original chalkboard. In addition, we winterized and finished the attached shed that was an outhouse, incorporating a kitchenette and bath with reclaimed-brick flooring. An old ladder, found on the property, leads to a new loft that provides a cozy reading nook. Now, the schoolhouse is alive again, ready for its teacher to return.

Tara Kelly Says: Simple interventions have beautifully and carefully transformed this schoolhouse, making the most of its original historic fabric while updating both its purpose and function. The insertion of modern amenities was achieved sensitively, and the use of reclaimed materials, like the brick flooring and ladder found on-site, contribute to the warm and weathered patina of the space.

General Contractor: Bob McAuliffe
Electrical Contractor: Ed Profenno
Insulation Contractor: Anderson Insulation of Maine
Plumbing Contractor: T.M. Lee Plumbing
Stove Installer: Metcalf's Hearth Services
Stove Supplier: D&J Home and Hearth
Antiques: BarnSwallow Pottery

READERS' CHOICE: READER SMALL SPACE

Rockland Vernacular

Tom and Carol Lanza

Tom Lanza Says: We are a retired couple who, for many summers, vacationed in

Maine. During the height of the COVID pandemic, we purchased a lot, sight unseen, in the South End neighborhood of Rockland and set about building a year-round home. With my mechanical-engineering background, I was able to prepare a set of detailed construction drawings by hand. In deference to the neighborhood, we designed a modest, 1,024-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath home that mimics the vernacular architecture of the past. I guess we were successful, as many folks walk by and ask about our "renovation." We hired a local builder, but completed the finish carpentry and painting ourselves. In addition, we are working hard to establish a lawn and landscaping. An offset stair tower allowed a more efficient use of the first and second floors, making the small home feel more spacious and functional.

General Contractor: Broad Cove Builders
Electrical Contractor: York Electric
Excavation Contractor: Earthly Needs
Plumbing and Heating Contractor: Blane's Plumbing and Heating
Flooring: Maine Traditions
Siding: Grayne
Windows: Mathews Brothers

Photo by Tom Lanza

PROFESSIONAL REMODEL/ADDITION

Old Yacht Club, Blue Hill
Elliott Architects

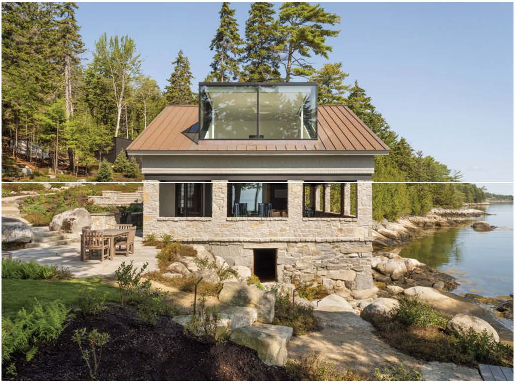


Photo by Trent Bell

Corey Papadopoli Says: An abandoned yacht club, poised at the edge of the bay, sat derelict for years, all the while bearing witness to the relentless coastal climate. Built in 1919, it endured a series of interventions after the club relocated to its current home in 1946. Our task was to restore its historical memory while modernizing the structure. After the foundation was reinforced and repointed, a new wood-and-steel superstructure was erected above in the exact shape and profile of the original yacht club. Inside this shell, the Club Room was rebuilt with its accompanying chimney. The replacement of a corner of this room with large sliding glass panels, coupled with the addition of two glass dormers, transformed the dark building into a two-way receptacle for light. The glazing admits sunlight into the house throughout the day and turns it into a coastal beacon at night.

Rachel Ambrose Says: I love the old-meets-new qualities of this property. The stone porch feels as if it grew out of the coastal granite, while the glass panels enclosing it afford occupants gorgeous views in all weather. Adding dormers to a building is certainly nothing new, but making them huge and mostly glass is spectacular. I also love the old-school charm of the multi-paned windows and corbels on the back side. Even the lighting is thoughtfully considered and elegant.

Principal Architect: Matt Elliott, AIA
Project Architect: Corey Papadopoli, NCARB
Design Team: Buzzy Cyr, Maggie Kirsch, Elise Schellhase
General Contractor: Hewes & Company
Landscape Architect: Richardson & Associates
Lighting Designer: Peter Knuppel Lighting Design
Structural Engineer: Thornton Tomasetti

READERS' CHOICE: PROFESSIONAL REMODEL/ADDITION

Farmhouse for Family, Kennebunkport
e4 Interior Design

Photo by Jonathan Reece

Emily Mattei Says: A large barn attached to an 1800s home was carefully dismantled and thoughtfully repurposed in a two-story addition encompassing an entry, a mudroom, a kitchen, a pantry, a living room, a laundry room, three bedrooms and three baths. Wood flooring and beams from the barn juxtapose with sleek slate and marble countertops, shiplap and board-and-batten paneling, and playful patterns on tile and wallpaper, creating the sense that the new spaces have always been part of the antique home.

Interior Designer: Emily Mattei
Architect: Kennebunk River Architects
General Contractor: Spang Builders
Custom Millwork Design: e4 Interior Design
Custom Millwork Fabrication: McIntosh & Company
Tile Supplier and Installer: Blue Rock Industries

READER REMODEL/ADDITION

Primary Bath Gut Renovation, Saint George
Bill Metzger and James LaVigne

Bill Metzger Says: We reimagined a large, but dark, primary bath/closet to include an airy shower, larger vanity, toilet room, and walk-in closet. Three new skylights were placed at eye level above double sinks, providing views of the Saint George River. The house also has views of a small forested cove that is often a striking shade of green. It inspired the quarter-sawn red oak used on the walls and floor, as well as the jade-green shower tile. The vanity and benches were crafted by my partner James's cousin from a red oak from James's childhood home in Old Orchard Beach. The countertop is Mystic Mountain granite from Belfast.

Blair Moore Says: This is a very thoughtful approach to layout and design. I appreciate that they used the shower to establish a focal point and managed to create an expansive feeling without the intrusiveness of dormers. The materials

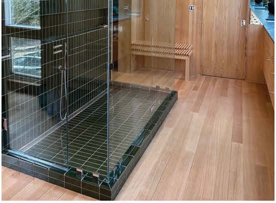


Photo by Bill Metzger

complement the surroundings, while feeling contemporary and in keeping with the room's architecture. Centering the shower and encasing it in glass creates a nice flow from the entry to the closet and water closet.

Design Concept: Rob Southern
General Contractor: Oyster River Builders
Countertop Supplier and Installer: Rockport Granite
Flooring and Paneling Installer: Acadia Wood Floors
Flooring and Paneling Supplier: AE Sampson & Co.
Tile Installer: Scattoloni Tile Co.
Tile Supplier: Heath Ceramics

This entry was also voted the Readers' Choice winner in the Reader Remodel/Addition category.

PROFESSIONAL NEW HOME

Three Cabins, North Haven
McBride Architects

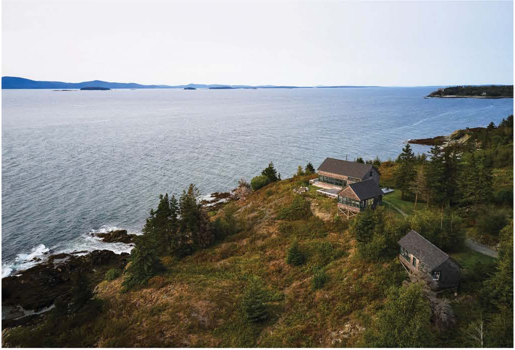


Photo by Read McKendree

Nate McBride Says: The Three Cabins nestle along the cliffs of Crabtree Point, each sited in harmony with the terrain and oriented toward specific panoramic views of Penobscot Bay, the Camden Hills, and the craggy coastline. The principal cabin contains a kitchen and living/ dining area. The secondary cabin includes a primary bedroom suite, and the smallest cabin is a bunkhouse. The hallways of this house are the paths and decks that connect the structures, evoking the experience of a summer camp. The post-and-beam structure of the principal cabin suggests life in a repurposed New England barn, while the open framing and painted-plywood floors in the sleeping cabins mirror the utilitarian, rustic nature of structures on the island. Together, the cabins create a timeless experience that is both in the moment and born of memories and dreams.

Maria Berman and Brad Horn Say: We love this project! It nestles effortlessly into the rugged North Haven coastline. We are especially drawn to the thoughtful and considered way the buildings gather together to create a true evocation of a Maine camp. The interiors are both sophisticated and playful. Perfection.

Principal Architect: Nate McBride
Project Architect: Brooke Harris
General Contractor: Stone Contracting & Building
Electrical Contractor: Tri-Digit Electric
Plumbing Contractor: Rex Crockett
Timber Framing: Rockport Post & Beam
Stylist: Annie McKendree

READERS' CHOICE: PROFESSIONAL NEW HOME

Brickyard Cove, Freeport
Kevin Browne Architecture

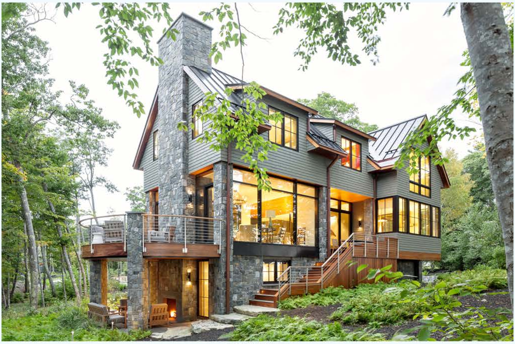


Photo by Jeff Roberts

Kevin Browne Says: While this wonderfully wooded, oceanfront site came with many positive qualities, it also presented some unique constraints. With restrictions from lot lines, the waterfront location, and a

we were able to design a house, a pool house, and a bridge that spans the stream, connecting the two buildings, within these boundaries. The house is composed of two converging gable forms that intersect at a square glass entryway. A floating guest suite sits on a cantilever over a carport and provides a view of the bridge and pool house. Echoing the crisscrossing gables of the main house, the pool house — which includes a mudroom, kitchen, garage, woodshop, and pair of bedrooms and baths — ties in beautifully. The reiteration of design elements and materials, such as stained cedar shingles, stone, and sapele trim, create harmony between the structures.

Principal Architect: Kevin Browne
General Contractor: M. R. Brewer

Landscape Designer: Terrence J. DeWan & Associates
Landscaping Contractor: Anderson Landscape
Civil Engineer: Baker Design Consultants
Structural Engineer: Albert Putnam Associates

READER NEW HOME

Custom Colonial, Bridgton
Zoe Grant and Sean Beacham

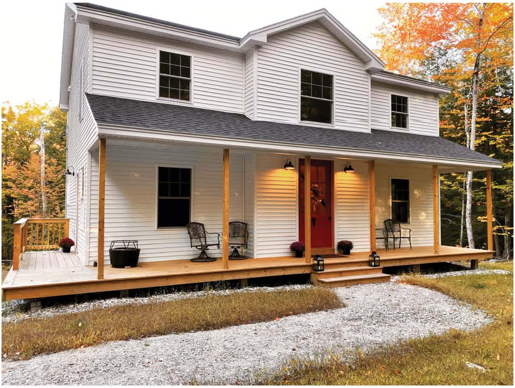


Photo by Zoe Grant

Zoe Grant Says: When we purchased our 35-acre property, shortly after we were married in 2021, we had no design, building, or DIY experience.

We designed the floor plan on paper, then on PowerPoint, and then on the life-simulation video game The Sims before creating the final CAD drawings. After the house was built, we did most of the finish work ourselves, including laying flooring, tiling, painting, and wallpapering. We aimed to use as many antiques as we could, which helped keep costs down. We found the front door on the side of the road, in Lincolnville, and restored it; our living room juxtaposes a gas fireplace with an antique carved-wood surround; and our primary bath features an antique claw-foot tub we painted light pink. We had lots of help from family and friends, learned a great deal, and had so much fun.

General Contractor: Hilltop Builders
Window Supplier: Mathews Brothers

Choice winner in the Reader New Home category.

Maria Berman and Brad Horn Say: This house really conveys how much love and thought went into its design and construction. The dedication and tenacity of the homeowners tell us that construction can be both rewarding and fun. What an inspirational project!

PROFESSIONAL KITCHEN

Blueberry Fields Vintage Charmer, Buxton
The Good Home Interiors & Design

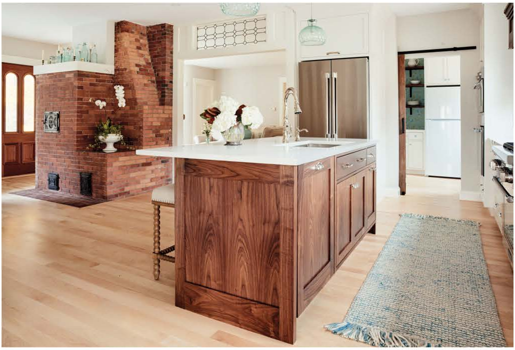


Photo by Michael D. Wilson

Lisa Hincher Says: ‘Something old, something new’ was the mantra for this kitchen/sunroom addition to an 1850s farmhouse surrounded by blueberry bushes, gardens, and mature trees. Incorporating historic elements from the original home and barn, along with found items, was key to creating a seamless integration between the new and existing spaces. Marble mantels, unearthed in the barn, were fabricated into windowsills in the kitchen and pantry. A patinaed barn door was cleaned, waxed, and hung in the pantry. Salvaged leaded-glass windows became transoms on either side of a massive brick fireplace — an original feature that had to remain. Modern touches, such as a bar/coffee station and double ovens, custom cabinetry, including a walnut range-hood cover and quartz-topped island, and a fresh, functional layout contribute to a space that will enhance this home for the next 170-plus years.

Blair Moore Says: This team showed a great appreciation for craftsmanship and history. The restored barn door and exposed brickwork are among my favorite elements, while the salvaged leaded-glass windows that serve as transoms and marble mantels repurposed as windowsills are really thoughtful touches.

Interior Designer: Lisa Hincher
General Contractor: Rideout & Turner
Cabinetry and Range-Hood Cover: Tim Hill Design Co.
Countertop Supplier and Installer: Morningstar Stone and Tile
Electrical Contractor: Bryant Electrical
Flooring Supplier and Installer: C&E Hardwoods
Plumbing Contractor: D.J. Small Plumbing, Heating & Pumps
Tile Installer and Windowsill Fabricator: TCT Marble & Tile
Tile Supplier: Distinctive Tile & Design
Wallpaper Installer: Woody Hynes Painting & Wallpapering
Pendants: Jamie Young Co.

READERS’ CHOICE: PROFESSIONAL KITCHEN

Oak Ridge, Kennebunkport
Mobile Studio Design

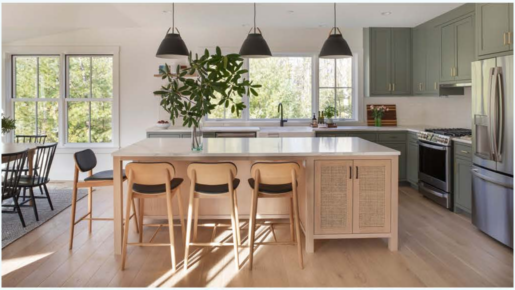


Photo by Rachel Sieben

Located in the woods of Kennebunkport, this sunny kitchen was designed and meticulously crafted to optimize both daylight and practicality. The white-oak flooring and island, coupled with gray-green cabinetry, establish a sense of harmony with the surrounding forest. Pops of matte black and white in the

Architect: Jessica Jolin
General Contractor: Mobile Studio Design Build
Carpenter: Howe Building Company

Countertop Installer: Rumford Stone
Flooring Supplier/Installer: Riva Spain
Plumbing Contractor: Jim Godbout Plumbing and Heating
Plumbing Fixtures: The Portland Group
Tile Supplier/Installer: Distinctive Tile & Design
Appliances: Central Furniture and Appliances
Flowers: Stem & Vine

READER KITCHEN

Medomak Makeover, Waldoboro
Robin Moglia and Bob Clancy

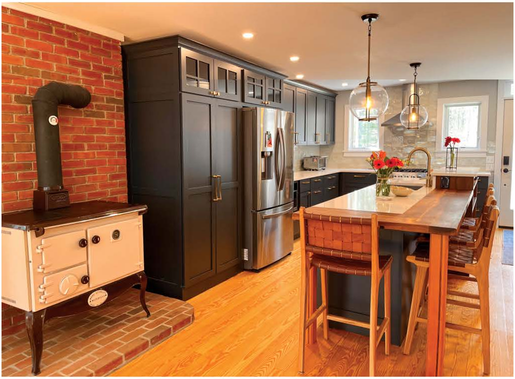


Photo by Robin Moglia

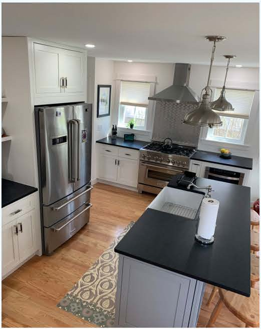
we appreciate, but we did not want to compete with it. We decided on quartz-topped, blue-gray cabinets juxtaposed with a walnut countertop and shelving unit, built by my husband, that houses charging cords, wine glasses, cookbooks, and dog dishes. He also built two walnut shelves that proudly display the pottery my sister-in-law creates. The cherry on top is the luminous glass-tile backsplash. Over the range, we incorporated faceted tile that reflects light differently as the day shifts, mimicking the river framed in the opposing dining-room windows.

Rachel Ambrose Says: This kitchen remodel is really smart. I love the color of the cabinets and the fact that they're not plain wood. The hardworking island seems especially well designed for this space, as it contains the sink, a higher shelf that blocks the view of dirty dishes, storage, prep areas, and a generous eating area, all trimmed out in beautiful walnut. I even love the warm brass cabinet hardware — simple and handsome. Somehow they've achieved the perfect balance of warm tones, cool tones, and textures.

USA
Tile Installer: Scattoloni Tile Co.
Tile Supplier: Distinctive Tile & Design
Stools: Häti Home

READERS' CHOICE: READER KITCHEN

Rockland South End
Tom and Carol Lanza



Tom Lanza Says: Our home is small, and the kitchen shares the living area, so space planning was important to us. Our original plan had an L-shaped countertop, but my wife, Carol, noted it restricted foot traffic and suggested an island instead. I sketched her concept, and it immediately improved accessibility in the kitchen, living space, and rear entrance corridor. Carol also suggested open shelving to give the appearance of a larger room. The kitchen and baths in our home have a predominantly black-and-white palette. Although they have modern features, the colors are timeless and remind us of the appliances, countertops, and kitchen tables when we were kids.

General Contractor: Broad Cove Builders
Electrical Contractor: York Electric
Plumbing and Heating Contractor: Blane's Plumbing and Heating
Cabinets: RTA Wholesalers
Flooring: Maine Traditions
Stools: Crafted Downeast
Windows: Mathews Brothers

See more photos and all of this year's entries here.

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