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Cover Story

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Above: South End Kitchen's design consultants create computer-aided, rendered drawings like the one shown above to help clients envision their completed space.

Right: This elegant kitchen features custom cabinetry in two finishes, specialized cabinets that meet the homeowner's storage needs, and extensive trim pieces that combine to create a unique style.



Designers Bring Dream Kitchens to Life

By Trish Stukbauer • Photography by Matt Silk • Rendering courtesy of South End Kitchens

When Greg and Linda Finnican were planning the new home Atlantic Builders & Remodelers was creating for them, Linda had some strong ideas about how she wanted her kitchen to look. "I wanted a wow kitchen," she explains. "I wanted it to be a major feature in the home, to make a statement with lots of cabinetry and the features that I wanted."

Although she had a well-formed concept, she wasn't certain where to turn to bring that vision to life, until she walked through a charity home and saw a kitchen that took her breath away. "I got the name of their kitchen designer and immediately asked my builder if we could use them," she says.

Builder Mike Scaime was happy to oblige, particularly since he was very familiar with South End Kitchens. Showroom Manager Melinda Wolfe had worked with him to design a striking kitchen and bath for a spec home he was building in South Park. In that home, Wolfe used Brookhaven cabinets, a semi-custom line from leading U.S. manufacturer Wood-Mode, Inc.® The company also produces a full-custom line that South End Kitchens offers. "You will find this cabinetry through independent dealers, and we only represent and design with Wood-Mode and Brookhaven cabinetry. Therefore, our designers know the two product lines inside and out," Wolfe explains.

Indeed, both lines are made in Kreamer, Pennsylvania by Wood-Mode, which has been in business since 1942. The large, privately owned company is 1.3 million square feet that does it all; from processing green lumber to carrying out deliveries in Wood-Mode trucks. The full-custom line boasts over 70 distinctive door styles ranging from traditional French Country to contemporary Urban Matrix in more than 100 standard finishes. "Being completely custom, Wood-Mode will duplicate any color or glaze effect. They will also create heavily distressed finishes. The cabinet color can be unique and one of a kind," Wolfe explains. "There is a limited color choice in Brookhaven, but you're sure to find a finish out of the 83 that they offer."

From those varied choices, South End Kitchens' designers excel at helping clients find cabinetry that reflects their personal style. "We have over 50 large collage boards with photographs of different design themes," Wolfe explains. "When the customer is overwhelmed and unsure about their style, we use these photos to inspire them. We watch for their energetic reaction, and we know they've found something they are drawn to."

Linda had a good idea of what she wanted. "I wanted to get away from dark wood. I wanted to make the kitchen



South End Kitchens' Showroom Manager Melinda Wolfe worked with the homeowner to visually balance the weight of the refrigerator and built-in double ovens along this appliance wall.

a bright and cheerful spot, even at night. At the same time, I collect ceramic pieces and do a lot with florals, so I didn't want anything that would compete with that. For that reason, I selected painted cabinets with a simple brushed glaze, darker wood in the island, and simple Black Galaxy granite countertops," Linda says. Those light cabinets and simple lines highlight the beauty of the space. "The perimeter cabinets are maple with a finish called Vintage white, and the island is cherrywood in a shade called Autumn with a black glaze finish," Wolfe explains.

Once they get a feel for the overall style, South End Kitchens' trained kitchen and bath designers go to work on the details, looking at floor plans and discussing how their clients live and entertain to determine exactly what they require in a functional kitchen design. To illustrate the results and help clients envision the space, they rely on computer models. "The design consultants here create a computer-aided, rendered drawing that looks like a photograph," Wolfe explains. For Linda, Wolfe's willingness to work with the design until it was right for her was an essential ingredient in her kitchen's success. "We played with the design quite a bit," Linda says. "I had changed the kitchen from the original plans when we were building. I wanted to create different elements along each of the walls." Wolfe helped Linda create a focal point above the cook top with a custom hood, inset panels and intricate tile work. Wolfe worked on the design of the refrigerator wall to balance the visual weight of the refrigerator with double ovens on the opposite side and a microwave in the middle. Cabinetry panels further reduced the visual impact of the refrigerator. On a third wall, Wolfe

added glass fronts and brackets between top and bottom cabinets to convey the illusion that the individual pieces were a furniture hutch. While tying it all together, Wolfe was careful to work in functional features Linda required. "Linda included some very specific cabinets, like a mixer base cabinet to store her KitchenAid® mixer; pull-out spice columns on each side of the cook top; wood panels on the dishwasher drawers, warming drawer and refrigerator; and wine storage wall cabinets in the desk area," Wolfe says.

Once the layout was established, only the details remained. "I joked with Melinda that if Wood-Mode made a piece of trim, we added it on," Linda says. Although extensive, the trim details, carved corbels and onlays they selected give the kitchen a distinctive, yet understated, appeal. "We then subbed out the installation to the firm Melinda recommended, John Chadbourne of Chadbourne Remodeling. They took all the extra steps necessary to ensure that all the trim products we used were assembled correctly," Linda says.

Linda's kitchen also benefits from another advantage – Wood-Mode's commitment to the environment. Within the scope of their manufacturing and finishing processes, the company is committed to preventing air pollution by destroying Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's), gaining energy efficiency through waste reuse, preserving forests and other renewable resources, and reducing excess transportation of materials and finished products.

Ultimately, that means the kitchens and baths that South End Kitchens creates not only benefit homeowners now by being beautiful and functional spaces at the heart of their homes, they also are enduring reminders that you don't have to sacrifice style to be good to the environment.



For more information on South End Kitchens, visit the showroom or call (704) 379-1770.