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A Houston kitchen beautifully mixes style cues ranging from turn-of-the-century artisan to Hollywood chic.

Custom Blend

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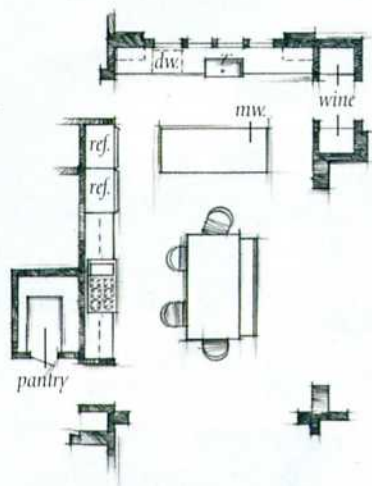
Gathering is key to Brian and Katherine Thompson's kitchen, where a dining table anchors the lively concoction of styles and materials, extending from pro-style stainless-steel appliances to a dignified marble and granite floor and paint-glazed country cabinetry.





Right: Decorative brackets support upper cabinets to frame the cooking niche.

Opposite: The pro-style, stainless-steel range, with its own backsplash, and a corrugated steel vent hood in the shape of a storefront awning add industrial counterpoint to walls and counters clad in slabs of marble.



Moving breezily from coast to coast and decade to decade, this kitchen's style is impossible to pigeonhole. "We aimed for a look of Hamptons Arts and Crafts blended with Hollywood diner," homeowner Brian Thompson says. Traditional green-glazed woodwork and furnishings play against a checkerboard floor and an awning-style range hood fashioned in corrugated stainless steel.

"The fun lies in juxtaposing styles and materials" says Brian, a builder by occupation. "The 'If one thing is pewter, then everything is pewter' idea is not for us." Instead he and his wife, Katherine, let Brian's penchant for play guide their kitchen's distinctive design.

His talent for mixing, and improvising, shows in the standout checkerboard floor. The white squares are carrara marble, the contrasting squares black granite. "Black marble wasn't available, but I found the granite has the same look,"

he says. Brian had doubts about a highly graphic floor pattern at first but now loves its "old Hollywood feel"—a touch of drama in a mostly subdued kitchen.

The couple's lighthearted approach to their kitchen also considered their home's exterior. They installed runs of windows, French doors, and transoms at every opportunity to balance the heavy English-style stone facade. In brilliantly sunny Houston, northern exposure seemed just right for a window expanse over the kitchen sink. This put the light-filled work area at the cooler end of the space, and a sunroom-cum-family room at the warm, south-facing end.

"The kitchen is close to 50 feet by 20 feet," Brian says. "We can get a lot of activity into that space with three children: Courtney, 17; John, 14; and William, 7. And there's Bear, our teacup poodle. Nearly 80 percent of our time is spent here."

The Thompsons' first thought was to have two islands



Nooks above the refrigerators house a collection of white ceramics. The decorative effect helps balance the room's mix of work and cozy dining zones



KEY TO THE LOOK

Floor: White marble and black granite through Walker Zanger; walkerzanger.com

Countertops: White carrara marble (perimeter) and maple (island)

Range hood: Custom by Met Co.; 713/460-8000

Sink and faucet: Matte stainless-steel farmhouse sink and faucet by Waterworks; 800/899-6757; waterworks.com

Microwave drawer: Sharp; 800/237-4277; sharpusa.com

Refrigerator and freezer: Sub-Zero; 800/222-7820; subzero.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
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and to place a dining area where the sunroom is now. "Then we put our dining table in the middle of the room," Brian says. Siting the table in place of a second island turned a potentially cavernous space into a warm, inviting room.

A maple top helps the island blend with the dining table, while lighting distinguishes each surface. An industrial-style metal pendant offers downlight over the island, while a crystal chandelier hangs over the table. Other surprising pairings include the vintage Franklin range and the microwave drawer in the island. "It's cool," Brian says of the high-tech drawer. "Just push a button and 'shzzzzz'—out it glides."

Twin dishwashers on either side of the sink help with housekeeping. "And a nook off the kitchen has a wine cooler so we don't need to wander far for entertaining," Brian says.

"The room has great flow," he adds. In addition to ample work areas, "There's plenty of what I call standing-around areas. Even with a full house, we're never crowded."

Above: The sink is set off by a wide bank of windows above and china cabinets on either side. Glass on two sides allows views into the cabinets from the sink or from across the room.

Left: A microwave drawer tucks conveniently into the island.

Opposite: Carrara marble dresses countertops around the stainless-steel double sink with its industrial sprayer/faucet combo.