



# The Kitchen Lifestyle

## First Time's the Charm

"The kitchen is the central and starting point of our entire house," declares homeowner Jennifer Kakani. "Whether it's in the morning or late in the evening—all roads lead to the kitchen."

She's describing the design rationale for the clean-lined, open-plan kitchen in the Kakani's new home in Mansville, Ohio. The family of four—Jennifer, her husband, Sagar, and their two children, Ashwin two years old and Aiden just two months—moved into the 5,400-square-foot, six-bedroom home the day after Christmas in 2007.

"We wanted an open dry feel to be able to talk with guests and family when we were cooking or cleaning the dishes," Jennifer continues. "Also, watching over our two young boys and knowing

we want more kids, the more open space the better."

The Kakani's found the perfect partners to achieve this goal in their choice of builder, Capital Custom Homes, Milford, and the architect, Rodney J. Sabo of Sabo Design Associates, Loveland. Sabo explains: "The kitchen is one of the most important rooms in the house, it's the centerpiece. We design the rest of the house around the kitchen," adding that this is also important to Capital.

The Kakani's chose Capital from among the three builders active in the new development on the border of London and Mansville. "The design of our home was taken from the Legacy house plan," says Jennifer. "It was done mostly first design to custom fit our needs."

In addition to the expansive feel that the Kakani's wanted, they were also after a contemporary look. Jennifer explains, "I like order and repeated patterns, along with geometric shapes." Sagar is in accord with his preference for straight lines and angular forms.

Although Capital had not done this type of design previously, the custom builder readily took it on. As Victor Kapurba, president, notes, "Our job is to translate the client's style into reality."

The biggest change is the Legacy floor plan was opening up the kitchen, by removing a wall that would have been in front of the sink and originally divided the kitchen from what the architect describes as the "hearth room." This enlarged the space from an enclosed 12' x 14' to an open space that visually incorporates the

17' x 17' hearth room and the 12' x 11' breakfast area. From the sink you can see beyond the breakfast area to the exterior, the hearth or great room, the more formal dining area, a portion of the foyer, the mudroom, and even part of the laundry room. "Having a wall in front of the sink not only closed us off from the great room, but did not allow for the kids to roam around the kitchen without having us stop what we're doing and look after them," says Jennifer.

A two-level open bar adds to the fluidity and workability of the space. On the kitchen side, it is an expansive work surface of Santa Cecilia granite, which is hidden from view by the higher bar where family and guests can pull up chairs to get closer to the action. "Our two-year-old loves sitting at the kitchen bar

when we're washing dishes or cooking," notes Jennifer. "And our guests love it because they look directly into the kitchen and see what's going on."

An integral part of the kitchen design is the European-style wood cabinetry in chocolate brown, a special request from Sagar. They fit in with the Kakani desire for streamlined design. "There is no face frame as is found in more traditional styles," says kitchen designer Julie Savchenko of Cooknee Kitchen and Bath Design. "Not what you see in a 'big box' store."

In European-style cabinets, the doors overlay the carcass, so the visual effect is seamless. But this requires precision installation and makes it more difficult. This was the first time that the Capital workers had installed this style, but, as Kapitula notes, "We're custom builders so we learn as we go along."

Instead of the more commonplace practice of using cabinets with shelves and doors beneath the counters, Savchenko opted for drawers, allowing for easier access. This puts the pots and pans conveniently directly beneath the cook top, which, along with the self-closing feature of the drawers, Sagar particularly likes.

To accommodate the weight of these items and still slide out easily, Savchenko chose cabinetry from AyA Kitchens and Baths, a Canadian company. Although designer Candice Olson often uses them in her HGTV *Divine Design* projects, the Kakani kitchen marked their debut in Cincinnati. "This kick-started the use of AyA here," Savchenko says.

AyA is eco-friendly, formaldehyde-free as well as well priced. "Comparable cabinets would have been two to three times more

expensive," according to the designer.

All of the stainless-steel appliances—cook top, wall-mounted oven, microwave/convection oven, dishwasher, and refrigerator (paneled to match the cabinets)—are top-of-the-line Kitchen Aid products. Because there was not enough space for a Sub-Zero refrigerator, the Kakani's added a wine/beverage center, something that they had seen in other kitchens. "We think of it as a second refrigerator," shares Sagar. It not only accommodates wine, but also juices for the kids."

The sharp angular shape of the exhaust hood, also Kitchen Aid, fits into the overall design and aesthetic of the kitchen and becomes a minimalistic sculptural element.

Highly polished, black onyx tiles were used behind the cook top and long run of counter to its left. The Kakani's requested that they extend to the ceiling and also designed the striking black-and-white pattern over the cook top.

The kitchen is lit with four recessed cans with an additional one over the sink. The hanging lights over the bar are brushed-nickel mini pendants.

There is one element about the design that the Kakani's regret. In the glass-fronted cabinets, which store and display the family's dinnerware, there is no accent lighting, one point where they deferred to the builder. Still it's not bad for a couple who moved from a 1,300-square-foot condominium into their first house.

"When we conceptualized the kitchen, this is exactly what we had in mind," notes Jennifer. "It couldn't have turned out any better." •

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