

# SPRING *Seasoning*

A dash of color and a pinch of faux painting transform a 1930s kitchen into a savory space.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** “Even though our yard isn’t deep, it feels protected, and there’s a beautiful view from every window,” notes kitchen designer Eileen Thurnauer, who brings her garden inside her own remodeled kitchen with a leaf chandelier and floral-and-fruit-patterned valances and tableware.

**K**itchen designer Eileen Thurnauer knows that no two kitchens should look exactly alike, so when she and husband Skip bought their 1930s suburban Chicago home five years ago, they didn’t set out to copy what they’d done in their previous kitchens.

Instead, intent on staying true to the era and architecture of the home—it was designed by Chicago architect Harold Zook, known for his English Tudors—Eileen set out to create an “English country kitchen that would build on the gardens outside,” she says, “something very comingled and comfortable.”

The original kitchen had a few birch cabinets, painted white, and hardly any usable counter space.

“It desperately needed updating,” she recalls.

“Nothing had been done in almost 40 years.”

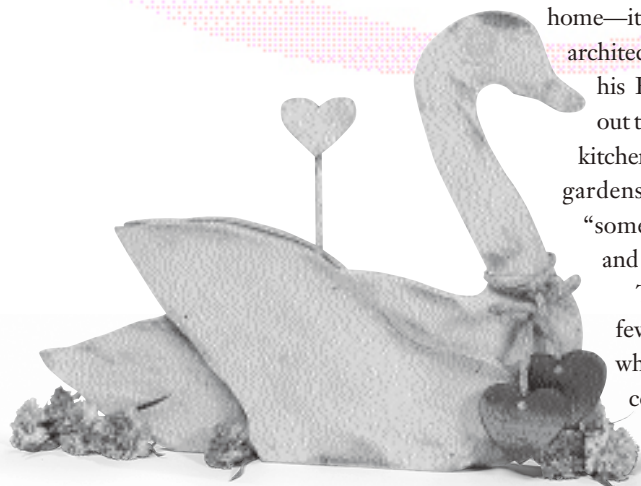
However, with 21 years of professional experience as a kitchen designer and the personal experience of renovating the kitchens in her last two homes, Eileen was undaunted by her latest kitchen’s shortcomings.

“I really like working with older homes and transforming them. Every space is dynamic—I never look at anything as static,” she says.

In fact, it was this ability to envision design possibilities that launched Eileen’s career. Her first kitchen redesign prompted Normandy Builders of Hinsdale, Illinois, to offer her a job on the spot.

It was only natural, then, that before she even moved into her new home, Eileen began envisioning solutions to the functional challenges she saw.

For example, by taking out a powder room, she created a



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By widening the opening to the breakfast nook and placing the ceramic floor tiles on a diagonal, Eileen makes the most of her limited dining space.

## Eileen had a faux painter create subtle, broad, tone-on-tone wall stripes that look like planks.

passageway to the family room and gained space for a peninsula.

“It’s the perfect place to share a morning cup of coffee and read the paper ... it’s also where we do most of our chopping and dicing,” she says, explaining that she and Skip belong to a gourmet club and enjoy both cooking and entertaining.

Taking out a built-in banquette made more room for cabinets and counter space and allowed Eileen to widen the opening to the breakfast

area. “I wanted the space to live large,” she explains, adding that her son, Mark, an architect, collaborated on the project.

Once the structural work was complete, Eileen began decorating, taking her cues from the original wide, wood-paneled walls in the breakfast room. To match its cottage atmosphere, she selected taupe cabinets with a worn finish, adding beadboard accents and furniture-like touches, such as the turned-leg

detailing and the glass-fronted cabinetry. She even had a faux painter create subtle, broad, tone-on-tone wall stripes painted to look like planks.

Though she favors a mix of elements and textures, Eileen maintained continuity by keeping her palette simple. She started with a favorite element—handpainted tiles in sea-foam green and taupe from Sonoma of California—that create interest above the range.

# Tricks of the Trade

Many people hire designers to achieve just the look they want in the kitchen. Eileen Thurnauer didn’t have to. A designer herself, Eileen has been helping clients build their

dream kitchens for 21 years and just finished remodeling the kitchen of her own 1930s Tudor in suburban Chicago. Here are her tips for decorating the kitchen of your dreams:

- ◆ **Use your imagination.** Eileen uses a mix of materials and textures to create a fun, inviting environment—from the tiles on her floor that resemble rough-hewn limestone to the handpainted tiles of her backsplash, the linens at her breakfast table and the many garden-themed accents that dot her counters. To tie all her unique elements together, she keeps her color palette simple and fresh.
- ◆ **Add architecture.** Eileen added architectural interest with built-in elements—balusters, tiny drawers, lift-up cabinet lids, and a cutout soffit that lets her bring her love for gardens inside with a ceiling-high arrangement of silk florals. To evoke a period in your kitchen re-do, try adding corbels, stained glass, columns or other decorative pieces.
- ◆ **Think focal points.** “Every wall should have one element that draws the eye,” says Eileen, who creates interest with a handpainted stucco range hood on one wall, a built-in hutch on another, and a sea-foam green cabinet on a third wall that draws the eye into the breakfast area. Handpainted touches, heirloom china, a big clock—use whatever strikes your fancy to make a statement on your walls.
- ◆ **Take chances.** For those afraid to try anything new or different, Eileen recommends starting small. Try adding two glass-fronted cabinets instead of a whole row. In her own kitchen, Eileen experimented and found that a few well-placed glass-fronted cabinets not only break up all the wood, they create display space for her favorite china and stemware collections.



ABOVE: A local artist was commissioned to copy the floral motif of the breakfast nook valances onto the stucco range hood Eileen designed. LEFT: To create the look of an unfitted English kitchen, Eileen chose furniture-like details such as turned legs on the lower cabinets and two glass-fronted cabinet doors complete with wire-mesh screening. Contrasting sea-foam green and taupe finishes create the illusion of two separate pieces. The middle cupboard hides a microwave.



“I really like working with older homes and transforming them,” Eileen says. “Every space is dynamic.”

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### DO IT FOR LESS

Want to re-create the custom-crafted look of designer Eileen Thurnauer's Illinois kitchen while sticking to a more modest budget? Follow these five steps:

- 1. Pickle old cabinets.** Use a commercial stripper to remove old varnish and stain, then coat bare cabinets with a white, see-through wood stain. Seal the cabinets.
- 2. Paint it yourself.** Paint or stencil a motif on your range hood. If you make a mistake or don't like your work, just paint over it!
- 3. Think “custom.”** Create a backsplash that's all your own by using tile paint to put favorite images on existing kitchen tiles.
- 4. Recycle old favorites.** Repaint current kitchen stools to fit your new color scheme.
- 5. Look at lighting.** Revive an old chandelier with a new coat of paint. Convey a cottage theme by twining grapevines or silk flowers through the arms of the light fixture, varying accents with the season or your mood.

Eileen selected complementary designs that lend an air of serenity to her kitchen. Diagonal tiles frame the backsplash and are echoed in the floor tile pattern, while the curving lines of the handpainted range hood are repeated in the swirls of the wrought-iron bar stools.

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**LEFT:** To maintain an uncluttered look, Eileen keeps counter accents simple and natural, noting, "People like open spaces." **BELOW:** "We are very outdoorsy people," Eileen says, and the potted plants and iron birds on her kitchen windowsill reflect this interest while providing the perfect bridge to the gardens outside. **BOTTOM:** Playing with color and texture, Eileen fashioned the look of a free-standing antique hutch against the warm, worn finish of her cabinetry, while an arched cornice adds period detail.



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## Well-placed glass-fronted cabinets break up all the wood and provide display space.

"The fabrics and everything else flowed from there," she recalls. In fact, both the sandy hue and diagonal pattern of the ceramic floor tiles echo the backsplash. "I think setting things on a diagonal adds movement and texture that are more interesting," Eileen explains.

Though she doesn't like to copy what she's done before, Eileen says she believes in recycling whenever possible. She brought both her bar stools and her chandelier from her last home, painting them to match their new surroundings. To her oak dining set, she simply added new, cottage-compatible cushions.

With the kitchen finished, Eileen and Skip enjoy entertaining, whether it's their grandchildren or their gourmet club. "The kitchen is much more open," Eileen says, adding, "I love looking out the windows at the gardens ... It's a nice respite. I can't think of anything I would change." ★

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NIGHTENGALE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE RESOURCE GUIDE,  
PAGE 146.

