



acquired age

Although its elegant detail and high ceilings suggest an English Manor house, this new kitchen is filled with what the Brits call modern “cons.”

This lakeside house in East Grand Rapids, Michigan, was seven years in the making. Interior designer Jeffery Roberts spent more than three of them just researching the design traditions of English manors. “The project began with a snapshot,” he recalls. “When my client showed it to me, she said, ‘I like the feel of its balanced, not-too-formal look.’” From that germ of an idea, Roberts began to flesh out a project that would ultimately fit into a community with homes dating back to the 1880s. His role included hiring and overseeing the builder.

The kitchen was a particular challenge, requiring cutting-edge amenities, while maintaining the Old World theme. A space large enough to accommodate caterers and feed a crowd—it angles out as a one-story wing—it also had to function well as an everyday kitchen. The solution: a

A Sub-Zero freezer is balanced by a companion refrigerator on the opposite wall of this 18-by-22-foot kitchen. Likewise, a double oven occupies one wall and the other houses a gas range, convection microwave oven, and two warming drawers, all by Wolf. The island is outfitted with freezer drawers on one side and refrigerator drawers on the other; each side also has a dishwasher. Maintaining the period flavor are stools based on 18th-century Windsor chairs and electrified reproductions of iron chandeliers from the same era. The windows have operable awning-style lower sections.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES YOCHUM





raised hearth • milk-painted and glazed cabinets • hand-scraped wood flooring • palladian windows

kitchen within a kitchen. “On one side of the island is a sink, a dishwasher, and freezer drawers,” notes Roberts. On the wall opposite, an efficient galley layout includes everything needed to make family meals: a refrigerator, range, and microwave oven.

“My client wanted the space to seem like a much-used working kitchen that’s been here for some time—albeit updated and equipped with contemporary conveniences,” Roberts explains. Deep, arched openings frame the Palladian windows, and a massive fireplace—one of five in the house—has a stucco chimney breast that tapers up to the 15-foot ceiling. The 24-inch-high hearth recalls a time when swing-arms pivoted cooking pots directly over the flames. Adding a subtle sense of intimacy to the expansive space is floral wallpaper. Although it resembles oft-washed printed linen, once a staple of English decorating, it is vinyl-coated for easy maintenance.

The custom cabinets are milk-painted and then glazed, with brushed-nickel hardware that replicates vintage English latches. “The cabinets rise to eleven feet,” says Roberts, “but the upper row of cupboards is really for display—the owner has an extensive collection of yellow-ware bowls and ceramic pitchers.” Countertops and backsplashes are honed white Calcutta marble.

As an example of Roberts’ abiding attention to detail, walnut plank flooring in random widths and lengths was hand-beveled, hand-scraped, and then oiled. “The oil actually soaks into the wood to give an aged look,” he says. “And the finish is easy to touch up. Just rub a blemish with fine steel wool. Apply more oil and give it two hours to soak in, then burnish with the steel wool.” After all, one of the real beauties of traditional design is its ability to age gracefully.

—Mervyn Kaufman

LEFT With the main refrigerator and range in close proximity, one side of the kitchen serves as a kitchen within a kitchen. Two warming drawers (one not shown) handle large-scale entertaining. The top tiers of the milk-painted and glazed cabinets are fronted with glass and lit from within to showcase a collection of ceramics. **TOP RIGHT** On the opposite wall, Calcutta marble counters on the perimeter and island offer ample set-down space close to the Wolf double oven. **RIGHT** A deep undermount double sink in the island sports a compatible restaurant-style faucet set.

