



"I wanted a kitchen that includes people and draws them in, where those who like to cook have room to play, and those who just like to eat still have a place to interact." - CHRYSEIA BRENNAN



Culinary Design

Gourmet-at-home chefs share their kitchens, recipes

Story by **Maria Sonnenberg**

Photography by **Rob Downey**

We tell ourselves that great rooms help us entertain friends, that bedrooms are for much-needed rest and that bathrooms should be our palaces for self-pampering, but we know the kitchen is the room that matters most, for here is where the heart of the home beats. Julia Child got it absolutely right when she said that “Dining with one’s friends and beloved family is certainly one of life’s primal and most innocent delights, one that is both soul-satisfying and eternal.”

Three Brevard chefs opened their kitchens to us, sharing spaces that, although as different as these foodies’ favorite recipes, remain their homes’ most precious asset.

Grandma’s kitchen, that spring of delicious childhood memories, overflows with grace and function, thanks to the design team of Concepts & Dimensions and RoomScapes of Brevard. The grandma here is Betty Cobb, wife of Tom, he of Makoto’s fame. An accomplished cook and matriarch to a large family, Betty desired a kitchen that could appropriately cater to her skills, yet remain a comfortable gathering place for her loved ones.

Christine Whiteley, owner of Concepts & Dimensions and Jim Correa, senior designer and certified kitchen designer with RoomScapes, obliged with a design that ran off with a silver National Dream Home Award, which recognizes outstanding designs that provide livability, sustainability and healthy and nurturing environments.

Christine and Jim’s original canvas was a typical 1980s kitchen, washed oak cabinetry and all. Although somewhat open, it was too enclosed for Betty’s taste.

Left: Bright, convenient and central kitchen space was the starting point for this dedicated foodie who just finished a degree in nutrition and dietetics.





ous makeover in the kitchen area.

With Christine and Jim's expertise, Betty got the homey kitchen she desired, but with new technology seamlessly incorporated.

Christine stole three feet from the home's living room to open up the kitchen and added tongue-in-groove to the 13-foot ceilings to emphasize the country feel Betty craved. The richness of RoomScapes' Wood-Mode custom cabinetry with a cream and hand distressed umber wash, appears both home-spun and elegant. Matching panels hide the state-of-the-art appliances to minimize 21st century intrusion into the space.

"She wanted an atypical Florida home that would accommodate her large extended family," says Christine.

The generous 100-year-old home has good bones, and although remodeling had kept the lady looking classy, she needed a seri-

"Although I had worked closely with Christine and RoomScapes on the project, the final results were even more beautiful than I had imagined," says Betty.

"The very best part of the design was how even the smallest detail blended with, and enhanced the overall effect. I am very

Opposite page: At the end of the island, a desk beckons grandchildren to sit a spell and watch grandma cook. "Betty wanted a desk area so the kids could sit here and draw," says Christine. "It's all about balance and rhythm." *Left:* The Sharp brand microwave accessible from the large island frees up counter space. Touch one button and the microwave drawer opens and closes with fluid efficiency. *Above:* Betty's requests for the kitchen included two ovens, but not the typical stacked double ovens. Kitchen designer, Jim Correa obliged with two that flank the range area.

An accomplished cook and matriarch to a large family, Betty desired a kitchen that could appropriately cater to her skills, yet remain a comfortable gathering place for her loved ones.



Right: Wood-Mode custom cabinetry with a cream and hand distressed umber wash, appears both home-spun and elegant. Matching panels hide the state-of-the-art appliances.



conscious of even little flaws, but I would not change one detail. I wanted a totally "finished" look, and this room is exactly what my family and I had hoped for."

The avid chef loves the three Wolf stovetop modules RoomScapes installed.

"It's a great way to add flexibility to your surface cooking," says Joe Goldblatt, owner of RoomScapes. The modules can be mixed and matched, and are available in electric, gas, electric grill and induction, and these are just some of the options.

Another Betty favorite is the Sharp microwave,

"This recipe makes a some-what unusual, but delicious, side dish with beef or pork." - BETTY COBB

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Betty Cobb's Pineapple Casserole

Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar (or Splenda, etc)
- 6 tbsps. all-purpose flour
- 2 cups grated sharp cheddar
- 2 20-oz. cans pineapple chunks, drained, and 6 tbsps. pineapple juice reserved
- 1 cup cracker crumbs (recommended: Ritz - 1 1/3 sleeve = 2 cups of crumbs)
- 8 tbsps. (1 stick) butter, melted, plus extra for greasing pan

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
- Grease a medium-size casserole dish with butter.
- In a large bowl, stir together the sugar and flour. Gradually stir in the cheese.
- Add the drained pineapple chunks, and stir until ingredients are well combined. Pour the mixture into the prepared casserole dish.
- In another medium bowl, combine the cracker crumbs, melted butter, and reserved pineapple juice, stirring with a rubber spatula until evenly blended.
- Spread crumb mixture on top of pineapple mixture. Bake for 45 to 60 minutes, or until golden brown.
- Serves 8.



Above: At-home-chef Chrys Brennan begins preparing her Fresh Basil Tomato Pasta. She said she loves her Wolf range for responsive, intense, even heat. For more of her interview go to www.brevardcountymoms.com, click on Entertainment, and select Lifestyles Today in Brevard. Choose the August 9 show and scroll almost to the end for the kitchen segment.

unobtrusive yet easily accessible under the large island.

"It's not in your face and also frees up the counter," says Joe. Touch one button and the microwave drawer opens and closes with fluid efficiency, negating any possible spills.

Betty wanted two ovens, and Correa obliged with two that flank the range area.

"She wanted symmetry, not the typical stacked double ovens," says Joe.

At the end of the island, a desk beckons grandchildren to sit a spell and watch Grandma cook.

"Betty wanted a desk area so the kids could sit here and draw," says Christine. "It's all about balance and rhythm."

Concepts & Dimensions and RoomScapes collaborated again in another stunningly well-balanced kitchen design, this one for Chrysea Brennan's enclave just a few steps from the Indian River in Cocoa.

Bright, convenient and central kitchen space was the starting point for this dedicated foodie who just finished a degree in nutrition and dietetics.

"No matter where I've lived, people congregate around the kitchen," says Chrys.

"Maybe they follow their nose. I wanted a kitchen that includes people and draws them in, where those who like to cook have room to play, and those who just like to eat still have a place to interact. I love to cook. It's a vanishing art in our busy lives. The better the kitchen design, the easier and more fun to prepare healthy meals."



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Right: Brennan selected Sub Zero freezer drawers one stacked on top of the other to accommodate ease-of-reach. They're at arms-length from her cooking space behind the long island. Neighboring appliances include a wine refrigerator with settings to accommodate red and white varietals, an ice-maker and a microwave drawer.



"I love to cook. It's a vanishing art in our busy lives. The better the kitchen design, the easier and more fun to prepare healthy meals."

- CHRYSEIA BRENNAN

The Brennan kitchen is the focal point in the main floor of the three-story home. Even though ceiling heights soar to 33 feet, the eyes are still riveted on the kitchen.

"The kitchen spilled out into the first floor," says Chrys.

"It started out as an important room, but became a focal point. It had a mind of its own. The plans were drawn and redrawn until the kitchen found the space and the design that it needed. Planning was the most challenging aspect. I did not trust that my ideas would work. I could look at a

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Above: The finished dish. Can't you just smell the sautéed garlic in the air?

“It’s a great way to use a bumper crop of garden tomatoes to take advantage of good seasonal produce prices.”

– CHRYS BRENNAN

plan and see that it should work on paper, but Christine looks at a plan and visualizes the finished product and then she improves it 100%!”

Whiteley introduced Brennan to Joe Goldblatt of RoomScapes, who unleashed an almost magical array of appliance options.

“I did not know some of these things even existed,” says Chrys.

The long kitchen island, flanked on one side by the unique log dining table Chrys discovered in Savannah, with its Sharp under counter microwave, Sub-Zero freezer drawers, self-draining icemaker, wine refrigerator and veggie sink with Franke faucets, is a foodie’s idea of heaven.

“I’m a little territorial in the kitchen, so the real challenge for Christine and Joe was to give me access and control, and still allow room for socializing and additional cooks,” says Chrys.

“I think the placement of the island; veggie sink and appliances do that perfectly.”

Across from the island is the Wolf 48” pro-style



Fresh Basil/Tomato Pasta

Ingredients/Equipment

5 medium (or three large) vine-ripened tomatoes
 3 medium-large cloves of garlic
 1 to 2 tbsps. olive oil, canola or safflower oil
 8 oz. thin, whole wheat linguini or spaghetti
 1 small fresh basil plant

Freshly cracked black pepper (to taste)

Use large colander and heavy skillet, but not iron, due to interaction of acid in tomatoes, and a 10-quart pot.

Preparation (10 - 15 minutes)

Peel and seed tomatoes, chop coarsely into 1/4 to 1/2” cubes and allow to drain in colander (Tomatoes are easily peeled by dropping them into boiling water for about 30 seconds, removing from water with slotted spoon and peeling immediately).

Fill pot half full with water and heat to boiling.

Warm skillet on very low heat.

Peel and slice garlic thinly, across the grain.

Wash basil leaves; shake off excess water and cut into thin strips.

Cooking (10 - 15 minutes)

Bring skillet temperature to low, add enough oil to lightly coat bottom of pan. When oil is warm, add garlic slices. Sauté gently, until just beginning to brown (If sticking occurs add a bit more oil).

Add tomatoes from colander to skillet, pepper and increase heat to medium high. Add pasta to boiling water, stirring frequently to prevent clumping. Agitate the skillet containing tomatoes and turn tomatoes frequently, allowing excess liquid to evaporate. As pasta becomes al dente, add basil strips to tomatoes in skillet.

Pour pasta into colander to drain, turn heat off under skillet and gently stir basil into tomatoes.

Divide pasta into four equal servings and top with the tomato mix. Serve with aged parmesan or Romano cheese shavings, chili pepper flakes or a dash of salt and garnish with basil tops. Enjoy!



Above: Function was foremost for at-home-chef Toni Lowe, but only when wrapped in a beautiful setting. She found both in the kitchen of her new Christopher Burton home in Fairway Lakes. Right: A 48" wide peninsula arcs around the kitchen, where Bordeaux granite, with cream and burgundy veins, reigns.

range. Six gas burners and a griddle on top and two ovens – 30" and 18" – cover all cooking needs. Since the house has such an open layout and proper ventilation was critical, RoomScapes installed an oversized hood that whisks out any lingering odors.

All counters, plus backsplash, glow with Delicatus granite with flecks of quartz that shine with an almost three-dimensional quality. Tiny "purple freckles" in the stone recall the Bordeaux color of the sofa nearby.

Art glass with an organic motif floats as the light fixture over the sink, leavening the kitchen's supreme functionality with a soft natural edge.

"Chrys is one of those clients with a fine sensitivity to beauty as well as function," says Christine Whiteley.





Above: Toni didn't want electrical outlets to mar the sculptural quality of the surface, so all electricity is accessed from the underside of the buttery cherry cabinetry custom-made by Melbourne Architectural Millwork Company.

For Cordon Bleu graduate Toni Lowe, who is luxuriating in the wonders of her own new kitchen, function is foremost, but only if wrapped in a beautiful setting.

Does Begheera the cat, who enjoys snacking on spinach, realize the effort her owner went through to create the new kitty hangout? Probably not, but Toni's kitchen, in her new Christopher Burton home in Viera's Fairway Lakes, was the result of highly detailed planning.

"I started doing research on appliances 10 years ago while we were living in Portland," says Toni.

"We really tried to think this out."

A 48" wide peninsula arcs around the kitchen, where Bordeaux granite, with cream and burgundy veins, reigns.

"When I saw the granite, I ran to it and hugged it," says Toni, who claims she has a picture to prove it.

The granite is used in the backsplash, too, but Toni wanted no outlets to mar the sculptural quality of the surface, so all electricity is accessed from the underside of the buttery cherry cabinetry custom made by Melbourne Architectural Millwork Company.

Designer Melinda Palmese helped Toni and Ken Lowe not to stray away from consistency and coordination, and offered unique problem-solving ideas, such as the immense cherry door that hides the corner pantry.

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Above: Toni is particularly thrilled with the Electrolux speed cooker, a grill-convection-bake-microwave combination with an instrument panel reminiscent of an airplane's. **Right:** Toni always pre-measures her ingredients out in small clear glass bowls. She said it's much easier when you start actually cooking your dish to just add your pre-portioned ingredients.



Toni Lowe's Putanesca

Ingredients

- 4 14.5 oz. cans diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1/8 tsp. red pepper flakes, or to taste
- ½ cup Kalamata olives, sliced
- ½ cup Italian parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup capers, drained
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 can flat anchovies, drained and chopped into paste
- 12 oz. penne pasta

Directions

- Combine olive oil and tomatoes and bring to a boil.
- Add remaining ingredients, one at a time, stirring frequently.
- Reduce heat to simmer and stir until thickened and flavors have melded, about 30 to 45 minutes.
- Serve over al dente penne, or as a relish over chicken or fish.

Toni's pride-and-joy is the six-burner DCS stove that sits under the imposing cherry hood. The stove, together with the Sub-Zero refrigerator, were non-negotiable components.

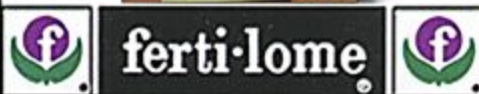
"If I couldn't get my DCS or my 48" Sub-Zero, everything else would have to change," says Toni.

Bells and whistles, such as the whisper-quiet operation of the Asko dishwasher, were very important. A KitchenAid warming drawer slides out from one of the cherry drawers, ready to tackle any slow cooking projects Toni may encounter.

The Sub-Zero's ethylene filter keeps produce fresh. Touch-control Delta faucets turn on and off



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effortlessly over both the kidney-shaped main sink and the tiny oblong prep sink in the island.

Toni is particularly thrilled with the Electrolux speed cooker, a grill-convection-bake-microwave combination with an instrument panel reminiscent of an airplane's.

"This will do everything," she says.

For flooring, the Lowes opted for wide planks of tiger wood, an appropriate choice, since their home sits next to one of the holes at Duran Golf Club. Twelve-foot ceilings provide the scale necessary for massive appliances such as the Sub-Zero fridge that is dear to Toni's heart.

"I wanted to build an open, beautiful, warm kitchen that could support all the appliances I wanted," explains Toni.

"I think we did it." ■

Above: Our Cordon Bleu trained chef's finished dish, Putanesca. And, it was mighty tasty too!

"I wanted to build an open, beautiful, warm kitchen that could support all the appliances I wanted."

- TONI LOWE

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