



THE OWNERS OF THIS open-plan loft kitchen craved materials that would gain patina over time. Carrara marble, reclaimed wood, and stainless steel proved to be the perfect blend of texture and color. Together, they create a quiet backdrop that draws the eye to the window-filled living areas at either end of the rectangular room.

:: An Open Space, Cleverly Contained ::

UNUSUAL STORAGE SOLUTIONS HELP CORRAL A LOFT KITCHEN WHILE RETAINING A SENSE OF SPACIOUSNESS BY MOLLY JANE QUINN

LOFTS ARE, BY DEFINITION, UNSTRUCTURED. But often the temptation to corral an open room proves irresistible, and form overtakes function. In Angela Shen-Hsieh and Mark Schindler's three-story residence in the Porter Square neighborhood of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the previous owner had divided the second floor into a fragmented kitchen/living room/play area with multiple L-shaped islands that disrupted flow. There was also the requisite oversized exposed ductwork that has come to denote "urban" living.



FAMILY LOFT

RENOVATION :: JOSEPH KENNARD ARCHITECTS
 BUILDER :: DISTINCTIVE BUILDING & RENOVATION
 PHOTOGRAPHY :: GREG PREMUR

"Besides the layout and flow, the previous space was visually very noisy," says Shen-Hsieh. "There were a lot of different elements: wood, bits of metal, exposed industrial elements, as well as very residential elements like shutters."

The homeowners both studied architecture at Harvard (although neither pursued the discipline professionally), so when it came time to remake their abode, they immediately looked to fellow graduate and Boston architect Joseph Kennard. Kennard is well versed in the challenges of balancing utility with fluidity; he lives in a loft himself. "It's something I play with a lot, in creating rooms that need separation but try to feel open," says Kennard. "I call it endless space, in that I don't look at the floor plan and see specific rooms. I kind of see by putting an object in the middle to keep everything accessible and open."

Here, a geode-shaped custom cabinet serves as an anchor for the space. It contains storage for dishes, a walk-in pantry, a bar with beverage fridge, and a powder room and closet accessible from the corner office/guest room. Refrigerator, 36-inch range, and exhaust hood are sited along

one wall, which keeps the monolithic stainless-steel appliances from blocking views to the windows at either end of the room. Two-inch-thick Carrara marble countertops offer plenty of workspace; the stone slab continues up the backsplash for a seamless effect. A parallel island holds the sink. Above it, a milky-white Murano glass chandelier illuminates the work area.

"The main passage on the other side of the island is where most traffic would flow, and it keeps people out of the oven area," says Kennard. The old layout dumped visitors into the kitchen, where an ungainly fireplace, which was removed during the renovation, boxed them in. Now, stainless-steel stools tuck under a reclaimed antique chestnut-wood bar that hugs the island, offering a place to chat with the cook. The bar is elevated 6 inches from the marble counter to further delineate the two surfaces.

"There is a lot of stuff that is destroyed during construction, so we wanted to reuse materials," says Shen-Hsieh. She and her husband already had a set of Poliform cabinets, rescued from a relative's remodel. Kennard has worked extensively with salvaged materials, and knew that incorporating the salvaged cabinetry would force the program into a specific configuration. So the ebony-stained Poliform is supplemented by custom pieces in a rich, earthy gray that thoughtfully contrasts with the darker salvage.

"Now we really have a multiuse space. Kids can sit at the bar; people can talk to us when we're cooking; we can have big dinner parties," says Shen-Hsieh. "You feel the edges of the building, and experience the breadth of the space." ::

▼ **THE LIVING SPACES ORIGINALLY featured dark trim. A friend of the homeowners (and a former classmate), designer Heather Wells, who has offices in Boston and Chicago, consulted on color choices. Walls and sills are white; the window sashes are a darker shade that lends an industrial edge. A table between the kitchen and living area offers a dining option.**



DESIGN DECISIONS
A Pod With Plenty of Apps

"One of the challenges with loftlike spaces is storage; when you've got such an open expanse, it's hard to not fill it with lots of 'things,'" says owner Angela Shen-Hsieh. To give the homeowners the storage they needed, but keep the space quiet and unfussy, Boston architect Joseph Kennard created a nearly 9-foot-tall, 10-foot-long "pod" of cabinets that does quadruple duty as a walk-in pantry, powder room, guest room closet, and bar. Oh, and it also has plenty of space for stashing formal dinnerware (TOP LEFT). "There is a closed breakfront all across the front part of it, so it's fantastic for storage," says Shen-Hsieh.

The couple entertains frequently and wanted a place to set up drinks. So, there is a built-in bar behind a cabinet door (TOP LEFT) that slides into a slot when the bar is in use.

But the truly ingenious elements of the pod are the two doors (INSET) that allow the owners to close off one corner of the room to create guest quarters or an office suite.

One door is at the stair landing (BOTTOM LEFT), the other at the back wall of the house. When not in use, each fits inside a panel in the pod to create a sense of openness.

Lighting above the unit showcases the pod's unique form. "We pulled it down from the ceiling," says Kennard, "so you get the sense it is a piece of furniture and not part of the walls."

