

kitchens



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AN AIR OF RUSTICITY

HOLLY GAGNE TURNS AN ORDINARY KITCHEN INTO A PRISTINE MELDING OF NEW AND OLD, WOVEN TOGETHER WITH EXQUISITELY WORN BARNBOARD.

By **Mary Grauerholz**
Photographs by **Eric Roth**



HOMEOWNERS WHO LOVE OLD WOOD KNOW the treasures that even the most battered old planks hold: the lasting beauty of the past that, in the right setting, shines a special aura on everything around it.

Jane Flanagan of Boxford knows the appeal of wood's natural character. When she and her husband, Ed, decided it was time for a new kitchen, they found kindred spirits in interior designer Holly Gagne and cabinetmakers Jewett Farms + Co., makers of fine cabinetry.

Today the couple's kitchen, part of an addition designed by Benjamin Nutter Architects, is a pristine melding of new and old, woven together with exquisitely worn barnboard that shows up in cabinetry, doors, and furniture. The wood's gray-toned beauty only deepens with the sunshine that wash through the wide expanses of glass opening a view to the backyard. Pieces of pottery are placed here and there, each one allowed to shine in its own unique beauty.



The kitchen island plays up the stark contrast of the barnboard and clean, white cabinets, with the barn siding wrapped around crisp white slab-style drawers and topped with white quartz.



The ceramics on display, in fact, influence much of the design of the English-inspired space, says Gagne, the principal of Holly Gagne Design in Rowley and a frequent collaborator with Jewett Farms, headquartered in York, Maine, and now also in the Boston Design Center.

Gagne recalls her first visits with Jane Flanagan to hammer out a plan. “Jane was very directed in her vision,” Gagne recalls. “She pulled out accessories, including a lot

The open-shelf concept allows a feeling of minimalism where materials can be focal points, Gagne says.

“Every cabinet was thought out with regard to what specifically was going where; this was critical to ensure the minimalist feel would actually be successful for their everyday use.”

—HOLLY GAGNE



of ceramics.” The combination of ceramic tile and pottery and other accessories drove the color palette and material textures: “It was so good in helping us establish the aesthetic, what she wanted the feel to be. Jane’s vision set us on a strong design path from day one.”

The reclaimed barnboard became a natural way to balance an air of rusticity with a classic, clean European look. Sourced from a demolished barn in Ohio, the barnboard rendered the color and texture that only natural factors can provide—time, weather, and sun. The planks were not easy to find. “Many of them were too rustic or not the right style,” Gagne says. “Jane wanted minimalist and clean, but also rustic.”

Jewett Farms woodworkers treated the wood as an art form, patiently shaping the fragile, often warped, boards and meticulously mitering the corners, without affecting the face of the boards.

The character of the wood, along with the hand-crafted tile and the Flanagans’ beautiful kitchenware, called for a hand-touched, accessible mood, Gagne says. “I always try to incorporate natural materials into design. Here I wanted clean lines, too. It felt right for the house and the suburban setting.”

A few key design techniques establish the clean, modern farmhouse look. Open shelving was one. “Many people are consumed with filling a kitchen with cabinetry, to have maximum storage,” Gagne says. The open-shelf concept allows a feeling of minimalism where materials can be focal points, she says. “Every cabinet was thought out with regard to what specifically was going where; this was critical to



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The wall above the stove has floating shelves and eye-catching hand-glazed tile.

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Another technique is the mingling of the barnboard and clean, white cabinets. The kitchen island, facing the sink, plays up the stark contrast, with the barn siding wrapped around crisp white slab-style drawers and topped with white quartz. The wall above the stove has clean-lined floating shelves and eye-catching hand-glazed tile. Throughout, cupped pulls and lanterns lean toward the traditional and maintain the clean lines.

The apron sink, with its exposed front-facing side, was a perfect complement to the barnboard. Underneath, furniture feet lend a touch of elegant simplicity.

Nutter, whose architectural offices are in Topsfield and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was completely on board with the tone set by the Flanagans and Gagne. Nutter had the advantage of a history with the Flanagans; his firm had renovated a house for them when the couple's sons—now grown—were toddlers. "Jane has an excellent sense of design," Nutter says. "She also has the ability to maintain a consistent design clarity throughout the home."

Nutter worked with Gagne, Jewett Farms, and general contractor Sean Scanlon of Scanlon Contracting Co. in Hamilton to craft the concept of the renovation—opening up the first-floor rooms and linking them visually—as well as some of the key interior components. One is a wall of full-height cabinetry with rolling barnboard doors, driven by the lack of closed cabinets and, as Nutter says, Jane's desire for a "clean look." The doors disguise storage space; when they are closed, they are bookended by a small bar and display areas.

The warm, open feel of the kitchen has its roots in the Flanagans' unique sensibilities and the artful items they have found on their many travels. "The ability to display these items was as important to them as having a Wolf range to cook a great meal," Gagne says. "I think being able to achieve that emotional and functional balance is truly the purest measure of success we can achieve as interior designers." ■

For contact information, see Resources on page 113.



The living space off the new kitchen is cozy and inviting.

COMFORT ZONE

INTERIOR DESIGNER HOLLY GAGNE CREATES A NEW KITCHEN AND LIVING SPACE FOR A FAMILY IN BOXFORD.

By Katherine Gustafson
Photographs by Eric Roth



KIMBERLY AND GARY D'ALELIO SPENT MORE THAN A decade tolerating their kitchen. It was disproportionately small for their 3,900-square-foot Colonial in Boxford making family life with three growing boys cramped.

They were “always frustrated, always bumping into things, never being able to store enough,” remembers Kimberly. “We knew we wanted to make some changes.”

Once two of their boys were out of the house, they had some leeway to think about a renovation, but they hadn't settled on a plan when an opportunity arose. Kimberly's best friend in Virginia was renovating her kitchen and discarding all of her cabinetry—the D'Alelios could have any pieces they wanted if they retrieved them within a few days.

A wellness enthusiast who aims to live mindfully, Kimberly was enthusiastic about upcycling, especially as a collaboration with her dearest friend. She and Gary spontaneously drove straight there, unsure what they would bring back. After brainstorming with Kimberly's friend, they ended up loading a moving van with the entire extensive collection of high-quality cabinets.

They knew they needed a talented designer to tackle



Gagne and her team used a computer program to reconstruct how the cabinets had been arranged and then figured out how they could be repurposed for the D'Alelios' space.

this unorthodox project, and engaged Holly Gagne of Holly Gagne Interior Design to help them figure out how to renovate with the cabinets as the centerpiece of the project.

“The concept of it was very cool—to salvage a whole kitchen that was in very good shape and modify it,” she says. Yet it was a departure from her typical way of working: “Usually I design a space and then the cabinetry. I had never seen their space before. So that whole part of the process was completely cut out.”

She and her team used a computer program to reconstruct how the cabinets had been arranged and then figured out how they could be repurposed for the D’Alelios’ space. It turned out that not even a portion of the cabinets would fit in the existing kitchen—the room would have to be expanded substantially. And even with a bigger space, some of the cabinets had to be modified and other custom pieces added.

The result is basically a double kitchen—a main kitchen area fronted by a span of windows looking out to the garden, and a secondary kitchen where the original one used to be. The D’Alelios also added a mudroom, a laundry room, and a powder room.

The main kitchen is for daily cooking, with a Wolf four-burner stove with a griddle and double oven, a Miele dishwasher, a large Sub-Zero refrigerator, and



Top, Between the two spaces is a seating area with gray swivel chairs where the family congregates. Bottom, A blue barn door separates the kitchen and mudroom.

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vignettes

two refrigerator drawers opposite the stove for daily ingredients. The secondary kitchen has a coffee station, a half dishwasher and a Wolf warming drawer, which are useful for entertaining, as well as space for processing vegetables from the family's garden, which Kimberly particularly enjoys. It also features a smoothie-making area with an ice maker, a wine refrigerator for nut milks and probiotics, and a freezer for frozen fruit.

The style across both kitchen areas is classic, showcasing white Carrara marble, the repurposed cabinetry—white inset with shaker doors with bead detailing—and a custom millwork rangehood. But the personality of the family shines through; there are industrial farmhouse touches such as metallic light fixtures, a blue barn door between the kitchen and the mudroom, and rustic counter stools. The mosaic marble backsplash tile—a delicate pattern resembling overlapping leaves—is a nod to the D'Alelios' appreciation of their garden and rural surroundings.

"Everything had to be so thoughtful," says Kimberly, whose vision for the new room was "peace." She feels that word describes the finished product perfectly: "It's peaceful, it's happy, it's beautiful, it's cozy."

Between the two kitchen spaces is a seating area—a small table and four gray swivel armchairs—where



Holly Gagne (left) with Kimberly D'Alelio. Right, The style across both kitchen areas in this Boxford Colonial is classic and peaceful.



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—KIMBERLY AND GARY D’ALELIO

the family congregates. The men of the family are all musicians, and during school breaks the D’Alelios’ sons often sit in those chairs strumming on guitars while Kimberly cooks and smiles.

“That sounds idyllic, but that is literally my reality,” she says. “They say the kitchen is where everybody ends up, but this is now literally the hub of the house, the heart of the house.”

For Kimberly, that heart is made all the more loveable by the fact that much of its style and substance came to her directly from her best friend’s home. ■

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