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KITCHEN OF THE MONTH

RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Opposites attract in a kitchen that's contemporary and traditional, clean-lined and glamorous. White marble and dark wood? Made for each other!

Kitchen by
EILEEN SEGALMAN &
CHRISTIE SCHULTZ

Interview by
MICHAELNE BUSICO

Photographs by
MIKI DUISTERHOF







Cabinets ground all the Calacatta Gold marble in this cook's kitchen, which is equipped with a Viking 36" Pro-range top and warming drawer and Viking Designer food. The two islands have separate functions—one for cleanup. A Marvel beverage center and GE Profile microwave are in the prep island. Blinds by Nanik.

MICHAELNE BUSICO: *You've designed kitchens for clients, so you must have had a very definite idea about what to do with the design of your own kitchen.*

EILEEN SEGALMAN: It was more like an epiphany. I wanted it to be open and airy, with windows and French doors all over the place so I could see outside in every direction. We entertain a lot, and we have three kids, so I cook every day, and I don't want to feel like I'm closed off. But the essence of the kitchen is the two islands.

Why two?

They have two separate functions. I'm not the neatest cook. I wanted one for prep and one for cleanup. The cleanup island is where all the dishes and glassware are stored, so if you're setting the table, you're not in the cook's space. The islands are laid out galley style, and they're oriented so that I never have my back turned to anyone when I'm cooking. Not having upper cabinets or anything else separating you from one another makes it more intimate, too.

Were you inspired by any particular style?

I had a co-designer, Christie Schultz of Kitchen Traditions, and we created a mix of traditional and contemporary, with elements of midcentury, French Deco, and South Beach. I'm outdoorsy, and I like to feel connected to nature, but I'm also drawn to that old Hollywood glamour of the '40s—the burnished wood, the clean-lined elegance. I went to South Beach, and I walked into the Delano Hotel and saw a lot of white marble and dark wood. It had this ethereal feeling, and I thought: Aha! that's it! And I came up with this espresso finish.

Why the mix of traditional and contemporary?

This is basically a classic New England shingle-style house, with traditional architecture. I love all-white super-contemporary kitchens—Christopher Peacock

does fabulous white kitchens—but that wouldn't have worked here. There's so much light in this room, and it's so open, all white would have felt cold. I think of this as soft contemporary—not industrial contemporary.

Is the gray-blue of the walls and ceiling a South Beach color?

No, that was just me, standing in the room and looking out at the sky and thinking, I don't want to compete with this view. It's a good, subtle transition to the outdoors, very soothing. Although I did pick a beachy color, I guess—Benjamin Moore's Beach Glass.

Lots of people disguise or hide their appliances, but you really show them off.

This is a conversation I have a lot with my clients. I say, 'Listen, this is a kitchen. It is what it is. We're cooking here!' I don't hide anything. It's there to be used. And to me, stainless is gorgeous. I love it.

You really do. You even carried it over to the dining area.

I wanted to balance the two spaces, and I thought it would be fun to have a funky stainless-steel fireplace surround in this sort of glamorous room. But I also wanted a delineation, and I wanted it to be based on architecture. An interesting ceiling can accomplish that, as well as walls or columns. If you have good architecture, who needs much of anything else? So I decided to vault the ceiling in the dining area. It's 14 feet high and when you look up, it's like it's open to the sky.

One last thing: You don't worry about stains or scratches on that beautiful marble?

If there were a white granite with veining as interesting as Calacatta marble, that would have made my life easier. It does etch the instant anything acidic hits it, like vinegar or citrus. So I have it repaired, repolished, and resealed regularly. But you know, I don't mind the etchings. They tell a story. And they remind me that nothing in life is perfect. >>



ABOVE: Fisher & Paykel single-drawer dishwashers flank the Blanco sink on the cleanup island, and eliminate some of the bending. Faucets are Dornbracht's Tara Collection. A graceful oval window separates the Viking 36" refrigerator and the Viking 30" Designer

Series double wall oven. Countertops are Calacatta Gold Marble (detail, far left) and cabinets by Plain & Fancy are walnut stained a deep espresso and finished with Colonial Bronze polished chrome hardware (detail, left).