

# KITCHEN WITH A LAKESIDE SPIRIT

*In a home on the water in West Milford, a key room needed work, so the buyers hesitated. Then a dream sealed the deal.*

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**G**OOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT, and for Marlo Purcell and Steve Wagoner, their new kitchen was worth every minute.

When the couple was ready to downsize from their Mountain Lakes home to a house in a lake community, they were frustrated to find that many such homes were very close together with no privacy, or perched high on a hill with a long walk down to the water. After a long search, they finally found a house in West Milford on High Crest Lake that sat on the perfect piece of property.

“It had a big, beautiful, flat backyard with a large pool, a big grassy area and its own private beach,” recalls Purcell. It also offered total privacy, thanks to numerous trees and lush landscaping. But the house was old and very dated, and the couple wasn’t sure they wanted to deal with a large renovation, having previously renovated several other homes.

Then one night Purcell had a dream about the house. On waking, she said to her husband:

In this West Milford home, the walls enclosing the kitchen and obstructing the view of the lake were removed, the ceilings were opened to the rafters and rustic beams were added, giving the kitchen an airy feel. The owner wanted a mix of open shelving and traditional cabinetry, and the Ulrich custom-framed square inset cabinetry by North American Cabinets was painted in Benjamin Moore’s Chantilly Lace.









“We are never going to find a piece of property like this. I think we could really do it.” So they pulled the trigger, intent on gutting the entire house, with Wagoner’s contracting company doing the work. Seven months later, they finally had the house of their dreams, including the perfect kitchen, designed with the help of Taylor Sassaman from Ridgewood-based Ulrich Inc.

Purcell knew she wanted the kitchen to look very neutral and white, with an organic, natural feel in keeping with the fact that they were right on a lake. But she wasn’t sure what kind of material she wanted to use for the countertops. Sassaman suggested using porcelain, which is more economical than marble and could be cut thin enough to use for the backsplash too. “Marlo originally wanted something very soft and subtle, but when she saw the Macchia Vecchia porcelain with the bold veining, she loved it,” says Sassaman. “She was worried about taking a risk, but I thought it was the right move. It was the best thing for this kitchen because it gives it life.”

Another eye-catching feature of the room is the white limestone wall behind the bar. “Marlo really loved that old-world, bleached-stone look,” says the designer. “It gives the kitchen an earthy, natural feel and adds that element of warmth.”

Both Purcell’s and Sassaman’s favorite element of the kitchen is a subtle nod to the home’s location right on the water: nautical boat cleats in unlacquered brass used for refrigerator pulls. “It’s such a special touch,” says Sassaman. “It’s all about the details, and that’s a special little moment.”

Thanks to a mix of unique features and classic elements, the kitchen is both gorgeous and functional—and the couple really uses it. “Some people eat out five, six nights a week, but that’s not us,” says Wagoner. “We eat out one night a week—six nights a week Marlo cooks.”

“And Steve is a very good dishwasher,” Purcell jokes.

It’s nice when a kitchen has everything—including folks who appreciate it. ♦



This page: A Sub-Zero refrigerator hides behind paneled French doors featuring boat cleats as pulls. Opposite page: The large island made of quartersawn white oak hosts plenty of storage along with the Sharp microwave drawer. Behind the bar, the wall is clad in white limestone, which was challenging to get just right. "We agonized over finding the bricks," says homeowner Marlo Purcell. "It was really difficult to find light, white bricks. And then I wanted it very natural-looking, and the mason would try to make all the bricks look nice and even. I kept telling him, 'No, remove that brick and put it there.' And he wanted to put the mortar very neatly between the bricks, and I said, 'Put it all over!' He finally understood what I wanted, and it came out really nice. We were really pleased."

