

Kitchen remodels that optimize space



Kate Carter

By Kate Carter

Kitchen remodels are in high demand right now, often due to the fact that everyone's been cooking at home during the pandemic. Many are discovering that their poorly designed kitchens don't suit their newfound culinary creativity. Sisler Builders has recently done a number of kitchen remodels that optimize existing spaces, improve work-station flow, provide more storage, and look great. Here are three examples of our pandemic kitchen remodels.

Interim kitchen

This kitchen was part of a full renovation and structural revision of an old garage. The owners are staying here while their new home is being rebuilt on the property. The objective was twofold: improve the immediate, albeit temporary, living situation and provide a completely separate space for guests once the owners have moved into their rebuilt house.

The garage's second floor was originally supported by posts that were inconveniently located and took up space on the first floor. "We cut the floor system off the walls and jacked it up about two feet, installed a steel I-beam to eliminate a structural post in the garage below," said project manager Luke Sisler. "Then we removed the old roof system with a crane to build new second floor walls and a roof on top of that."

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The kitchenette was created with ultimate efficiency in mind, including European appliances, dishwasher, range, open oak shelving, and oak flooring. Due to the pitch of the roof, custom cabinets were essential. Sisler Builders' woodworking division stepped in to create that cabinetry. It was the first complete kitchen that came out of our newly expanded woodworking shop. In order to provide more storage spaces, our crew also built custom pull-out drawers.

The original architectural draft included a pantry off to one side, but on site it soon became apparent it needed to be reconfigured because there was no place for a couch. Sisler Builders reoriented the access and replaced what had originally been a closet-style pantry to a space-optimizing floor-to-ceiling arrangement with more pull-out drawers.

Sisler Builders upgraded the living space so that the owners would be more comfortable during the house rebuild. It will also provide a charming place for visitors when the house is finished.



Photos: Kate Carter

Go with the flow

A family from Montreal had been coming to their vacation home in Stowe for many years, and as they continued to come, the family continued to grow ... to the point of outgrowing their home. Their renovation began by enlarging the garage, which required raising the roof. Four bedrooms, a bath, and media room were added to the upper level and a large mudroom, pantry, and laundry to the lower level. The owners were so pleased with the transformation they also had us reconfigure the kitchen.

"It was a major transformation in terms of functionality for the home," said project manager Bryan Kelley.

"We remodeled the kitchen for better flow and a renewed look." The main task was to remove the projecting peninsula that divided the kitchen from the living room. It was replaced with a dining island. All cabinets, countertops, and backsplash tiles are new and the refrigerator was relocated, providing more counter and cabinet space. Recessed lighting was removed from the ceiling, replaced with matching chandelier and pendants.

Sisler Builders also created a pantry/storage area with a sliding barn door. In keeping with the new country-style theme, they also installed sliding barn-style doors in other rooms to unite the style change throughout the house.



Photos: Erica Allen

Kitchen designer's kitchen

The owner of this house, Nina Howell, is a kitchen designer on Martha's Vineyard, and she had a clear goal from the start. "We bought the house in 2019. It was old and a bit unpleasant and we wanted to update it to be more our style," Howell said. "It was different being the client, it was both easy and hard. My husband is very detailed oriented and thankfully, our project manager Luke Sisler was very patient. The best part was we had a vision and Sisler Builders replicated it."

Sisler said the most challenging aspect was cutting the concrete slab in the kitchen to lay conduit to power a new island's beverage cooler and microwave. "There was significant owner involvement and much to our delight she was responsive and timely. She supplied the materials and we did the installation of cabinets and flooring." The countertop, which Howell brought up from the Cape, was installed by Burlington Marble & Granite.

Sisler Builders also remodeled the adjacent entry-

way by removing a closet door and wall and installing a custom-made bench, thus creating a modified mud room. "The rustic oak bench was a late addition, created in our woodworking shop," Sisler noted.

The Howells were happy with the process and result and are looking forward to splitting their time in comfort between Martha's Vineyard and Stowe.



Photos: Kate Carter

In the News

Sisler Builders has again maintained a Covid-free workplace for another six months. Thanks to all who have taken this pandemic seriously and not compromised the health of our clients, co-workers, employees, and their families.

One of our homes at Spruce Peak was featured in the winter editions of both *VT Ski+Ride* and *Spruce Life*, and this summer in *Stowe Guide & Magazine*. Our talented team of construction professionals appreciate this recognition.

We happily announce additions to our extended family. Employees Bryan Kelley and Will Spenser have new babies in their young families. Grant Wieler, who does

our marketing, had twins, and two long-term subcontractors, Andrew Trombley and Matt Laggner each also had babies. Congratulations to all of them!

So that we may leave a better world to this next generation, we are proud to announce the first electric vehicle in our fleet and we have two cutting-edge electric trucks on order. We strive to expand our energy efficiency wherever we can.





56 Park Street, PO Box 605
Stowe, Vermont 05672
802-253-5672
SislerBuilders.com

Ask the *craftsmen.*

Q: What is the most cost-effective heating system?

The past decade has seen huge advancements in three heating technologies—heat pumps, solar energy, and battery storage. When combined, they are the most cost-effective method for heating a home, and are more sustainable.

Heat pump technology is the state-of-the-art heating system. Heat pumps are super-efficient and can both heat and cool. They can be air-source or ground-source. Ground-source heat pumps are commonly referred to as geothermal. Like a refrigerator, heat pumps extract heat or coolness from a source through a thermodynamic cycle.

A ground-source heat pump uses a refrigerant pumped through the ground as its source, while an air-source heat pump uses ambient air. Air-source heat pumps blow warm or cool air into the home while ground-source systems generate warm or cool water. Warm water is pumped through a radiant slab and cool water cools an air system.

Ground-source heat pumps are more efficient than air-source because the ground is a nearly constant temperature. Also, air-source heat pumps are not efficient when the ambient temperature falls below 0° F and hence, need a backup system.

Despite the inherent disadvantages of an air-source

heat pump system, it is usually best for an existing home because the installation is much easier. For a new house, a ground-source system is usually best when it's incorporated into the house design. Ground-source systems have a higher initial cost with the drilling of wells and associated piping, but those costs are offset by the system's efficiency.

Advancements in solar technology have made installing photovoltaic panels to generate electricity from the sun's rays much cheaper. A solar system that had 30-year payback 15 years ago now has a 5-year payback. Heat pump systems need a lot of electricity to drive compressors and pumps, and cheap solar often makes them more cost effective than unsustainable oil or gas systems.

Finally, advancements in battery technology have made storing electricity in a house cheaper. Adding a battery storage system allows that cheap solar to power clean heating, even at night.

The synergistic combination of a solar system that charges a battery storage system which in turn drives a super-efficient heat pump system yields housing that will go a long way toward solving our climate crisis, while saving a homeowner money.