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KITCHEN

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TYPICAL OF ITS 1950S ORIGINS, the U-shape kitchen in Barbara and Bob Herr's Grand Rapids, Michigan, home was designed for one cook and no guests—a stark contrast to the couple's social lifestyle.

With its scenic location and charming architecture, the home drew in family and friends, but it lacked a floor plan that could easily accommodate them. Barbara wanted a kitchen that would welcome both cooks and conversationalists. Her priorities included more space, professional-grade appliances, an island, and vintage style.

By removing a wall between the kitchen and a laundry room, kitchen designer Doug Burgess increased the size of the kitchen by one-third.

To smooth traffic flow and allow for multiple cooks, Burgess clustered elements according to the length of time typically spent in front of each. The more time-intensive stations—cooktop, sink, and dishwasher—are in one grouping, while the quicker stops—wall ovens, refrigerator, and microwave oven—are in another. The island's prep space serves both areas.

OPPOSITE: The cooktop area, with its elegantly curved hood and crackle-finish subway tile, is a focal point of Barbara and Bob Herr's remodeled kitchen.

THIS PHOTO: Topiaries top the custom trestle table at the banquette, one of the places where family and friends gather.

SOCIAL GRACES

Old-fashioned style surrounds today's convenience

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE TIBODEAU SILLMAN PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES YOCHUM FIELD EDITOR GISELA ROSE

in a setting conducive to cooking and company.

The island is a gathering spot. "I'm from a big family, and everybody came up for Thanksgiving," Barbara says. "You can use the island to either serve food or sit and visit while everybody's getting food ready."

Set off from the rest of the kitchen by bold blue, the island base features a different cabinetry style, too. "We wanted it to feel like an old painted piece of furniture," interior designer Christine DiMaria says.

While the island suggests age, other touches—open shelving, deep crown molding, a shapely hood, and honed-granite countertops—express elegance and charm.

Now the kitchen can work the crowd, yet no one feels lost in it. "It just feels cozy to me," Barbara says.

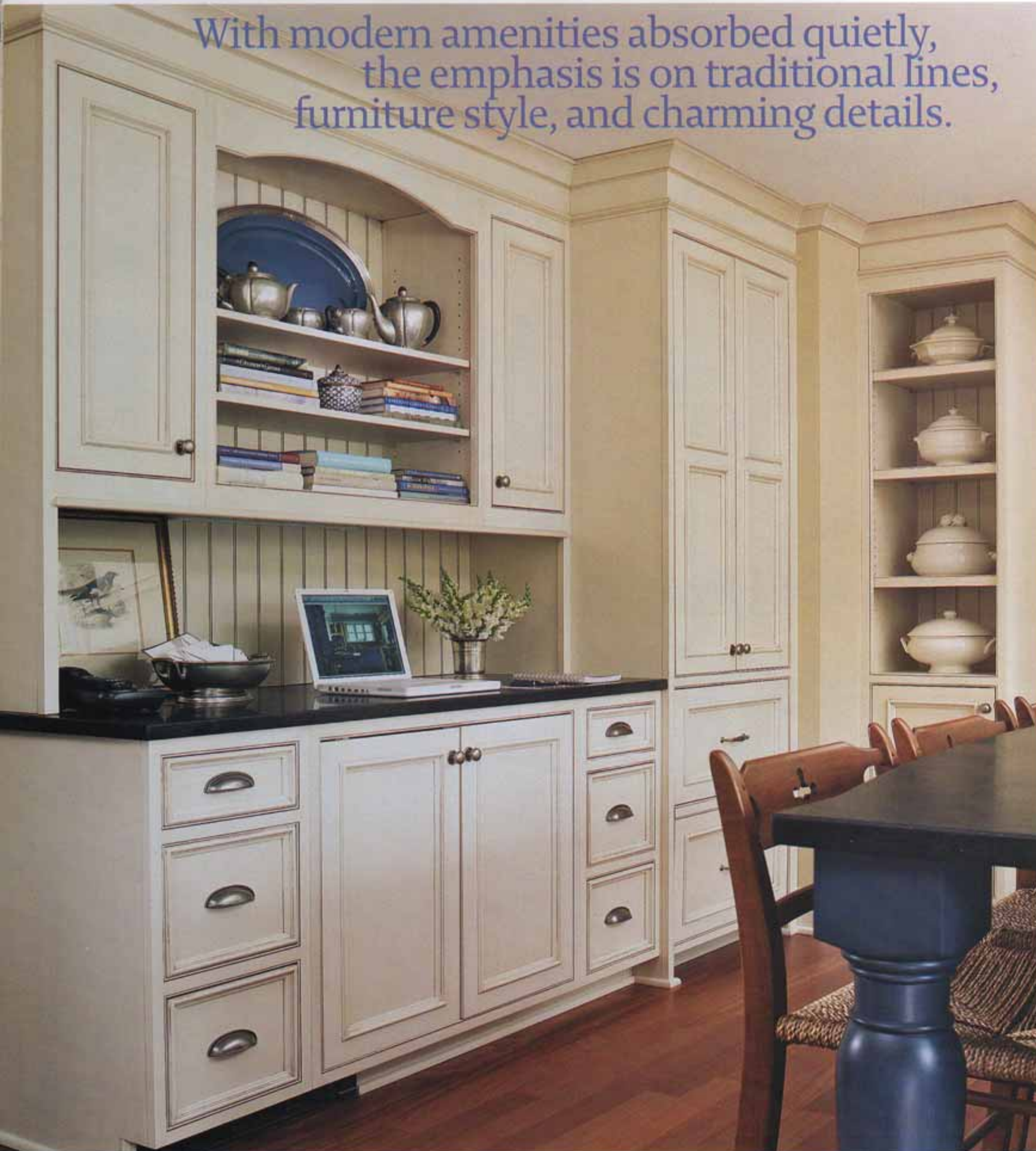
The island is a social magnet, drawing guests to the center while cooks work the perimeter.



OPPOSITE: The island is set apart stylistically from the perimeter cabinetry, as if it were a piece of antique furniture. The refrigerator, wall ovens, and microwave oven form a "quick-access" appliance grouping. THIS PHOTO: A brown glaze and pewter hardware age the creamy cabinetry. The sink and island take in beautiful garden views.

BELOW: The desk area holds a slide-out tray and office equipment behind retractable doors. A stool at the island becomes the desk chair when needed. Set at counter height, the desktop doubles as buffet-serving space. To the right of the desk is a shallow pantry with two freezer drawers underneath. OPPOSITE: There's almost always room for one more at the banquette, where beaded-board backing extending well up the wall adds vintage charm to built-in seating.

With modern amenities absorbed quietly, the emphasis is on traditional lines, furniture style, and charming details.



GROUP THERAPY BARBARA AND BOB HERR'S 1950S RANCH WAS NOT DESIGNED FOR ENTERTAINING. HERE'S HOW THEY SOCIALIZED THE KITCHEN.

The Herrs attacked structural obstacles first. They had to reroute an unusual ceiling-based copper-tube heating system before removing a wall to enlarge the kitchen. With the wall down, there was room for an island, a natural social magnet that provides a central place for guests to sit or stand. The island

can also be used to serve buffets, as can a nearby counter-height desktop. Multiple workstations and logical appliance placement make it possible for two or more cooks and their helpers to work at the same time. Finally, the banquette with table provides an informal dining option and additional seating. **KBI**

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