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## Ergonomics With Style

A professional chef and a home cook have a meeting of the minds

WRITTEN BY JACI CONRY • PHOTOGRAPHED BY SARAH WINCHESTER

**M**egan and Chris Parsons didn't buy their house in Winchester, Massachusetts, in 2006 for the kitchen. In fact, with the gray Formica cabinetry, mauve granite counters, and dropped ceiling, the kitchen was the worst room in the house. Yet the rest of the turn-of-the-20th-century Victorian cottage-style house greatly appealed to the newlyweds. Chris, a professional chef and restaurateur, had recently moved back to the area after a stint in New York City, to work with Joanne Chang as she opened her first Flour Bakery in Boston's South End.

Save for the ghastly 1980s kitchen, "the rest of the house had been untouched," says Megan. "It had all the original windows, the beautiful doors and mouldings, and we loved that. While we didn't like the kitchen, it functioned OK, so we waited nearly 10 years to redo it."

At the end of 2015, after planning long and hard for their dream

kitchen that would meet the needs of their family, which includes daughter Lily, 12, and son Timmy, 10, the Parsons were ready to renovate. They turned to Boston-area interior designer Sarah Scales of Sarah Scales Design Studio and contractor Glen Mistretta of Mistretta Contracting Inc. in Melrose, Massachusetts, to help execute their plan.

After his foray at Flour, Chris owned and operated the much-acclaimed Parsons Table in Winchester for a number of years and went on to open Steel & Rye in Milton, Massachusetts, in 2013. Earlier this year, he left Steel & Rye and is in the process of securing a location for his next eatery. While one might assume the chef in the family is the more dominant home cook, that's not the case in the Parsons house-

**CHEF CHRIS PARSONS** walks through the kitchen he helped design with function in mind. The sink was relocated from the back wall to a light-filled space beneath the expansive new Marvin triple window. The white subway tile backsplash, which stretches to the ceiling, is accented with light-gray grout.

## KITCHEN



A DUTCH DOOR original to the house (ABOVE) separates the kitchen and dining room. The family shares the kitchen space (LEFT) with Megan and Tim at the table made with metal pipes from The Home Depot and a reclaimed wood top from Longleaf Lumber in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Chris and Lily prepare food at the work counter. All lighting fixtures are recessed, save for a single antique brass pendant above the sink (BELOW LEFT).



hold. “Chris is usually off cooking at his restaurants for other people,” says Megan, “and I’m the one cooking at home.”

Chris does cook when he is home for dinner and always when they entertain, which is often, and creating a plan for the kitchen was very much a collaboration between husband and wife. “We talked a lot about the ergonomics of the space, which is the process I go through when setting up restaurant kitchens,” says Chris. “In a restaurant kitchen, there are several stations, and each one is designed around the ergonomics of how the chef in each particular area can work efficiently.”

The couple carefully considered aspects revolving around flow. “When you are standing at the sink,” asks Chris, “where is the dishwasher, and how does your body move between the two? Before we put the high table in the middle of the room, we thought a lot about how it would function in relation to the stove. I enjoy figuring that stuff out.”

Among the goals of the renovation, says Scales, “was to have the new kitchen match the heritage of the house.” Simply removing the dropped ceiling increased the headroom a whopping 12 inches, which instantly made the space feel larger and more airy.

The footprint was not changed, but new windows from Marvin Windows and Doors bathe the kitchen with sunlight. New mouldings and trim match the antique millwork throughout the house. Mistretta was key in that. “Since it’s an old house with quirks and odd corners,” says Megan, “we didn’t know what we were dealing with — there were a lot of unknowns. He was very careful and helpful.”

Scales made a plan that transformed the layout from a U-shaped to an L-shaped

## KITCHEN



THE STRIKING BLUE Le Creuset Dutch ovens, glassware, dinnerware, and All-Clad pots the family uses daily are kept within easy reach on the open wooden shelves (LEFT AND FACING PAGE, LEFT). Chris found the antique brass cabinet hardware (FACING PAGE, RIGHT) from an Etsy vendor based in England.



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## KITCHEN



configuration. The peninsula was replaced with a long, freestanding counter-height table with a top of reclaimed wood and legs that Megan and Lily fashioned out of metal pipes.

Open shelving, also of reclaimed wood, sits on bronze oil-rubbed brackets. "The pots we use every day are readily available on the shelves," says Megan. "Nothing gets dusty because we are using the things all the time."

The lower cabinets are painted Benjamin Moore's mossy green Herbal Escape. The Caesarstone Frosty Carrina countertop has a subtle, marble-like appeal but is

more durable than the stone. Antique bronze drawer and cabinet pulls match the door hardware throughout the house. "Finding the right fixtures was a process," says Megan. "Chris

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finally found them on Etsy. They came from England and took forever to get here. The kitchen was installed for three weeks before they arrived, so we had this new kitchen but we couldn't get into any of the cabinets."

For maximum food storage, Scales designed a floor-to-ceiling pantry that con-

tains electrical outlets. "We also keep all our electronic devices [phones, iPads, Sonos] inside," says Megan. "No one in the family can bring their phones, et cetera upstairs. Every kitchen seems to have that corner where all that stuff accumulates. It's really nice to be able to tuck it away so we don't see it."

A collection of framed menus from restaurants where Chris has worked hangs on one wall, along with prints that are special to the family. "The kitchen is the heart of any home," says Megan. "Our kitchen is now really great for that. It feels really personal." ■

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