A RETROSPECTIVE
OF OUR FAVORITE SPACES

PLUS... OUR YARD MAKEOVER CONTEST WINNER
KITCHENS

ONCE SPURNED AND SEPARATED, NOW THE HEART OF THE HOME.

"SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN WITH DINAH." THOSE WERE POPULAR LYRICS IN THE 1930s. Back then, congregating in the kitchen was a novelty — why would anyone want to assemble there in the first place? Unlike today's modern showplaces, the kitchen wasn't always the heart of the home; it evolved from considerably more humble beginnings.

The Colonists booted the kitchen out of the main house altogether, relying on servants to work in the detached "summer kitchen" (which sounds romantic but was assuredly not). Victorians decided the kitchen didn't merit much attention at all. In contrast to the opulence of the era, the kitchen was austere and the domain of the help. The reason was fairly simple: Food was primarily prepared from raw ingredients, preparation was labor-intensive, and it was seen as hot, smelly work.

After World War II, low-cost "cooking machines" flooded the market. Stoves became iron-enclosed, replacing wood- or coal-burning units; extractor hoods abolished odors; refrigerators incorporated freezers; and a host of small appliances made cooking easier.

The utilitarian, workhorse kitchen of yore was evolving into an efficient, respectable place. Ironically, with the advent of frozen and prepackaged convenience food, less and less time was being spent in the kitchen, while the kitchen itself was being designed with increasingly more complex appliances.

In the 1980s, integrating the living, dining and kitchen into one open concept became in vogue, making it easier for young homeowners with children to interact with the rest of the family. For some, the kitchen was now integral, leading to a trend that hasn't diminished — cooking as a social act.

Kristeen Armstrong-Scott, CKD, owner of Armstrong Kitchens, recalls this:

"Over the past 25 years, kitchens were far from what they are today. We had fewer choices, but there was an explosion of value. Countertops were tile or plastic laminate (Formica's Butcherblock #204 was huge). You could spend your money conspicuously for Corian, considered a big upgrade. Almond and black glass appliances, especially on a smooth-top electric range, were popular. Wallpaper, featuring mini-prints, stripes or big florals, was the rage, complemented by brass fixtures to enlighten the cool, pastel room where efficiency was prized."

Modern kitchens are gloriously large, wonderfully sophisticated and meant to impress. The kitchen is now the trophy, where homeowners can become food stars for friends and family. Unlike asking, who's in the kitchen with Dinah?, today the refrain may be, who isn't?
1. Completed by Designahome Designs; Photographed by Steve Swallow, Jan/Feb 2007
2. Completed by Regarding Kitchens; Photographed by Bob Greenspan, Jan/Feb 2007
3. Completed by Euston Kitchen Company; Photographed by Gary Rohman, Jan/Feb 2008
4. Completed by Anne Hatakka/Portfolio Kitchen & Home; Photographed by James Maidhof, Jan/Feb 2008
5. Completed by Kitchens by Kleveno; Photographed by James Maidhof, Jan/Feb 2008
6. Completed by Classic Kitchens; Photographed by James Maidhof, Jan/Feb 2008
7. Completed by Rothers Design Build; Photographed by James Maidhof, Jan/Feb 2008
8. Completed by Rifle Homes/Bickford + Company/Hobson Interiors; Photographed by Steve Sanders, March/April 2008