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PHOTOS BY HAYLEI SMITH

# Communal Tables

*Open and airy kitchens  
designed for dining in*



*This kitchen feels larger than life, with the help of high-gloss white paint and finishes throughout. Eschewing upper cabinets and opting for a pop-up stove vent keeps sight lines wide open.*



# K

**KITCHEN** glamour shots are a slam dunk on social media feeds — and for good reason. But take a peek behind the filters, and you'll see the creative process is as messy and unpredictable as that pandemic sourdough you never quite mastered.

Add supply-chain issues and the rising cost of raw materials to the mix, and the stakes have never been higher. That's why experts stress the importance of doing your homework before jumping into a new build or renovation. "It's not just what it looks like, it's how it acts and how it sets up the behavior," says Ursula Emery McClure, partner at EmeryMcClure Architecture. For so many Acadiana residents, that means a space that allows you to multitask: cooking up a delicious meal and a healthy serving of Southern hospitality in the process. Luckily, the latest trends are not so much paint colors or finishes, but kitchens designed as living spaces. (After all, everyone seems to end up there anyway.) We've rounded up three, home-grown kitchens that rise to the occasion.

**MOD MAX**  
Although these River Ranch homeowners built on a compact lot, they knew they didn't want to cut any corners when it came to their kitchen. McClure, says the couple's previous home had an enclosed kitchen without any counter space. "This kitchen was a reaction to that," she adds. "The total opposite." The modern kitchen design features 30 feet of sleek, high-gloss quartz counters that can comfortably seat eight adults. On the other side of a glass wall, an outdoor, kitchen-dining-living space maximizes the home's entertaining capacity. (Designed by EmeryMcClure Architecture, emerymcclure.com)



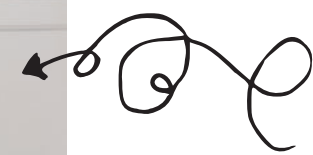
*Playing peek-a-boo behind sliding doors, the refrigerator and large item storage space stay accessible, but out of view—all part of the kitchen's minimal aesthetic.*



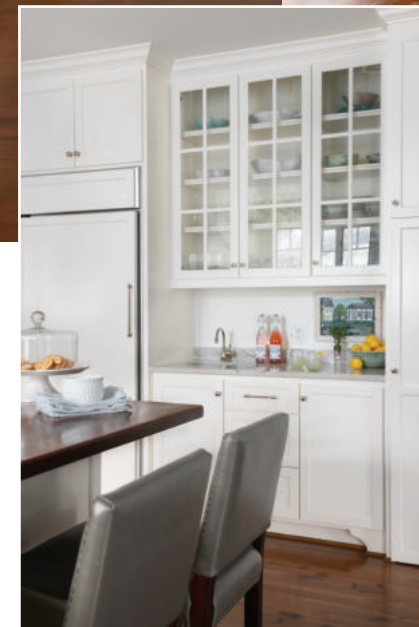
*McClure says forward-thinking design choices, like low, no-handle cabinets and a drawer-style freezer, will allow the homeowners to age in place.*



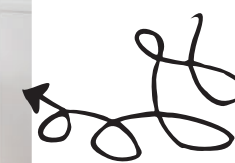
Natural light bounces off of the kitchen's warm, white walls and cabinets, painted White Dove by Benjamin Moore. The window frames a tranquil garden with a fountain and mature live oak.



Artesque tile and an accented range hood creates a focal point above the cooktop. (Carpentry by Chris Borch, custom cabinetry by Lagueroux Construction and Cabinet Shop, wood floors by Wiggins Flooring.)



The homeowners' active lifestyle called for a dedicated sink area to quickly fill water bottles. Bonus: It doubles as a wet bar when they're entertaining.




**CLASSIC, REMASTERED**

After raising four children in a 1920s home, it was time for a refresh. High on this New Iberia couple's priority list was an updated, open kitchen that would accommodate their family's next generation. Interior designer Andrea Toce says they took the room down to the studs, then anchored the space around an antique cypress-topped island, where everyone could gather. "I'm big on function," says Toce. "I love beautiful spaces, but if you're going to live in them and they don't work, they get ugly quick." (Designed by Andrea Toce, Andrea Toce Interiors)







  
 A neutral color palette creates a blank canvas to display the homeowners' art. Combined with brick floor, mixed-metal hardware and an antique Pecky Cypress island, the space achieves a warm, collected vibe.




**FRESH AIR**
  
 "A total transformation," says designer Justine Hebert, describing this Lafayette living room-turned-kitchen. The homeowners envisioned their dream kitchen as a "hang out," where everyone from their young children to adult dinner guests could feel at home. The secret to making it sing? A hidden-away chef's pantry that handles the dirty work. Hebert designed the central island to feel warm and welcoming, more like a piece of living room furniture. The addition of a vaulted ceiling and multiple windows allow natural light to work its magic. (Designed by Justine Hebert, J Design, JDesignLA.com) ■




  
 The chef's pantry originally envisioned as a space for serious cooking, has turned into the kids' favorite spot for grabbing movie-night popcorn and after-school snacks.




  
 Hebert advises her clients to adopt an organizer's mindset when designing their dream kitchens - creating a place for everything, even pesky phone chargers.