

The Luxury Kitchen in a Traditional Home

By Lee Anna O'Daniel

Gone are the days that the residential kitchen was hidden away in a utilitarian room, isolated from the rest of the house. Today people realize that they spend a good part of their precious time at home in and around the kitchen, whether it is cooking, eating, sitting at a desk planning a grocery list or paying bills, watching the food channel or local news, keeping an eye on kids doing homework, or hosting a holiday party - we all know the party ends up in the kitchen at some point!



So, since the kitchen has now become a hub for many of our activities, it must measure up to the rest of the house, so a fine traditional home naturally deserves a beautiful and luxurious kitchen.

Let's explore some basic architectural elements - space, form, balance, and line.

Space: Most would agree that the luxury kitchen needs to have a feeling of spaciousness - it must be large enough to spread ones wings. A high ceiling will contribute to this - and having a lower ceiling opening up into a higher ceiling will give an even more dramatic effect. The mere act of walking through the space should give us an uplifting feeling.

Form: Here we have a wealth of traditional architectural symbolism to work with. A central arch supporting a raised beam ceiling will create a feeling of opulence. Large columns instead of skimpy posts can be used to define areas of importance. A grand hood can become a focal point over the range, - a celebration of the art of cooking. In a kitchen, we have the usual necessary "forms" to work with - cabinets & appliances; in most traditional luxury kitchens, the refrigerator blends into the cabinetry by the use of integrated front and side panels. One would not find a bulky 30" deep refrigerator with black sides and stainless front in this kitchen! As to the stove - it may be a one piece unit - at least 36" wide with "professional styling" - high-powered box type burners with oven (s) below, or it may be a "range top" - the upper portion of the traditional stove, with double wall ovens elsewhere. If the latter is chosen, we need to house these in a vertical form - usually a cabinet. Which leads to:

Balance: When possible, the traditional luxury kitchen exudes symmetry. Perhaps either the built-in refrigerator or a pantry cabinet can balance the vertical oven element. Or maybe it is duplicated in another tall cabinet housing a microwave and steam oven. Symmetry gives a feeling of formality. Everything feels grounded, secure. Upper cabinets are of equal size, centered on the various elements such as sink or range. In a traditional kitchen, often we design specific areas as more or less self-contained units or "forms" - the cooking area on one wall - totally symmetrical in it self. The food storage (pantry and refrigerator) can be on another wall, the clean-up area centered on the window. A large island - centered in the room with a large chandelier above - all these are examples of well-defined architectural forms that are in balance with one another.



Line: Tying this all together are linear elements - counter tops and backsplash materials, crown molding, under-cabinet lighting, large baseboards, wainscot paneling with chair rails. Perhaps we have a design in the floor - such as a border or a tile "rug" in the middle. All these linear elements lead our focus around the room, drawing our attention to the various opulent details, enhancing that feeling of spaciousness. By contrast, if there is no linear continuity, we can get the feeling that everything is disjointed, chaotic, -or maybe just the feeling that something is lacking or missing.



