

# A TALE OF TWO

BY STEPHANIE ANDERSON PHOTOS BY SCOT GORDON

**T**hanks in part to reality television, food and the people who make it have burst into the pop-culture stratosphere in the past few years. Celebrity chefs, such as Emeril Lagasse, Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson and Rocco DiSpirito have given gourmand voyeurs the opportunity to watch them at work, whipping up everything from delicate foie gras to hearty meatballs.

But what happens when these chefs hang up their aprons and head home? More importantly, what do their own kitchens look like? Two local restaurateur couples — Terry and Patty Lee, owners of Haydn Zug's in East Petersburg, and Russ and Susie Freeman, owners of Café on Market in Camp Hill — have created kitchens in their homes inspired by a love of cooking and a desire to make food a centerpiece for great times with friends and family.

### BRIGHT, OPEN AND MODERN

Terry and Patty Lee moved into their Wrightsville home just over two years ago. You could say that “two” is the couple's favorite number. Their kitchen has a pair of most everything — two refrigerators, two sinks, two ovens, two warming drawers, even two coffeemakers (“My wife drinks decaf,” Terry says). Soon they will add a second dishwasher. “That's the restaurant influence,” Terry explains. “You need backups on everything.”

For 12 years, the Lees lived above their restaurant in a 600-square-foot converted dining room. When the right time finally came to build their own house, they wanted something spacious. Terry and Patty, who have no children, were able to design their dream house exactly the way they wanted it. The most attention — and space — was devoted to the kitchen. Their kitchen, at approximately 1,500 square feet, equals half of their house.

“We built a kitchen, then added a little bit of house around it,” Terry says.

Most of the Lee home, which overlooks the Susquehanna River, is one large kitchen-dining-living area. They wanted lots of open space and an easy flow, free of walls or any other obstructions. They even installed a side venting system in the stove, which is in the center of the kitchen, so an overhead hood wouldn't break up the lines. Aisles separate the various stations in the kitchen, and are wide enough to pass through even if an oven door is open. A walk-in pantry boasts a separate wine refrigerator and a built-in steamer and deep-fryer. An outdoor grilling area on one of two porches faces the river and is only a few feet off the kitchen. Guests may eat in the dining area, at the bar at the end of one of the counters, in the breakfast nook or outdoors on one of the porches.

Two local restaurant owners relied upon culinary experience when designing their home kitchens, but came up with very different results.



The Lees have plenty of open space in their kitchen (above), which is decorated with colorful elements such as the Betty Boop figure (opposite, top left); a walk-in pantry (next page) has a wine refrigerator and a built-in steamer and fryer.

# KITCHENS

The Lees claim the most important aspect of building or renovating is research, and no detail was left to chance. They positioned one of the sinks to face outdoors so Patty could look out at the river while washing dishes. The butcher-block countertops were chosen for their utility, aesthetic appeal and durability. Four sets of overhead tech lighting and pink neon in frosted glass under the bar allow the Lees to control the level of brightness in their kitchen and set a particular “mood” for a dinner party or other gathering. The project began as a rough sketch designed by Terry and Patty, and was later finessed by a builder and finally by Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry in Lancaster. Plain & Fancy created custom cherry-and-maple cabinets for the couple and helped them create their kitchen. The process, from conception to completion, took a long time, but Terry and Patty built the kitchen they had always wanted — and a house to go with it.

Despite the steely glint of the industrial appliances, the Lee kitchen is anything but sterile. Patty wanted their home to be a “get-comfy, laidback house,” and every corner is welcoming and vibrant — even quirky. A life-size Betty Boop posing on top of a shelf lords over a corner of the kitchen. Colorful glassware and family photographs line the shelves of a floor-to-ceiling glass case. A scrap-metal dog sculpture props open the door to one of the porches. Walls are painted shades of red, taupe and yellow, and the chairs around and the lights above the bar are mismatched. While they are particular about quality, the Lees lack fussiness about other elements. Their easy-going attitude and sense of humor instantly put guests at ease — a key to successful entertaining.

The Lees concede that theirs is not the average home kitchen, in terms of space or design. In fact, until major renovations at Haydn Zug’s less than a year ago, their kitchen at home was bigger and more efficient than the restaurant’s kitchen. But in the two years since they built it, their home has become the main gathering place for their family — most of which lives in the York area. And, as in most homes, the kitchen is the center of activity.

“When the family gets together, there are about 20 of us,” Patty says. “Anywhere we are, everybody always hangs out in the kitchen. We wanted one that was big enough.”

Terry adds, “We set it up so everybody could be together at the same time.”

## SMALLER AND DOWN-HOME

Russ Freeman, co-owner of Camp Hill’s Café on Market with his wife Susie, proudly refers to his new stove as “the Cadillac” of his kitchen.

“Our pride and joy is this stove,” he says, pointing out the gas griddle, char-broiler and four burners. “We redesigned the kitchen around this stove.”

The Freeman kitchen could not be more different from the Lee kitchen. The Freemans and their three children (Ariana, 10; Austin, 6; and Sophie, 5) reside in an 18th-century stone farmhouse in Mechanicsburg. While the Lee kitchen is modern, with bright colors and a ton of open space, the Freeman kitchen is much smaller and has a more down-home feel. It’s the kind of kitchen that feels warm and cozy all the time.

The one thing that connects the two kitchens is family. The children’s presence in the Freeman home is everywhere. Bikes are piled up in a corner of the driveway. Crayon-scribbled pictures are tacked to a bulletin board. Tiny pairs of shoes dot a mat inside the door. A highchair is pulled up close to the large wooden kitchen table where Russ Freeman sits, recalling the start of the kitchen’s renovation a year and a half ago. What started as a conversation about a coat of paint snowballed into a major overhaul.

“Initially, I was just sitting here at the kitchen table thinking, ‘Hey, we need to paint these walls,’” Russ says. “It was all wood and so dark. It was like living in a cave.”

The Freeman kitchen now has new appliances, new lighting, new countertops, new curtains — even a movable island that can be pushed aside to moonlight as a buffet when company visits. (And those walls have been painted a pleasing shade of pale yellow.) Like Terry and Patty Lee, Russ and Susie Freeman’s experience in the restaurant business is evident in the stainless-steel industrial appliances, heavy-duty pots and pans, and formidable collection of utensils and knives. But it was most important to them that they design a more homey, family-oriented kitchen. They don’t do frequent, large-scale gatherings like the Lees, so their needs are different.

“Entertaining for us is another couple coming over with their kids and having a couple of beers in the yard,” Russ deadpans.

Many of the changes to the kitchen were made with Susie’s baking in mind. Their kitchen doubles as a mini-bakery where Susie bakes many of the desserts served at Café on Market. One section of counter was widened to make more room for rolling dough. A small microwave oven below the counter allows Susie to melt butter easily. But the kid-height microwave hasn’t been without its problems, Russ says, shaking his head. “It’s great, but it’s been a challenge, like when one of [the kids] puts a piece of chicken in and sets it to 45 minutes.”

More space allows for more cooks in the kitchen as well. The Freeman children love to help their mom with the baking, and enjoy taking trips to local orchards and farm stands to pick fresh produce and fruit for pies — or just to the berry patch in their backyard. Indeed, the children were a huge consideration in the decisions Russ and Susie made in their renovation process. The commercial electric oven, for instance, had to be large enough and accurately calibrated for baking, but also needed to be safe for the kids. Russ and Susie chose a commercial model specifically for residential use, as it was

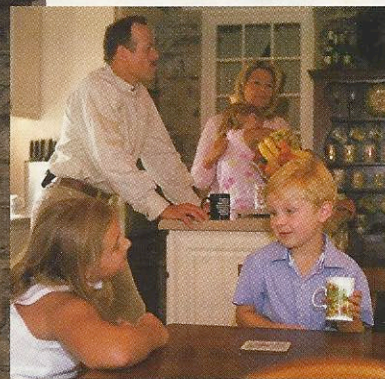


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— Terry Lee



The Freemans received help with their kitchen design from Deena Engle, Aura Designs in Hummelstown. The "Cadillac" of the kitchen is the stove.



## Kitchen Renovation & Design Tips

better insulated. "It doesn't get quite as hot as strict commercial ones," Russ says. "That way if a kid brushes up against the door, he won't burn himself."

Like Terry and Patty Lee, Russ Freeman cites research as the most important part of the renovation process. First, he says, decide what you don't like about your kitchen and why, then decide what you'd like as replacements for those elements. After that, research everything: manufacturers, contractors, designers, prices, sizes. He recommends finding a contractor or interior designer who uses computer software that simulates what the room will eventually look like, as it's much easier to make changes when you can actually see it. Think about how you'd like a room to "feel," and how you'll be using it. Choose a design that is as functional as it is aesthetically pleasing. As Russ says of his own kitchen, "Everything had to be livable and workable." **PA**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Stephanie Anderson has been published in *Central PA*, *Susquehanna Style*, *Pittsburgh* magazine, *Rapportage* and *Rain Taxi*. She is teaching creative-writing classes and pursuing a master's of fine arts in nonfiction writing.

Homeowners looking for renovation and design tips will enjoy *The New This Old House Hour*, airing Saturdays at 9am and 6pm on WITF-TV.

Spend time planning and thinking ahead about how you use your space. Everyone wants a beautiful kitchen, but functionality is an absolute must in this area of the home. Observe how your family uses the kitchen during a period of weeks. Do you really need that new Viking range, or would extra seating make more sense?

Allow more time and money than you think you'll need initially. It's not the piece of advice most homeowners want to hear. But doing this will alleviate stress when the unexpected pops up. And inevitably, it does.

Install extra lighting on separate switches. You can never have enough task lighting in a kitchen, but you'll rarely want it all on at the same time.

Purchase the best appliances that you can afford. High-quality appliances are typically a wise expenditure. But one caveat: That doesn't necessarily mean you should purchase the most expensive appliance available. Think about the various features you need and how you plan on using the device.

*Courtesy of interior designer Kathleen Ellis (www.cottagepleasures.com)*

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