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MEREDITH SPECIALS



FAMILY *traditions*

Memories of her grandmother's kitchen inspired this homeowner to create her own colorful spin on country style.

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OPPOSITE A new window seat offers a comfortable perch for family members and guests. Shelves on both sides display collectibles. **THIS PHOTO** The large island offers ample seating and prep space. "When we have parties, the entire group can mingle in the kitchen without feeling crowded," homeowner Melissa Bourgeois says.



FOR MELISSA BOURGEOIS, STEPPING OUT HER KITCHEN DOOR

is like stepping back in time to summers at her grandmother's Kansas farmhouse. It's not the lace curtains or the cheerful wallpaper—though she delights in those accents—but rather the ability to come and go with ease that fills her heart with joy. “When we were at the farmhouse, we would walk outside to get the eggs. Go out to the fruit trees in the backyard and come back in,” she says. “That connection to the outside is one of the things I love about my kitchen.”

But that connection to childhood memories almost didn't happen. The kitchen started out in the center of the new house that Melissa and her husband, Mark, were building in a planned community in Tennessee. It soon became clear that a landlocked kitchen didn't suit Melissa's passion for preparing and preserving homegrown vegetables and herbs. So, in consultation with Melissa and Nashville kitchen designer Eric Ross, architect Scott Wilson swapped the locations of the kitchen and an adjacent breakfast room. A Dutch door on one side of the kitchen leads to a covered porch, and one across from it leads to the raised beds where Melissa grows summer squash, okra, tomatoes, peppers, and a variety of herbs.

Ross cozied up the large space with a brick wall, a stone chimney, and flooring reclaimed from a tobacco barn. He tucked Melissa's AGA range into an alcove reminiscent of a hearth and expanded Mark's suggestion of a side window into a window seat painted apple green. That cheerful hue repeats in the patterned wallpaper that frames the window seat and in the geometric handmade tiles in the range alcove. “Melissa's key requirement was that it make her happy,” Ross says of the kitchen. “So I became jubilant in my finishes and the way I expressed ‘country.’”

The result works like a country kitchen too. Beside the range alcove, a cased opening leads to a drying room, where Melissa hangs fresh herbs and stores books. A small desk with a supply of note cards provides a quiet spot for penning a few lines to a friend, and a steel door leads to a concrete-reinforced pantry that doubles as a storm shelter.

At the end of the island, a 30-inch-tall, marble-topped cabinet is just the right height for Melissa, who is 5 feet 2 inches, and her 5-year-old granddaughter to roll out dough for cookies. It's memory-making come full circle.

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 92.

OPPOSITE "It's an idealized version of country," designer Eric Ross says of the cheerful kitchen. **THIS PHOTO** The apron-front sink overlooks the backyard and the common area beyond, which includes a walking path and creek.



THIS PHOTO A classic AGA range fills an arched alcove reminiscent of a fireplace. Handmade backsplash tiles showcase spring-fresh colors, inspired by Melissa's garden.





ABOVE LEFT Wrought-iron sconces with mirrored interiors illuminate the main sink area and add a collected-over-time feel. **ABOVE RIGHT** The island's creamy Taj Mahal quartzite countertop mimics marble but doesn't stain. **BELOW LEFT** Uba Tuba granite with a leathery finish resembles soapstone. **BELOW RIGHT** A prep sink adds smart function to the island work space and sits conveniently across from the range.

