

# The Record Home

## Breakfast nooks are practical and pretty



PHOTO BY GREG PALLANTE

The breakfast nook in this Englewood kitchen complements the Prairie Style of the house. Ulrich, Inc., raised the original roof, adding skylights and new windows around the homeowners' favorite stained-glass panel. The flooring also was updated.

With the traditional dining room waning in popularity, and families spending more time than ever in the kitchen, the "breakfast nook" has become an oft-requested feature. A little more formal than the typical island with stools, the breakfast nook provides ample space for a table and two to four chairs, away from the busy meal-preparation area.

If your kitchen has limited space, you can create a breakfast nook either by making the most of what you've got or by adding on.

- Have an empty corner or a small bump-out? Install a banquette, or built-in bench, across the back wall, pull up a long table and use chairs on the other side. Or, if you have the room, add an L- or U-shaped banquette and put a square or round table at the center. (Just make sure everyone can reach the table comfortably when seated.)

- The style of the nook should blend with the rest of your kitchen, and can suggest anything from a romantic country inn to a retro diner.

- The furniture and materials should be hard-wearing if the space gets used not only for meals but for the kids' homework and craft projects.

- The nook should have its own light source, such as a chandelier, and ideally a window or two. Especially at this time of year, it starts the day off right to eat breakfast in a peaceful alcove bathed in sunshine.

### A Crafty Update

The kitchen of Grabow home in Englewood — a Prairie-Style contemporary dating from the 1950s — included a breakfast nook that had developed roof leaks. The ceiling also angled downward, making the space look smaller. In the course of renovating the entire kitchen, Ulrich, Inc., of Ridgewood, also made the nook more stylish and functional.

"We kept the same footprint as before but made updates, such as changing the floor," said Aparna Vijayan, designer and architect with Ulrich. "The back height was under 8 feet, so we lifted the roof a little. We also made the windows bigger, keeping the trimwork fairly plain and square. They have an interesting back yard, so we tried to capture most of what was there."

The nook now welcomes maximum sunlight through two skylights and a custom arrangement of Pella windows. The focal point is a stained-glass panel the Grabows purchased in Scotland, which complements the Frank Lloyd Wright lines of the kitchen.

Vijayan said a breakfast-nook renovation on this scale would run \$10,000-\$20,000 including the custom windows. The project measures 8 feet deep by 9½ feet wide, and the ceiling at its



PHOTO BY GREG PALLANTE

GTFM added 220 square feet to a Ridgewood colonial home to make room for this breakfast nook. The energy-efficient Andersen windows offer views of the yard and let in plenty of light, while keeping the temperature cozy.

highest point also is 9½ feet.

"I love that it's so open," said Fran Grabow. "It brings the outside in — I think that's what it's all about."

### Bumping Out

A Ridgewood family needed an addition to get the breakfast area they wanted. The Fairs had owned their colonial home for about 10 years, but last year, with a second child on the way, they felt their kitchen was becoming too cramped.

"We wanted an eat-in space, a family gathering spot," said Katherine Fair. "Light was a big thing, too, especially since we had such a small space to work with — anything that would make it seem bigger and brighter."

They called on someone who'd done renovation for them in the past, Tom Segrich of GTFM, LLC, Hackensack-based contractors and remodelers. His firm expanded the Fairs' kitchen by 220 square feet, adding a breakfast nook with two large windows that look out on the yard.

"The new energy codes are so conservative, we have to be careful how many windows we design into a space, because they reduce thermal efficiency," Segrich explained. "There's

also a difference in efficiency between windows — these are Andersen 400 series (energy-efficient) windows."

He added that a contractor also needs to consider new guidelines from the National Kitchen and Bath Association that mandate the amount of clearance needed around a dining table for comfortable use.

Segrich estimated that a one-story addition of a similar size would run \$18,000-\$40,000, depending on how much material had to be removed from the house during the renovation and the cost of the windows, flooring and other materials used.

"We use (the breakfast nook) every day for at least one meal," Katherine said. "I think it adds to the value of your home. Everyone today wants an eat-in kitchen, especially in this area (North Jersey), where we're so confined in terms of space."

She noted that GTFM design consultant Linda De Santos helped her and her husband decide on the earth-toned color scheme of the breakfast nook and the ruffled valances that leave most of the windows exposed — with shades hidden underneath.

"It's really bright during the day, then at night we pull down the shades," Katherine said.