



# Refined RUSTIC

## Fully embracing the kitchen-as-living-room

philosophy, designer Mary Jo Donohoe and her husband, Jim, created a wide-open space in their new (and, she swears, final) home in Bethesda, Maryland.

"We've built several houses in the past, and it always felt like the kitchens were separate rooms," says Mary Jo. "For this house we wanted to create a barn vernacular and have the kitchen open directly to the family room." The result is the Donohoes rarely want to be anywhere else. "It's kind of embarrassing," she says with a laugh. "Everyone wants to hang out in this big room."

Although the house is new, a large part of its appeal is the been-there-for-ever rustic styling. "We've been in Italy and southern France and love the feeling of those buildings," Mary Jo explains. "We wanted to cultivate a patina so the house didn't look new, so we used a lot of stucco finishes, glazing effects, and cabinets that don't match."

Rustic beams salvaged from Vermont accent high ceilings. The kitchen ceiling is 10 feet high and the family room rises to nearly 16 feet, contributing to the "barn-type cottage" style Mary Jo envisioned. "Those gnarly old rafter beams immediately add a charm and depth that makes the room much more interesting," Mary Jo says.

Also adding charm are the furniture-like kitchen cabinets, including a pale blue cupboard that Mary Jo had made. "I drew it from pictures I'd seen in French magazines and books. I wanted it to look like an old piece." Rather than glass door fronts, Mary Jo specified wire

mesh behind the curving mullions for an antique look.

Other cabinets in the kitchen are finished in different colors—a matte black and a natural wood tone—to give the room a been-there-for-centuries European flavor. "It's a very unfitted kitchen," Mary Jo says. "We wanted it to be rustic but still dressy enough for guests when we entertain."

Lighting choices also contribute to the welcoming, living-room-like feel of the space. Six swing-arm sconces in the kitchen and a candle-style chandelier over the island bathe the room with light.

**Left:** The kitchen opens directly to a breakfast room, making the space well suited for entertaining. Swivel barstools at the island allow for conversations in either room. **Below:** Although the house is new, it feels like an old manor thanks to salvaged beams, stucco finishes, and a copper vent hood treated with acid for an aged look.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON BEALL PRODUCED BY EILEEN A. DEYMIER



## Personal priorities

**DESIGNER** Mary Jo Donohoe, MJ Interior Designs, 7204 Glenbrook Road, Bethesda, Md. 20814 (301/656-5370). ■ **DESIGN INSPIRATION** European cottages and barns. ■ **HOMEOWNER WANTS** No stairs or barriers between the kitchen and family room, allowing for easy traffic flow. A western exposure and views to the outdoors. ■ **PERSONAL TOUCHES** A bar next to the kitchen and French doors that allow party guests to wander outside. A built-in coffeemaker, and a desk with space underneath for the dog, Wishes, to nap. ■ **APPLIANCES** Viking refrigerator, range, freezer, and microwave; Miele dishwasher and built-in cappuccino machine.



“The sconces have leather shades, and we leave them on practically day and night,” Mary Jo says. “They give a wonderful amber glow so it doesn’t feel like a kitchen. It feels like a lovely room.”

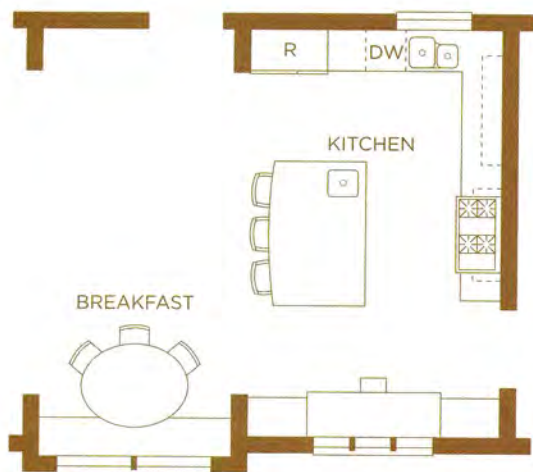
Recessed ceiling fixtures, low-voltage counter lights, and rope lighting on top of the cabinets further illuminate the room. All the fixtures are equipped with dimmers so they can be adjusted to suit the Donohoes’ activities.

The focal point of the kitchen is the stucco-and-copper range hood. The copper was treated with an acid to give it the look of an aged standing-seam roof. Mary Jo trimmed the hood with decorative metal hardware that also has an aged finish. A ram’s head mounted front-and-center is the final flourish. “I really love the ram’s head. The bonus is that it is also my birth sign,” Mary Jo says.

Because they spend so much time in the space, Mary Jo included a desk, which has two sliding extensions that expand the work surface when needed. She also planned for the family’s multiple cell phones, adding cubby holes wired with electrical outlets for each family member. “Now no one takes someone else’s charger or phone,” Mary Jo says. “When the kids come home to visit, they know right where to charge their phones.”

With two adult children no longer at home, Mary Jo admits she doesn’t cook often, but she and Jim do entertain. The open floor plan, comfortable seating, and mood light make the space perfect for parties. “We’ve probably had five showers—baby and wedding—in the last month,” Mary Jo says.

The west-facing space is flooded with sunlight nearly every afternoon. “It’s not always easy to get that kind of exposure, but if you can that’s the nicest thing you can do,” says Mary Jo. “Every afternoon it feels so warm. It’s almost like being in Tuscany. This is a great house for entertaining, and it’s a fun house to live in.” ➤



**Top:** Designer Mary Jo Donohoe designed a wall-hung china cabinet based on pictures she’d seen of old French cupboards. Wire mesh screening on the door fronts keeps the look informal.