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Wood Sculpture: Freeing the Form

Les Otten Energized

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March 2008



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# Island Life

*Kitchen Islands at the Heart  
of the Home's Heart*



ELEMENTS

by Joshua Bodwell

Photography Darren Setlow

Styling Tamara Savage



## ELEMENTS



### KENNEBUNK KITCHENS AND BATHS

KENNEBUNKPORT  
RESIDENCE  
(previous page)

**PINE RIDGE CARPENTRY  
and  
RICK KLEPFER DESIGN**  
CAMDEN RESIDENCE  
(left)

DESIGN: **DENISE RUBIN**  
CABINETRY: **MAINE COAST  
BUILDERS**; FAUX PAINTING:  
**WEYERS PAINTING**;  
ANTIQUE GUILDING: **CIDER  
HILL WOODWORKS**;  
COUNTER TOP: **KENNEBUNK  
WATER AND STONE**  
(right and above)





A large, wooden table was once a common fixture in the kitchens of our forebears. The tables provided much-needed room to spread out ingredients and cookware, and it was a gathering place within the warm thrum of kitchen activity. These well-worn tables were the precursors of today's ubiquitous kitchen island, which may just be *the* defining feature of modern kitchens.

Pamela Shangraw-Murdough of Kennebunk Kitchens and Baths loves how islands “redirect kitchen traffic” and separate those who are cooking or cleaning from those who are eating or gabbing. According to Shangraw-Murdough, space is often the most important consideration when selecting an appropriate design. An island, she says, must remain proportional to the size of the kitchen: too big, and there's no clearance; too small, and





**KITCHEN CONCEPTS**  
YARMOUTH RESIDENCE  
(left)

**COOK AND COOK CABINETRY and**  
**JEANNE RAPONE, CKD**  
FALMOUTH RESIDENCE  
(right)



there's no space to prep, cook, or eat.

Once the size has been determined, Shangraw-Murdough often outfits her islands by first seeing what she can or cannot place in other areas of the kitchen. Some decisions are easier than others; if there is no window with an outside view, she says, the decision to put the sink in the island is an easy one.

In addition to the essentials, such as stools and extra space for storage, Shangraw-Murdough says kitchen islands are often best

suited for smaller, under-the-counter appliances like microwaves, warming draws, or wine refrigerators.

For Todd McIntosh of McIntosh & Tuttle Cabinetmakers, designing and building kitchen islands combines two passions. "I love cooking," he says. "If I'm not in the woodshop, I'm in the kitchen."

When it comes to selecting hardware for kitchen-island cabinetry, McIntosh offers pragmatic advice: "Keep it simple."





**NEW WORLD KITCHENS and  
MORNINGSTAR MARBLE & GRANITE**  
CUMBERLAND RESIDENCE  
(left)

**OPUS ONE and  
STONECRAFT ICONIC CONCRETE**  
PORTLAND RESIDENCE  
(right)



He usually steers people away from “gimmicky hardware with too many moving parts.” While the flashier hardware might be interesting to look at, McIntosh notes, it often has a shorter life-span than something simpler.

When it comes to kitchen islands, McIntosh also suggests letting the natural wood shine. Since kitchens are such high-traffic areas, he says, painted islands are easily scuffed and marred. Square corners are another feature best avoided: “I try

to use rounded or chamfered corners, or even columns. People just don’t move at right angles, so having some rounded parts can be important.”

When deciding what material to use atop your island, Morningstar Marble & Granite owner Nick Whatley makes a case for stone. “The longevity of it goes beyond anything any of us can imagine,” he says. Whatley also mentions a few key things to keep in mind when searching for the perfect piece of stone.



ELEMENTS







**MCINTOSH AND TUTTLE CABINETMAKERS**  
**and MORNINGSTAR MARBLE & GRANITE**  
 POLAND RESIDENCE

Though stone is a strong and stable material, Whatley warns that marble or granite should overhang the island by no more than ten inches without adding supporting features such as brackets or legs. “I like people to understand how this fact will figure into the design and everyday use of their island,” says Whatley. He also warns that large or heavy kitchen islands may require floors to be reinforced from below. “If you have cabinetry, a range-top, and granite, you could be talking 700 pounds in the

middle of a room,” he says.

Beyond its longevity and practicality, Whatley also loves stone simply for its beauty. “A granite- or marble-topped island can be like a painting,” he says. “The size really gives stone a chance to shine.”

And who doesn’t want their kitchen island to shine—from layout to hardware to countertop—like a work of art? **MH+D**