

The spice of history

The kitchen of an 1824 Beacon Hill house has been blessed with owners who love it as it is and make themselves comfortable with a minimum of change



The new owners wanted a kitchen they could live in or, put another way, a living room they could cook, eat and entertain in. Linderman-Schenck Interior Design preserved the room's period character, adding the barest of modern essentials while filling the space with antiques and precious family possessions. Two chairs and a sofa in Rose Cumming's Ceylon Black fabric plus French park seats (left and above) fulfill the living room requirement, and a country table can seat six diners. Viking professional range, Traulsen refrigerator, General Electric dishwasher.

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THE FOCAL POINT OF this kitchen in the Beacon Hill section of Boston is not the massive Cyrus Carpenter wood-burning stove, although it is certainly big enough. And not the custom-made sofa, although it is surely inviting enough. And not even the collection of majolica plates, although they are treasures. No, the true focal point in this warm, livable room where everything works harmoniously is history.

Built in 1824, when James Monroe was our president, the original room had the high ceiling and narrow heat-saving space typical of its time. The kitchen was widened in 1915 and that was that. When designers Arrel Linderman and Sudie Schenck of Linderman-Schenck Interior Design in Boston first saw the space in 1989, nothing had been changed for forty years, not even the old brown linoleum.

With the help of Linderman-Schenck, the new owners preserved, remodeled and redecorated.

They kept the wood stove, the butler's pantry and the old cabinets, even the gaslight-era chandelier, adding only a range, a refrigerator and air-conditioning. The three east-facing windows were lengthened, the walls were painted a sunny yellow, and crisp, marbled black and white vinyl squares were installed.

And then objects from the new owners' family history were introduced—beloved possessions from other times and other rooms. There is an old storage bin from a summer house, a lamp from a library, French candlesticks from a bedroom (now table lamps).

The Linderman and Schenck philosophy is: Use what you have and enjoy it. Do not fear color—it is nourishment in a gray urban setting. Do not create an impersonal laboratory of a kitchen—relish old mementos. The woman of this house made the spirit of her mother's kitchen part of the ongoing history of this place.

Where Boston baked beans once bubbled (opposite), Staffordshire spaniels from Creative Antiques now sit in state along with antique hurricane lamps and a red tole coal bucket of Victorian vintage from George Gravert Antiques. The Cyrus Carpenter stove loses its potential for looming when set off by floral fabrics, yellow walls, soft lighting. Majolica collection makes its home in an original cabinet (above right). Butler's pantry (through doorway, below right) is the same sunny yellow as the kitchen.

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