

The oak kitchen island — stained in a custom-mix blue, glazed and distressed — anchors the Levine's Walnut Cove kitchen. Blown glass pendant lights by Uncommon Radiance echo the colors and swirling pattern of Julie Levine's handcrafted backsplash. Designer Pam McKay of Dianne Davant & Associates chose the hobnail studded leather barstools and dining chairs to provide upscale, country comfort. The round pedestal table is Palermo, dining area Aura chandelier in a sienna bronze finish is by Mariana.



# A DASH OF SIZZLE

Artisan details add pizzazz to this stylish country kitchen

By Kate O'Connor

Photography by Kevin Meehan

One hears a great deal about creativity in the kitchen, but, generally speaking, that refers to culinary delights. It's not entirely the case in the home of Bob and Julie Levine, set high on the hillside in The Cliffs at Walnut Cove. While Julie is a crackerjack cook, visitors to her kitchen tend to be equally impressed by the fanciful tile backsplash that adorns the wall behind her range...especially when they learn that Julie herself created it. It's just one of the details that makes this a very appealing — and personal — space.



Custom knotty alder Stockton cabinetry by Mouser, through Advance Cabinetry, was given a spice stain, glazed with black and then distressed for a rustic appeal. The Tivoli Universal field tile, Rope Sahara border tile and Crema Bordeaux granite are from Classic Stone Works. Homeowner Julie Levine designed and executed the decorative backsplash panel and leaf inserts.

The Levines, who are Philadelphians, love art — particularly glass and ceramic art, which they collect with enthusiasm. The family is also engaged in their own creative endeavors ranging from photography to painting to ceramic arts, which is Julie’s forte. So when they decided to establish a mountain getaway, they instinctively looked for ways to integrate handcrafts — and a touch of urban sophistication — into their country home.

The kitchen seemed an ideal place to do just that. Opening to the great room and the outdoor living space and graced with a dining cupola featuring a tongue-in-groove ceiling, lined with windows that frame a spectacular vista, the workspace was integral to the overall design, aesthetic and flow of the home. It would need to be a centerpiece.

“What we wanted for the kitchen — and for the entire home — was some of what we love about glass art,” says Julie. “We wanted that sense of texture and movement and flow. It all had to coordinate.”

“They have a rather modern, streamlined aesthetic,” says Pam McKay of Dianne Davant & Associates, who worked with the Levines on the interior design, “but we decided to go with something a bit more transitional to fit in with the mountain setting. We began with their preferred color palette — blue, purple, aqua, with some reds and greens for accent — and with the

distressed blue-stained oak center island, which Julie had seen in a design magazine.”

Working with Kip Driver of Advance Cabinetry, they chose the Stockton line, a modified Shaker style design in knotty alder from Mouser, a respected, family-owned cabinetry company in Kentucky. “They are known in the industry for the quality of their work and their environmentally responsible materials,” notes Kip. “All of the internal plywood is formaldehyde-free, they have solid wood face-frames and doors and their construction is incredibly precise.”

Designer Heather Guss of Advance assisted in laying out a series of staggered-height, stacked cabinets that have the feel



The metallic shimmer of a stripped slate backsplash provides a dramatic focal point for the Levine’s bar area. The clean lines of the cabinets, glass shelves supported by steel cables and a custom framed antique mirror — all crafted by Advance Cabinetry — contrast beautifully with the rough texture of stacked fieldstone bricks.

of furniture and an ergonomic configuration that offers plenty of specialized storage: a tray rack above the Wolfe convection oven and Sharpe microwave; rolling pull-out drawers for pots and pans; a partitioned spice rack that slides out from beside the Wolfe dual-fuel range which is outfitted with snazzy red knobs.

The range hood, warming drawer and double-door, 48-inch SubZero refrigerator and freezer were paneled to maintain a seamless line. The cabinet finish — a spice stain with black glaze and distressing — imparts a rustic feel, accentuating the grain and knots, and harmonizing beautifully with the wide-plank, natural hickory floors. Black hardware from Top Knobs completes the look.

McKay and Levine brought samples of all these elements with them when they visited Classic Stone Works in Linville to select the tile and granite. “We chose the Crema Bordeaux granite because it incorporated the very specific blue of our island finish with the other colors in our palette,” McKay points out. For the

main tile work, a coordinating spectrum of Tivoli field tile was chosen for its rustic, handcrafted appeal...an important aspect in light of what was to come next.

Utilizing her ceramics skills, Julie designed and executed a woodland-themed mosaic of leaves, glazed in earthy tones, to be installed above the range, encased by a frame of Rope Sahara border tile. Installer Arturo Diaz, working with the home’s builders, Glenwood Custom Builders, painstakingly hand-cut surrounding tiles to accommodate individual leaves that are scattered across the expanse of the backsplash.

With the addition of a series of hand-blown pendant lights by Uncommon Radiance from Christie’s Lighting that pull together the colors of the room and swiveling, hobnail-accented leather upholstered bar stools, it all came together. “It’s got a wonderful, homey, yet custom feel,” says Julie. “Compact, but with space for everything.”

A very workable space that’s a work of art. ■