



THIS PHOTO:
Perimeter cabinets,
awash in antique
white paint with
chocolate glaze,
contrast with the dark
wood island.

OPPOSITE: Tiles
replace wall paint for
added drama, while
cobbled limestone
tiles add welcome
texture underfoot.



Soothing Retreat

This Washington, D.C.-area kitchen is one of those rooms that whispers rather than shouts. And thanks to a deft layering of textures and patterns set within a soothing neutral palette, what it has to say is so interesting that everyone within earshot leans in a little closer.

Designed to accommodate a crowd—whether a few friends popping over for dinner or an extended gathering—the kitchen spills over into an adjacent breakfast nook and sitting room, encouraging all three spaces to join the party. Because the 28×18-foot space is longer than it is wide, the far (short) wall begged for a focal point—which it got in the form of a hefty hood over the wide pro-style range. Hand-plastered for a character-rich appearance, the hood features a band of decorative tiles and conceals the ventilation unit for the stainless-steel range—one of the few elements with a modern look in this old-world-style kitchen.

The perimeter cabinets are warmed by antique-white paint with a chocolate glaze, which bestows





their nooks and crannies with shadows and depth so they appear charmingly distressed. Heavily speckled granite countertops add welcome pattern without tiring the eye, and frosted glass doors on a few of the upper cabinets relieve the room of any perceived boxiness.

While many kitchens have tile on the backsplash, this room takes tile all the way to the ceiling. (There's no wall paint to be seen in the kitchen proper.) The tiles, which include two sizes of tumbled-limestone squares and decorative bands of accent tiles on the walls and range hood, give the impression of hand-painted frescoes and draw attention upward.

One's gaze will not be disappointed once it hits the ceiling. Wide dentil molding outlines the ceiling—and any element that intrudes, such as the range hood and upper cabinets, playfully dressing up an often-overlooked surface.

Recessed can lights illuminate the room and even get their own molding treatment over the island.

The island itself departs from the rest of the kitchen's neutral leanings. Its deep, rich walnut wood, capped by moody black granite, steadies the comparatively pale kitchen and offers seating on one end and a second sink on the other. Its convenient features also treat guests with honor. One side boasts a warming drawer for keeping appetizers and meals warm until guests are ready, while a narrow trough built into the top is ideal for holding ice and cold drinks when the homeowner entertains.

With so many design elements peacefully coexisting—but no single element overpowering the rest—this new kitchen mirrors the many get-togethers that it now regularly hosts.

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 158.

OPPOSITE: A hand-worked plaster hood crowns the range, while a pot-filler faucet adds convenience.

ABOVE LEFT: A commercial kitchen inspired the ice trough built into the island's black granite countertop. The luxurious feature allows guests ready access to cold drinks.

ABOVE RIGHT: Just a few steps beyond the island's eating counter, a breakfast table tucks into an alcove of built-in cabinets and shelves.