

From start to Finnish

A Belmont kitchen gets the
Scandinavian treatment



By Chiara Canzi
Photography by Christian Hommel



A trained chef, Cordano started designing her kitchen before anything else in the house. She wanted it to be an oasis for her, but a convenient gathering spot for her four-person family, too.

Ingrid Cordano and her husband are experts in kitchen design.

"This is the third kitchen we've designed during our marriage," she said. And it shows. The Cordanos' Belmont home is a modern treasure that feels fresh and light at first pass: long, straight lines converge into interesting architectural features punctuated by bright, lively colors. And everything has been carefully conceived.

The Cordanos bought the Belmont lot a few years before they began working on designing their forever home. They chose to work with Latitude 38, a local design and build firm that specializes in ecofriendly construction with a distinctly modern aesthetic. Construction began in October 2012 and the house was ready for move-in in June of 2013.

"For me, the kitchen needs to be in the center of the house," she said. "It's where I spend 85 percent of my time. It needed to have access to what is going on around the house, especially with young kids."

Ultimately, Cordano wanted a kitchen that was accessible to the family, but not so much so that she would get no alone time. When she is cooking, Cordano is focused, so she designed a space where the most often-used items—dishes for everyday dinner, silverware, or even nap-

kins—would be at the easy disposal of her daughters, ages 6 and 4. Take the dishwasher: It sits adjacent to a low drawer that stores plates, cups, and pots, so emptying it does not become an Olympic event of coordination and agility.

Cordano is a chef and an engineer by trade. After graduating from UVA, she and her husband moved to New York City, where she attended culinary school and became a personal chef. "That justified having a big kitchen," she said, with a proud smile.

The space is indeed large, but it doesn't overrun the nearby TV room or the central staircase that leads to the sleeping quarters.

Modern appliances and light, non-contrasting materials adorn every surface of the space, another hint that the kitchen was built before the rest of the house.

Cordano admits to one extravagance.

"I designed a lot of the kitchen around a dish-drying cabinet," she said. "In Finland, where I was born and spend a lot of time, we have things called drying cabinets instead of having a dish drainer on the counter." The cabinet rests on one end of a butcher block countertop that runs the entire length of a wall of windows.

Cordano's Finnish heritage is evident in other design choices, too—from the white IKEA cabinets to the appliances to the white speckled



A WORD WITH THE DESIGNER

We asked Latitude 38's **Joey Conover** to give us a behind-the-scenes scoop on the kitchen design. Here's what she had to say.

Had you ever designed an all-white kitchen before? It sort of creates a blank canvas.

We had not done an all-white kitchen before. We have had some clients look into white countertops, but it is hard to find a reasonably priced good looking stone one to use. I think the new "ice white" finish of appliances will be a new modern option instead of stainless. The all-white look definitely has a cleanliness to it that is appreciated in the kitchen, but also requires you to really think through all design choices in the space so that other elements do not unintentionally stick out.

Ingrid found River Shoal (Group B) Viatera white quartz from Home Depot.

What about that ceiling choice? The white-washed paneling sort of just disappears up there, but it's a nice unexpected element when you look up.

The ceiling was another design element that Ingrid specifically requested. Having family in Finland, she has a strong appreciation for Scandinavian design, specifically their method of "pickling" wood to ensure that there is enough light brought into the home on short winter days. We did do it throughout the house, however, with less finesse than some Finnish carpenters who have passed it down over hundreds of years.

Functionality seems like it was a big theme in the space. Can you tell me a little about the design choices that were made to make life a little easier for the family?

As a former private chef, Ingrid had great experience to help inform the layout for working in a kitchen with two children and a husband underfoot and friends wanting to hang out while she cooks. Because we were working on a budget with IKEA cabinetry, there were fewer options of specialty cabinets. So, we did a few "IKEA hacks" that Ingrid found, most notably the appliance garage, the dish drying rack over the sink, and the trash/recycling pull outs in the kitchen island. Much of the design focused on how to orient the kitchen in relation to the living and dining areas, so that there was enough room for mobility, but some definition of space. At the same time, we were designing a den/play area that would be right off the kitchen, but still could be closed off if needed.



Joey Conover

countertop. The eye moves from place to place with ease and relaxation.

"I know white is trendy, but for me, white is timeless," she said. "I wanted something that felt Scandinavian."

The sink sits next to the drying cabinet. The opposite leg of the U-shaped space is reserved for the big refrigerator and the cooktop, which is surrounded by more cabinetry.

"I know white is trendy, but for me, white is timeless," Ingrid Cordinano said. "I wanted something that felt Scandinavian."

The long butcher-block countertop is a handy office space for Cordinano, who admits to moving her computer to that spot for late-night Internet browsing. During the day, the countertop houses small appliances used in everyday cooking.

Her favorite feature, however, is the view from the window above the butcher block counter. The light hits the right spots all day long and the sun shines through big, wide windows, which are elevated enough from the working space that they preserve a little intimacy and privacy from the neighbors.

"I think that it is within everyone's grasp to design a good kitchen," she said. Her advice? "Just write down all the tasks that you have to do in the kitchen on a day-to-day basis and you can fine-tune the design based on that."

THE BREAKDOWN

Square footage: 3,109

Materials or finishes

White washed ceiling: Ponderosa Pine from Better Living; Windows: Serious Materials 501 Series vinyl from Nature Neutral; Flooring: Wormy maple from Redbrook Lumber; Kitchen cabinets: Abstrakt high-gloss white from IKEA; Countertops: River Shoal (Group B) Viatera white quartz from Home Depot; Numerar butcher block from IKEA

Lighting

West Elm Finn pendant (dining); Pottery Barn Exeter chandelier (stairs)

Plumbing fixtures

Kitchen sink: Kraus undermount single bowl from faucetdirect.com; Kitchen sink faucet: Kohler Elite in polished chrome from faucetdirect.com; Island sink: 1815 stainless steel with standard strainer from MR Direct; Island sink faucet: Tarnan from IKEA

Convenience is king in Cordinano's kitchen, where she and Latitude 38 incorporated smart features like a drying cabinet, appliance garage, and large drawers for pots and pans.

