



Gourmet Delight

This kitchen blends art and architecture, making a delicious Arts and Crafts delight.

"The well-matched grain and exceptional joinery throughout the kitchen give it a beautiful look."

— Mark Byttow



"This kitchen touts beautiful craftsmanship, superior use of materials and well-executed joinery."

— Tom Gleason

By Lisa Whitcomb

Remaining true to the quintessential principles of Charles and Henry Greene's Arts and Crafts style of the early 20th century, this year's winning entry in the Kitchen/Bath Cabinets category is a gourmet chef's dream. Designed and crafted by Signature Woodworks of Frametown, WV, its style sizzles with personality.

Although it does feature generous granite countertops, deep sinks, high-end built-in stainless-steel appliances and ample electrical outlets (a serious cook's dream), it is the exquisite woodwork that is most unforgettable. The crisp lines of the design emphasize the aesthetics of the hand-picked figured mahogany panels, as well as the master craftsmanship needed to execute the style.

Signature Woodworks' owner Michael Corlis says, "We built this kitchen to show that it is possible to have kitchen furniture made of highly figured wood that is consistent in figure, grain and color. Our biggest challenge was working with the irreplaceable mahogany. If we made a mistake on

any figured panel, it would have been impossible to replace and match," he adds. The shop had 16 boards to work with that were 16 inches wide and wider.

Typically cabinet panels are cut from several boards. But to achieve an artistic look in this kitchen, panels matched for figure, grain and color were essential. "To highlight the figured panels, we framed them with straight grain mahogany stiles and rails," Corlis explains. "This maximizes their visual effect." Corlis says he used single boards or bookmatched panels from one log for most of the cabinet panels – the island and the range hood were separate.

The stiles and rails on the doors and the face frames are 1-inch thick. Furniture construction details, such as full mortise-and-tenon joinery, can be found throughout the kitchen – even on the built-in refrigerator's handles, made of hammered and patinaed brass in an open bridge joint and pegged to figured mahogany handles. "We allow the crafts-



Photos courtesy of Michael Corlis.

manship to be the decoration," Corlis notes, adding, "Note the raised-through dovetails on the range hood, drawers and on the frieze board at the crown."

Any homeowner who appreciates the intricacies of fine millwork cannot help but notice that the wall cabinet door panels are a continuation of the cabinet base door panels, and the wall cabinets have 2-inch by 2-inch corners with rails mortised into them, holding the floating panels. "And there are no applied drawer fronts, the whole joint shows as part of the decoration," Corlis says. Dovetails were hand cut and sanded.

These elemental details are what make this kitchen so compelling. Imagine the pleasure of having friends over to sit at your island, with its 27-inch wide, 2-inch-thick mahogany island top, enjoying a cup of coffee and slice of warm apple pie while they admire the figure on the cabinet doors or notice that the crotch mahogany panels on the range hood infer smoke rising.

Corlis notes that the island's breakfast bar top is held up by a curved wall of bookmatched mahogany panels and solid mahogany brackets that were mortise-

and-tenoned together. Signature Woodworks' designs are inspired by one-of-a-kind material. "We try to honor the material by showing off its maximum potential and letting it inform the design. If people don't like the color and want a stain, we tell them to pick a different species," he adds.

Proud to win a Design Portfolio award, Corlis says his shop is "bucking the trend in today's market. We don't use CNC machines; we use highly skilled, dedicated craftsmen." The shop houses a Laguna band saw, 24-inch Oliver helical head planer, 24-inch Northfield joiner and a restored 1952 Wysong & Myles mortise-and-tenoner.

"A machine might be able to optimize sizes and shapes from sheet goods, but it will never replace craftsmen who have spent their lives learning about the craft and available materials. Our work uses modern technology when appropriate, but tries to remain true to our forefathers in the Arts and Crafts Movement of a century ago," Corlis concludes.



Signature Woodworks/ Corlis Design & Construction Inc.

Frametown, WV
www.corlisdesign.com

Project: Mahogany Kitchen with hand-picked figured panels

Year Established: 1983

of Employees: 10

Shop Size: 3,200 sq ft

Specialty: One-of-a-kind cabinetry, furniture and architectural woodwork for residential and commercial applications.

Project Notes: The Peruvian mahogany panels on the cabinets are either culled from single boards or are bookmatched for figure.