

# KITCHEN

planning &amp; buying guide

SPECIAL ISSUE | MAY 2014

## Dream Kitchens

Bright ideas for  
everyone!

Exclusive  
survey reveals:

Brands  
that  
break

Our most  
energy  
efficient  
picks

ConsumerReports *Specials*



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## Top-rated products

- Roomiest fridges
- Fastest ranges
- Quietest dishwashers
- Toughest countertops & more!

# Southern Charmer

A gut renovation gives a dilapidated duplex a comfortable kitchen fit for a growing young family.



BEFORE

**W**hen Amanda McMillan and Theresa Dau first saw their suburban Atlanta house, they knew it would need an extensive remodel to make it livable, let alone lovable.

But something about the 1920s bungalow in Decatur's historic district spoke to them, and they sensed enough potential in its inviting front porch and charming neighborhood to return with the experts at Renewal Design-Build, also in Decatur. "The house had been divided into two," explains McMillan. "We hoped to return it to its single-family past, and to create an open layout on the main floor. Also, we really wanted to add a pool to the backyard. If those changes hadn't been possible, we would have kept looking." Fortunately, the pros gave the go ahead, and the couple spent the next 15 months planning



The designer sourced the slab of Black Limba wood for the island top, then sized the base to fit.



Wide-plank heart pine flooring creates a warm farmhouse look. Painting the window frames a dark gray added a bold contemporary contrast.

ILLUSTRATION: TAE WON YU



**BEFORE:** Previously converted to a duplex, the house had two full kitchens and a choppy main floor layout with no circulation between rooms. There was access to the backyard through a utility room, but the house felt cut off from its site.



**AFTER:** A complete renovation reworked the back of the house, creating a single large kitchen with an open family room at one end and easy access to outdoor living areas through a new screened porch. Part of a bedroom became a walk-in pantry.

and watching the transformation of their home. “We moved in two months before our daughter was born,” says McMillan. “And everything was perfect.”

**Careful planning.** From the start, the kitchen was one of the couple’s biggest design priorities. “We both love to cook, and to entertain, and we’d lived in so many apartments and condos with too little space and no storage to speak of,” says McMillan. So, the couple was determined to make this, their “forever” kitchen, fit their needs to a T. With the help of designer Courtney Rogers, they created a true family hub, with an efficient workspace that flows effortlessly into adjacent living areas, including a cozy keeping room, a screened porch, and an elegant dining room—the ideal arrangement for parents watching a busy toddler, and for casual entertaining. “We haven’t entertained as much since Jameson was born,” admits McMillan. “But our families are here all the time, and it’s such an easy place to cook and to hang out.”

**Attention to detail.** Of course, that ease comes as a result of laboring over every last detail, from the location of each storage element—dish drawers beside the dishwasher, utensils by the range—to the placement of the sinks and appliances. Style received equal care: The team kept the look simple, but warm,

with wide-plank flooring, white cabinets, and black granite counters. The island got a rich wood top and pretty slipcovered chairs, creating a charming focal point. The result is a space with a fresh, modern farmhouse vibe that’s just right for a family that spends most of their time in the kitchen.



Just around the corner from the kitchen, the dining room features a built-in bar.