

2008 Best Overall Kitchen Award Winner
By Diana Tuorto



Photo by Peter Rymwid

When Peter Ross Salerno, CMKBD, was hired to remodel the kitchen of a traditional English manor house, he immediately recognized the chance to incorporate his love of old world charm into the project.

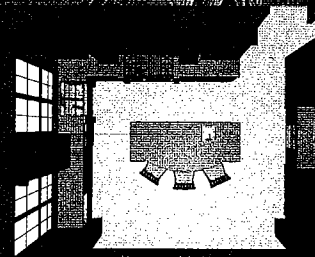
This type of assignment is in Salerno's blood. His father started working as a furniture maker and woodworker in Italy at the age of 7 under the guidance of a master craftsman. Following in his father's footsteps, Salerno started making cabinets in his father's U.S. shop at age 9. As he grew older, he worked in the finishing room each summer, making frames, gluing doors and learning his father's tricks of the trade. Both Salerno and his father share a great love and respect for art and design.

It was during his three years in the Navy, however, that Salerno developed much of his artistic talent and fell in love with European styles. Stationed in Italy, he also traveled to France, Spain, Greece and Egypt, spending much of his time sketching art and architecture in cities like Venice, Rome and Paris.

"When I was younger, I thought I would join the ranks of corporate America," Salerno stated. "Before long, I discovered that it was a bad climate. The more that you climb the corporate ladder, the more other people want to drag you down. I soon asked my father if I could join his cabinet business full-time. I've now been in this business for 25 years, running my own company for the past 10 years. In that time, I've expanded my horizons and have found that incorporating art into my business has been the perfect combination for me."

Salerno wanted this charming home's kitchen to achieve warmth in its grand space. "The clients are affluent real estate investors with two small children," Salerno commented. "I wanted to give them a space that had the turn-of-the-century detailing to ▶▶

Rendering by 20-20 Technologies



match the rest of their home, with modern and well made appliances. The house has incredible features such as stained glass windows, coffered ceilings and paneled walls."

A main priority was to balance the kitchen. Two display cabinets were placed at each end of the archway entering the kitchen from the family room. "The cabinets frame the entire kitchen, making it its own special space," Salerno stated. "The kitchen flows into the sitting area with the fireplace, but it makes its own statement with this slight room separation."

During the process, a tall cabinet was placed between the two kitchen windows and Salerno made the refrigerator and freezer appear to be armoires, placing them on either side of the microwave. "We wanted the room's features to appear more like furniture," Salerno said.

One detail that Salerno added to the room was custom-made cherry wood cabinets. "I wanted the cabinets to be substantial and thick, fitting of an older home," Salerno stated. "If you pull out a door that's an inch to an inch and a half thick, it's going to have some heavy substance. The cabinets were hand-crafted in Amish country and are made to last 100 years. I also wanted the lines to be kept simple with beaded-inset doors and minimal detail."

A diagonal grid was created in the room with nine pieces of terracotta tile inserted. This helps to draw the eye throughout the room and creates a unique look. "The flooring gave the room a clean look, but matched the house's charm," Salerno commented. "We didn't want to use only wood or tile for the flooring, so both elements were incorporated. The room is bordered in five-inch oak plank, which was stained to match the cabinets."

The hood soon became the room's focal point. "The hood was made of solid wood and needed to be curved," said Salerno. "We went to a boat builder for advice and my hood specialist built it from there. There was no other way to bend the wood; it was like the bow of a ship. If any mistake was made, the hood would have to be remade from scratch. To avoid problems, we created a full template on paper and nailed it on 2x4s in the room to get the clients' feedback. After some minor changes, the hood was given more detail to provide more height, with irregular dowels adding dimension. It took more than 40 design hours alone to complete the hood."

The hearth also had to make a statement. Salerno used both concave and convex shapes to give the hearth soft fluid lines without ruining its grandeur. The upper section was made using cherry veneer and Venetian plaster.

The butler's pantry allowed the kitchen to flow into the formal dining room. The pantry was divided into two sections; the first area stores up to 46 bottles of wine, as well as a hand-blown wine glass collection. The second section is less formal and has a simple u-shaped design for crystal and china storage.

Salerno points out that templates are a great way to ensure that a design works. "We created templates of either side of the refrigerator. We were 99% sure of the fit, but wanted to be 100% sure to guarantee the clients' satisfaction. The templates were nailed to the wall so we could stand back and see how they looked. They are just as important as elevations or renderings."

After 25 years in the business, Salerno is pleased to have projects like this kitchen to trigger his creativity. The inspiration and insight he has gained from both his family and travels to Europe have certainly made a lasting impression on his work. □



SPONSORED BY

Miele