



KITCHEN

THE RED-AND-GRAY color scheme anchors the kitchen that, thanks to the removal of a ceiling, is dramatically tall. The X base of the small central table echoes patterns in the floor tile and backsplash behind the stove.

Cultural Alliance

Indian, French, and American Greek Revival influences combine in a stunning and fully functional community kitchen

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INTERIOR DESIGNER VANI Sayeed (TOP RIGHT) LIKES to keep doors off the corner units of wall cabinets (TOP LEFT), utilizing this difficult-to-access space as open shelving. Electrical outlets were installed on the underside of the upper cabinets for a clean, streamlined look. The punchy red wallcovering (ABOVE) looks like tooled leather or animal hide but is composed of 9-by-9-inch squares of vinyl. The white-and-gray marble countertops from Cumar add to the traditional look of the sink area while the contemporary sconce, which matches the large central chandelier, adds a modern touch.

For her kitchen in the Nathaniel Allen House in Newton, Massachusetts, site of the Junior League of Boston's 2016 Decorators' Show House, Vani Sayeed looked overseas for design inspiration. "We don't live in an isolated culture anymore," says the interior designer and artist whose firm, Vani Sayeed Studios, is based in Newton. Born in India, she describes her style sensibility as "global chic." "I am unique to myself, a citizen of the world," she says.

But Sayeed was also inspired by the project's local impact. "I live in Newton; my daughters attend Newton Public Schools," she says. "This house belongs to the Newton Cultural Alliance, who will continue to use it for a variety of functions. They needed a kitchen, so, for me, this was an opportunity to do something with a bigger impact than just a pretty room. It was going to see ongoing use, and it had to be very functional."

The space originally occupied two stories at the back of the mid-19th-century Greek

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Revival building. Under the supervision of project manager Peter Griffin of FBN Construction in Boston, the floor between the two levels was removed, resulting in a room with 18-foot ceilings and windows on two levels.

“My idea was to create a French bistro feel, driven by a red-and-gray color scheme,” says Sayeed. “I thought it would be so pretty, and I believed that red was the key to capturing the whole thing. I did not do black and white, because I felt that would be too stark.”

She established the red background with 9-by-9-inch squares of vinyl wallcovering. “It’s very tactile, not flat,” Sayeed says. “It looks like animal hide, a luxurious product,

A BAR FILLS ONE CORNER of the kitchen (LEFT) with a mahogany cabinet, gray marble countertop, and white tile backsplash. Surrounding the mirror on the wall is a collection of paintings and intaglio prints by Sayeed, which, she says, represents her personal side. Cooking appliances are grouped with a Wolf wall oven and warming drawer (FACING PAGE) installed across from a Wolf induction cooktop, chosen because its surface is never hot to the touch, an important safety factor for a kitchen with a variety of users, including children.

but it passes all commercial requirements.”

She chose gray-painted cabinets, light- and dark-gray floor tiles, a white tile backsplash, gray-and-white marble counters, and stainless steel appliances. In one corner, she created a bar with mahogany cabinets, a round metal sink and a dark-gray marble counter. Herringbone-patterned white marble tile grouted in gray graces the backsplash behind the 30-inch induction cooktop.

“The diagonal design of the marble talks to the floor without competing with it,” Sayeed says. “It was a remnant piece at Cumar, who supplied and installed all the countertop stone, and a happy find: It adds a very pretty element. I like to mix materials and textures. The bar cabinetry could have been the same gray as that of the kitchen’s working end, but this is more interesting.”

She utilized a favorite trick when she put no doors on the corner units of the upper cabinets. “Those are hard-to-access dead spaces when behind doors,” she says. “Leaving them as open shelves turns them into display areas.”

A hefty chandelier and matching wall

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