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Northwest Living Made To Order

Rebecca Teagarden

YOU CAN TELL by the rosemary hedge in front of the house that this is the home of a cook (use sprigs as a basting brush). For 18 years Sasa Kirkpatrick simmered and sauteed, baked and broiled for family and friends, business dinners and charity events in her rural Sammamish kitchen.

And all the time spent there — in her favorite room — had given her some very specific ideas about what she needed next.

"I live in the kitchen. I never leave this room," she says, and with a bathroom and laundry right there, you know she's not fooling. Her husband, Ken, busies himself at the computer in the corner office there.

"My old kitchen was very functional, but it was smaller. It had Formica counters. And my oven blew up."

So began the remodel for a foodie whose husband says is "the world's best cook — or at least in the United States."

First, you must know that SaSa is passionate about cooking, and she is Italian. The coffee is always hot, a tin of muffins ready to pop in the oven of her kitchen completed in fall 2004.

The Kirkpatricks entertain twice a week or so. Ken has been known to call and say he's on his way home with business associates. Oh, yeah? The more the merrier, she says. Once SaSa didn't even have time to vacuum so she scattered confetti and heard from her guests, "Oh look! You've decorated just for us!"

The well-stocked pantry

SaSa Kirkpatrick says the well-prepared host should always have on hand:

1. Olive oil, extra virgin and a lighter press
2. Balsamic and wine vinegars
3. Frozen and dried pasta
4. Arborio rice
5. Dried beans
6. Polenta or cornmeal
7. Unbleached flour, semolina

SaSa spreads her joy of cooking by offering lessons about four times a year in her big new kitchen and giving all the money to charity — often Ronald McDonald House (where she was on the board) and Northwest Harvest (where she is now on the board).

"I felt nervous planning the first one, but once I opened my mouth I couldn't stop," she says. The timer dings. Hot honey muffins hit the 5-by-10-foot deep-green serpentine island.

Holidays are a big to-do. Easter brunch brings 45 to the table. So, of course, SaSa could not be without her kitchen even one day. Her smart contractor, Ross Hanby of Hanby Construction,



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

SaSa Kirkpatrick prepares ciabatta in her remodeled kitchen. "I was raised in the kitchen with my mom, my grandma and my aunts," she says. Everything in the room was made to order. Stone Design of Seattle was the architect; Seattle Cabinet and Millwork crafted the rough cherry cabinets and box beams.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

An extended view of the remodeled kitchen. "We had to convince the installers to use the knot holes and checks," SaSa says of her rustic, hardworking room.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Ken Kirkpatrick has his bartender's corner with two pullouts, one for liquor bottles, the

- 8. Eggs
- 9. Tomatoes, fresh or canned (plain, unflavored in any way)
- 10. Herbs: (fresh, dried or frozen) parsley, basil, rosemary, sage, oregano
- 11. Garlic
- 12. Pecorino and mozzarella cheeses

SaSa's e-mail for cooking-class inquiries is sasakirkpatrick@hotmail.com.

dismantled the old kitchen and reassembled it, fully functional, in the garage, where it remains today. In 14 months of remodeling, which included enlarging the foundation, SaSa didn't skip a meal. "We entertained, we even did Christmas," she says, still impressed.

What follows is how SaSa got her perfect kitchen with two large ovens, warming drawer, steam oven, two dishwashers, two sinks and three faucets, seven-burner cooktop, kick vac and loads of storage in a family-room-

office-sunroom-kitchen-terrace combo:

- She carted groceries to Bradley Distributing and cooked on the appliances she was considering. "At Crossroads Appliance they asked me, 'What do you want in a dishwasher?' I said, 'It has to poach my salmon.' So they let me bring in a salmon and I poached it. (Wrap in foil, place on cookie sheet on top rack, run one cycle. Check fish. If unfinished, run through a second cycle. No soap.) She also took her pots and pans with her to make sure they fit each appliance. She toted her biggest pot in search of just the right sink (she had to have custom).

Making the cut was a Wolf cooktop, Miele ovens and dishwasher, and Sub-Zero refrigerator and freezer.

- She brought home each counter surface under consideration and left a glass of scotch on top. She also stained each one with red wine, spaghetti sauce, lemon juice and fingernail-polish remover. She reports that the juice, wine and sauce ate right through the Carrera marble. "This serpentine? Nothing. Nothing happened to it."

RECIPE

[SaSa's Salsa di Pomodoro.](#)

- SaSa called local chefs and asked them about their kitchens at home. What kind of counters did they have? What appliances? Did they like them?

- She had a binder with a page devoted to each element of the room. "I wrote in there, 'No matter how much you love chopping-block counters, don't get it. Remember the membranes. Mind this note!'"

- The contractors measured SaSa's hips to cut the corner cabinets just the right size. They also measured her reach in stocking feet to set platter storage slots (36 are kept there).

Rebecca Teagarden is assistant editor of Pacific Northwest magazine. Ken Lambert is a Seattle Times staff photographer.

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other glasses. The drawers store towels, zesters, juicers and other tools.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The contractors measured SaSa's thumbs and custom-cut the cutting-board gutters for easy cleaning.



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A map of Italy, set in serpentine and marble, has two white dots marking Abruzzi (SaSa's father's ancestral home) and Calabria (her mother's). JC Marble of Arlington did the inlay and counters.



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The faucet, far right, fills large pots with ease right at the stove.



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The Kirkpatrick's pygmy goat, Wilson, romps in the pasture with the family's llamas.



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A pass-through window to the deck extends the reach of SaSa's hospitality.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

SaSa cooks — and so does her amazing kitchen. Here she whips up marinara sauce from an old family recipe.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Hanby Construction had this sign made up as a joke for SaSa and Ken after moving the old kitchen into the garage to be used during the renovation. SaSa likes the setup so much and cooks so often that she keeps it available for entertaining large groups.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Platter-storage slots are just high enough for SaSa to reach them in her stocking feet.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES
SaSa's Salsa di Pomodoro is her version of
Italian fast food.