

HOME & GARDEN



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FULFILLING
DREAMS...
ONE KITCHEN
AT A TIME

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When Craig and Erica Lewis of Chapel Hill approached CKS Kitchens & Design about creating a custom kitchen, bathroom and cabinetry for two additional rooms, the company had no idea that when the project was completed it would not only fulfill the homeowners' every wish, but would capture the imagination of *Better Homes & Gardens Beautiful Kitchens* editor Karin Bajj Holmes.

The Lewis' kitchen is one of 11, selected from hundreds from around the world, featured in the summer issue of the magazine, which is on newsstands through Sept. 4.

"I loved how discreet this kitchen was within the home's overall design. The kitchen blends so well with the millwork of adjacent rooms, it struck us as a very natural extension of the home's very classic, very comfortable living spaces," said Bajj Holmes.

The 19-year-old Durham-based CKS Kitchens & Design is lead by Craig Malkani, company founder and head of operations; Zack Simmons, designer; Bill Stewart, commercial division chief who is assisted by Gil Feltis; and minority partner Lisa Principe, designer.

Simmons said that the secret to CKS' success is the approach the company takes. "We really help [our clients] plan rooms. We're not like a traditional cabinetry shop. We're a design firm that specializes in cabinetry."

CKS works closely with its clients to make sure that their needs, wants and lifestyle are all accommodated. This process includes consultations and interviews that tease out all the details that go into planning the environment, whether it be the homeowner likes to cook or would rather entertain but not cook, or has large dogs or small children and how those forces all interact not only with the space under discussion but also how it flows into other areas of the house.

This can lead to having to make some serious changes to the original plan, which is what happened with the Lewis' kitchen. Following the interview process, Simmons realized that in order to accommodate all the features the couple wanted, they were going to have to move a wall to expand the kitchen area. He met with the Lewis' interior designer Lucinda Poole to make sure the changes could be integrated into the overall plan for the home.

It is typical for CKS to work closely with other designers, architects and contractors on a project to be able to articulate the client's vision.

In reflecting on the Lewis' project, Principe said that Mrs. Lewis told them "we were really able to take what she was visualizing and turn it into her home."

"It's a great sense of accomplishment to be able to give that to someone," Principe noted. An added challenge was Mrs. Lewis was in New England during much of the design and installation process — making communication that much more important. Principe related that "She said that during the process she felt well informed."

Another sample of CKS' work will appear in the Spring 2008 issue of *Better Homes & Gardens Beautiful Kitchens*. That kitchen features wrap-around wood paneling whose grain runs horizontally and is exactly matched from one piece to the next. The final result is nothing less than seamless.

While he confesses the process was time consuming and painstaking, Simmons explained that the end goal is that no one should know how much work went into

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