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SEASIDE KITCHENS

This is a kitchen that works," says Jane Long, and she should know. For 13 years she owned a takeout food shop in Atlanta, and since she's renovated the kitchen of her family's Bluffton, South Carolina, cottage, she's hosted two weddings with 250 guests each. Her no-nonsense philosophy: "Kitchens should be for cooking. I don't think they should be dining or living rooms."

Work stations were as carefully thought out as any restaurant kitchen's: The island incorporates a stainless-steel butler's sink, two electric burners for simmering soups and

Even at the beach, life seems to center on the kitchen. You can cook for a crowd in these two well-designed rooms.



stews, and a second dishwasher (practically a must for entertaining, she believes). Her Thermador stove combines a gas cooktop and an electric oven large enough to hold commercial-size pans. The porcelain apron-front farmhouse sink is ample enough to clean all those pans, and open shelves adjacent to the stove are sized for bulk spice storage.

Yet for all its up-to-date functionality, the kitchen seems to glow with the warmth of another era, thanks to pine walls—some salvaged from the original 1928 kitchen—heart-pine floors, granite set in heart-pine countertops, and



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hand-rubbed painted green cabinetry. A marble pastry counter was created from the top of a washstand that belonged to her mother. “We used as many original materials as we could,” says Long. “We really wanted to work with the style of the house.” Old-fashioned glass-front pantry cabinets suit the help-yourself aesthetic of a beach house frequented by two grown children and many family members in the area. Her efforts were so successful that she’s now started a whole new business: kitchen design.

In Rosemary Beach, Florida, a new community that stresses the use of native and natural materials, homeowner and designer Beth

Many of the pine walls were salvaged from the original kitchen, giving a new addition the resonance of things old and beloved. Double windows overlook the water, offering helping hands the payoff of a beautiful view.

“I can’t say enough about a sink that you can fit large pans in,” Jane says of her Kohler apron-front porcelain sink. The gooseneck faucet and ceramic-handled taps suit the sink’s vintage flavor.

Dillard wanted to create a kitchen that would be “contemporary but still family-friendly.” The tinted concrete floors that run throughout the first floor of the house are a good match for sandy feet and are warmed by cabinetry and shelving made from 100-year-old deadhead

cypress salvaged from a nearby river.

“We chose gridded chrome-wire cabinet fronts to help bridge the wooden cabinets with the industrial style of the stainless steel appliances,” says Dillard. Twelve-foot-high ceilings, wood-slatted transoms, and a propeller-style ceiling fan circulate salt-tinged ocean breezes and sunlight throughout the space.

Beth is a Cordon Bleu-trained cook who wanted top-of-the-line appliances—a Viking stove, Bosch dishwasher, and stainless GE refrigerator—so cooking at the beach could be as satisfying as at home. In fact, she duplicated many of the accessories in her Birmingham kitchen so her three children, ages 11 to 15,



Twelve-foot ceilings give a feeling of spaciousness to Beth Dillard's kitchen, which artfully blends stainless steel and cypress. Natural pigments were added to the poured-concrete counter, which is easy to maintain but expensive because suppliers are scarce.

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would feel just as comfortable cooking here. The centerpiece, both for preparation and cooking, is a table modeled on an antique from Provence and was fashioned from century-old heart pine by Florida artisan Jim Foley. It is surrounded by metal bistro-style chairs from J. Peterman. A single row of cobalt-blue tiles and the tomato-red poured-concrete counter provide sparks of color in an



otherwise neutral kitchen. The counter has a sealed surface and is smooth and cold, like stone. The crowning touch: little pink seashells that Dillard pressed into the counter's edge as a reminder of the ocean just outside. 🐚

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Jill Kirchner Simpson is a freelance writer in New York whose idea of cooking at the beach involves making guacamole and mixing margaritas.