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Michael Symon's kitchen pairs white subway tile with rustic ceiling beams for a space that feels functional yet homey. Three black metal stools take up minimal space at the butcher-block island. "Michael doesn't really want anyone else in the kitchen with him," architect Nicholas Botta says with a laugh.

FIT FOR A

The architect behind chef Michael Symon's home kitchen

CHEF

shares his secrets for creating a space as hardworking as it is beautiful.

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When chef Michael Symon isn't cooking at one of his restaurants or on his Food Network show, Throwdown with Michael Symon, he's at the range of his own kitchen in East Hampton, New York. There he prepares meals for friends and family or, sometimes, on camera for his Instagram followers. "He cooks in there pretty much every day," says architect Nicholas Botta, who spearheaded the renovation of Michael's home. As Botta explains here, the recipe for a chef-suitable kitchen calls for specific measurements, clever thinking, and everything to be just right.

“
EVERY DAY THAT
MICHAEL IS AT
HOME, HE'S USING
THAT KITCHEN.
”

—NICHOLAS BOTTA, ARCHITECT

THIS PHOTO: Windows with black frames draw attention to the view outside. OPPOSITE TOP: To streamline his cooking, Michael requested his tools be conveniently located. A magnetic strip keeps the chef's knife collection within reach. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Glassware and cutlery are displayed on open shelving—in this butler's pantry and in the kitchen—rather than tucked away in upper cabinetry.

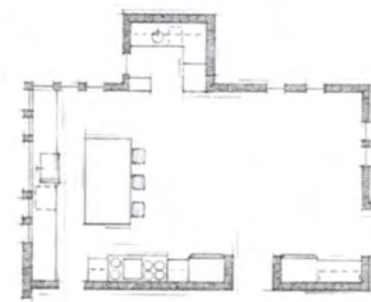
Q WHAT WERE MICHAEL'S REQUESTS FOR HIS HOME KITCHEN?

For starters, his clearances between working surfaces were different than what we normally would do. Typically, we allow for 42 to 48 inches of space between areas; Michael wanted them closer together, between 36 and 42 inches. He wanted to be able to open the oven, take out a dish, and drop it on the island right behind him. Because he works by himself, he doesn't have to worry about making room for someone prepping at the island while he's cooking at the range.

Q WHAT IS A KITCHEN DESIGN TREND YOU'RE SEEING?

People are looking for healthier ways to cook. We're starting to see a lot of steam ovens be used for vegetables, for example. It's different than what we've been installing over the years.

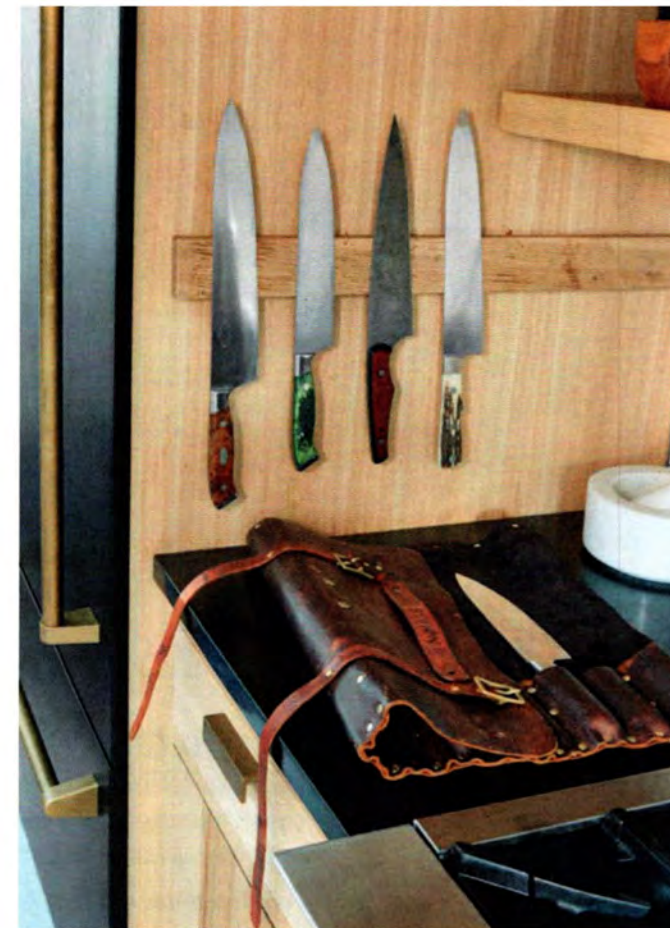
the plan



Functionality was the driving force behind this chef's kitchen. Closer-than-average clearances minimize steps between appliances and prep surfaces. Cookware is easy to grab from open shelves on the walls and beneath the island. Other pots, pans, and utensils are stowed in two walk-in pantries.

Q WHAT ROLE DOES STORAGE PLAY IN THIS KITCHEN'S EASE OF USE?

When it came to storage, Michael had specific needs in terms of accessibility. A lot of people want everything hidden within cabinetry, but Michael wanted everything exposed and easy to access. He didn't want any upper cabinets, just shelving. Pots are stacked on the bottom of the island, and knives are on a magnetic strip on the wall so he can see and grab what he needs easily. He moves quickly around the kitchen, so he doesn't want to be opening a door to get a pan, or anything else for that matter. He requested more open storage than pretty much anyone else we've designed for.



Q WHAT DO YOU THINK CAN MAKE OR BREAK A KITCHEN FOR A CHEF?

Chefs have to personally select a range that they love to cook on. Michael has his preferred brand of gas ranges and ovens that have the highest Btu output available. That's what he uses for everything.

Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO SEE MICHAEL IN ACTION AFTER THE KITCHEN RENOVATION WAS COMPLETE?

Fortunately, I get to eat dinner at his house quite often. Every time he cooks, it's better than the last. It's quite a joy and a privilege to eat a meal prepared by one of the top chefs in the world.



TIPS FOR CRAFTING A CHEF-APPROVED KITCHEN

Architect Nicholas Botta shares how to elevate your space to that of a culinary pro.

- **Create a more efficient layout.** Consider a U- or L-shape kitchen. A well-laid-out floor plan places storage and appliances in proximity to each other while optimizing space for prep, cleanup, and entertaining.

- **Upgrade your appliances.** To prepare chef-worthy meals, you'll need commercial-style cooking appliances and refrigeration. A high-end ventilation hood will help reduce smoke, grease, and odors while making a stylish statement.

- **Choose durable materials.** "Sometimes clients will pick marble for countertops or flooring—which is not as durable and requires maintenance over time—but they love the look of it," Botta says. Quartz is a worthy alternative. It resists scratches, is easier to clean, and requires less maintenance over time.

- **Make sure the kitchen is well-lit.** Add cool 2700 Kelvin task lighting above the island, sink, and other prep areas. Use undercabinet lighting to eliminate shadows on working surfaces.

- **Choose drawer storage over doors.** "Next to the range, we want big pot drawers so that when someone is cooking, they can reach over, open a drawer, and access their pots and pans, rather than opening a door and fumbling around," Botta says. If using cabinetry with doors, insert a roll-out shelf.



TOP: One of the kitchen's two refrigerators flanks a nook outfitted as a bar. ABOVE: A pro-style, double-oven range with matching hood anchors the airy, contemporary space and gives Michael the precise cooking performance he needs.

Resources begin on page 100.



THIS PHOTO: Michael's assortment of pots and pans hangs in a kitchen pantry so he can easily grab what he needs as he works.