



NEW YORK HOME

Green Kitchen in Westchester County



Upper West Side Kitchen With A View

# EVERYTHING — INCLUDING THE KITCHEN SINK

How do you design a place for creating culinary masterpieces, cleaning up afterwards and all the moments in between? Start with a dream and find the reality. BY KEVIN PHINNEY

MOST ARTISTS PREFER TO START CREATING WITH A CLEAN CANVAS. But high-end kitchen designers start with — at the very least — an exhaustive list of kitchen gadgets and clients with ideas about how they plan to use them.

According to Gideon Mendelson president and creative director of the Mendelson Group, “Most of the time we’re trying to start from a blank slate, but I would say that kitchens are very personal. How they work and function is what’s most important — and everyone uses their kitchens differently.”

By focusing on the ways people use the space, Mendelson helps clients create the kitchens of their dreams. “With a living room, there are a few finite things that people require and the

rest is fairly up to individual tastes,” says the expert. “Kitchens are infinitely more complex, so in a very real way it’s like putting together a puzzle.”

Mendelson begins assembling his recommendations based on two primary components: interviews and inventory. “First off, you have to figure out what the scope of the room might be. Kitchens need to have a sink, a freezer, a refrigerator, a stove, an oven and so on. Then you have to figure out how the client wants to use each of these things. Some people don’t want to bend over an oven to check a turkey; they want it at eye level. So once you determine what they need, then you investigate what they want, and how they’d like to use the tools at their side.”

PHOTOS THIS PIECE COURTESY THE MENDELSON GROUP.



Upper East Side Kitchen and Breakfast Area



Gideon's Own Kitchen in The Hamptons

Cataloging his customer's belongings provides an estimate of how much storage is required; that includes not only blenders, pots and pans, but also china and other objects both aesthetic and functional.

"After examining the space available," Mendelson explains, "we then find out if they're looking for a place to have a message center to pay bills or a banquette at the window. And from there, we assess what they are looking for in terms of materials. Some people want engineered stone which is more forgiving and durable. Other people like me don't mind the extra work because real stone is more beautiful. Everybody's different."

"So much revolves around also getting a feel for the people who are going to be living there and using the space," Mendelson explains. "Kitchens are fun to design, but there are issues. By their very nature, kitchens have more ground rules and a bigger checklist than most of the other rooms in the home."

For example, a kitchen also has to feel like it's an organic part of the home as a whole, and what works in a pre-war apartment on the upper East Side and may be different from a more modern space. This factors into Mendelson's calculus — as do each client's preconceptions.

"Most of the people I work with have a dream kitchen in their heads,"

Mendelson says. "We had a client whose father worked in the wine industry and she wanted a cork floor in the kitchen as a kind of nod to him. Well, that can be very soft on your feet, but it's not the kind of floor you can roast a chicken in stilettos on."

Other tricky requests? "Really big slabs

of stone — that's when I start to get nervous. Ten to 12-foot islands without a seam? That's a challenge." Mendelson says, "I try to listen and show them what's possible based on my experience. But in the end, they're telling the story and I'm there to interpret, serve their vision and do what I can to make it real." ■

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