



Bespoke cabinetry offers abundant storage in the kitchen of a Greenville, South Carolina, house decorated by Barbara Westbrook of Westbrook Interiors (westbrookinteriors.com).

ALWAYS INVITING

Atlanta-based designer Barbara Westbrook talks about fashioning a gracious, party-ready home for longtime clients in South Carolina

Warm hospitality is a point of pride in the South, a region of the U.S. with a strong tradition of stylish—and often spirited—entertaining. Good parties were certainly top of mind when one socially active couple called upon decorator Barbara Westbrook to help realize their dream house in Greenville, South Carolina. The residence, which Westbrook completed in collaboration with architect Keith Summerour (both are based in Atlanta), features a free-flowing floor plan with a spacious kitchen that adjoins a butler's pantry and a storage

pantry—all thoughtfully tailored for hosting gatherings small and large. Westbrook sat down with *AD* to discuss the fundamentals of a convivial home. **Architectural Digest:** How did your conversations with the clients begin? **Barbara Westbrook:** I had worked with them on a couple of previous projects and knew how important entertaining was to them. They're so gracious about opening their home, whether for charity events or just family and friends. In the case of this house, they had in mind—for starters—a place where they could hold the perfect engagement party for their daughter.

AD: The residence is new construction. How did you and Summerour devise a floor plan conducive to entertaining? **BW:** Keith and I conceived rooms that were generous but not huge. And because there are no hallways, one space leads directly into another. It's those openings that create great flow for entertaining. Much of the house functions as one room. **AD:** How did the layout affect your decorating decisions, especially for the kitchen and pantries? **BW:** The kitchen had to be a showstopper since you can see it throughout most of the main floor. You don't want guests

ENTERTAINING



Clockwise from far left: Diamond-pattern glass door fronts and a crystal chandelier lend a dressed-up look to the cabinetry in the butler's pantry. To provide a handsome focal point in the storage pantry, which is visible from the foyer, Westbrook backed open shelving with a slab of Italian marble; the space, off the kitchen, has its own sink and appliances and functions as a secondary prep area. The formal dining room is painted in a rich gray, creating a moody ambience during candlelit meals.



gazing into some sterile, utilitarian space. To make it warm and inviting, I settled on a few predominant elements—white Italian marble, French oak, and an antiqued-gray paint finish for the island. **AD:** Two pantries certainly must help when prepping for major functions. **BW:** I wanted the kitchen to connect seamlessly with the storage pantry, which acts like a second kitchen when large groups are expected. The butler's pantry needed to be dressy because it transitions from the kitchen into the formal dining room, so we installed a crystal chandelier and ruby-glass knobs for some sparkle.

AD: What appliances do you recommend for frequent hosting?

BW: Two dishwashers and at least three ovens are a must. It's best to split them up between spaces. If you have the second appliances in a pantry, then someone can prep in there.

AD: You designed the cabinetry. Any tips?

BW: Don't be afraid to mix closed cabinets with glass-front ones and open shelves to give a room interest. The more mundane things, like cans of soup and paper towels, can be stowed behind doors. And always allow for enough counter space to lay out platters, trays, and other entertaining essentials.

AD: How do you determine how much storage space is needed?

BW: I take an inventory of all the kitchen items, from china and glassware to utensils and spices. Getting this practical information up front ensures that everything will fit. Then I anticipate growth, as we all tend to collect things over time. Storage is a luxury, and it makes a household run more smoothly. In the laundry room there are even more cabinets for vases, candles, and the like.

AD: Do the homeowners use that space during events?

BW: Flowers get arranged there. It acts as part of the kitchen and pantries.

AD: People tend to worry about wear and tear on their furniture when they have company. What's your advice?

BW: The project designer, Kim Winkler, and I chose fabrics with texture, which makes them more forgiving than those with a smooth surface. Mohair, chenille, and leather are all quite durable.

AD: How about color palettes? What kind of hues set the mood?

BW: I like at least one very dark room in a house. The formal dining room often works best, since it's typically a nighttime space. It's very romantic to eat by the flicker of candlelight and the gleam of silver and crystal.

AD: Do the clients entertain outdoors?

BW: The terrace is used as much as the indoors during good weather—guests spill out from the family, dining, and living rooms. There's plenty of outside seating for parties, including intimate areas for when it's just the immediate family.

AD: So the daughter's engagement party was a success?

BW: Such a joyful atmosphere. It was the event of the season!

—INTERVIEW BY ALYSSA BIRD