

The Straus Home: Entertaining on A Grand Scale

“It all turned out so well that I wouldn’t change a thing if I could.”



Front view of the Straus home

Daniel and Joyce Straus live in a unique 1850’s stone house set on three acres of landscaped terrain featuring formal gardens, pool and tennis court. The house was in poor shape when the couple bought it, but careful renovations and a perfectly matched stone addition (a service wing, kitchen, butler’s pantry and family room as well as a 3-car garage are new) made it the perfect habitat for the family, which includes two daughters and a son. When they interviewed

architects to revive the house, most argued that it was a teardown. Lauren Ostrow and Mindy Miller, their long-term interior designers, thought otherwise. Lauren’s team, along with architect Boris Baranovich, was able to rework the interiors and plan for an addition that blended the old with the new. “It was this irreplaceable, stone house that could be made into a unique home with careful attention,” she says. “It was a terrific leap of faith for them to buy it be



Before



Renovation in progress

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cause it was a very difficult renovation.” But having worked with her on their previous house and been happy, the Strauses took her judgment to heart. “We had to merge the new with the old so it was a seamless transition,” she says. “The new rooms became the soul of the house and make it a home”, agrees Joyce Straus. “The joke of the house is, despite its huge size, we basically hang out here in the kitchen.” She adds, that “we do a lot of entertaining and we find that people like to congregate in

the kitchen area as it is so warm and welcoming, situated perfectly between the dining room and family area.” (So is the patio, which can be accessed from the breakfast room as well as the family room.) The couple, noted for their philanthropic activities in politics, community affairs and charitable organizations as well as rollicking family gatherings (the kids range in age from 18 to 23, with the eldest married), host a great number of events in their traditional-styled home. “We needed a space that



Original Kitchen

could handle big groups, yet be cozy enough for when it was just us,” explains Joyce. Though she says she “hates” to cook, she does



Butler's Pantry

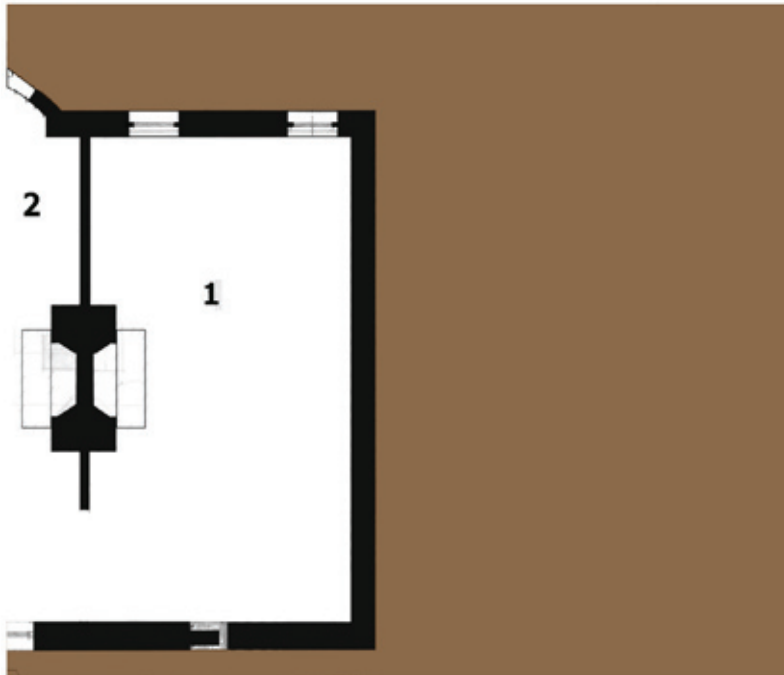
a goodly amount of it especially on weekends when family and friends tend to gather and drift between kitchen and family room. But dinner is almost always served in the formal and stately dining room. "My husband loves to use that room, even if it's just the two of us," she laughs.

But dinner *a deux*, is not a usual thing. It's more like din-

ner for 12. Which is why Joyce Straus enjoys her butler's pantry so much. "I didn't have one in my old house and always wanted one," she says. "Now I find that I use it all the time as it is so great when entertaining." Abutting the kitchen and dining room and visible from both, the pantry looks completely different from either room, yet keeps the overall feel. While the kitchen is light and

features traditional oak cabinets, the butler area is made of richly-toned mahogany and features a compact place for wine, platters, sinks, dishwashers and warming drawers. "It was important to make it look different because it's more interesting to use a variety of ideas. The pantry design is more formal than the kitchen because it is positioned adjacent to the dining room," comments Ostrow. The

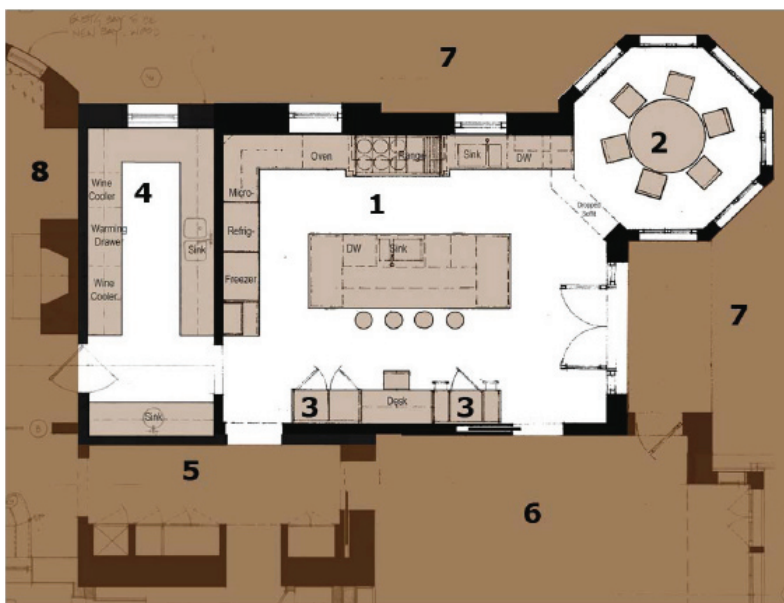
Before:



1 Kitchen
2 Dining Room

“The feedback that I get most often is how inviting and intimate the house is even though it is so big.”

After:



1 Kitchen
2 Breakfast Room
3 Pantry
4 Butler's Pantry
5 Hall
6 Family Room
7 Patio
8 Dining Room

designers also varied woods, hardware and doors throughout the house. The kitchen itself is put together masterfully with all appliances conveniently located to each other. The baking center, dairy and meat prep areas, are all thought through with easy access to sinks, refrigerator, freezer, ovens, and dishwashers. The cabinets, made of English oak were designed by Ostrow and built by famed specialist Christians to her specifications. “They are one-of-a kind and don’t exist in their listed line,” she notes. When asked why she didn’t hire a specialized kitchen designer to do the work, Straus seems puzzled. “Why would I do that? Lauren and her team were responsible for the interiors throughout the house. I knew that one of their main strengths was organization and space planning,” she replies. “It seemed completely natural to have them do it.” And, she declares, “the kitchen turned out so well that I wouldn’t change a thing if I could.”

Further, it was important to the Strauses and Ostrow, that furniture and fittings from their old home, be used in their new one. In fact, every piece of furniture from that house made it into the new, and then some. “It was all first quality and we enjoyed figuring out where to use each piece in the new home,” says Ostrow.

Joyce Straus is quick to note that even though the house is quite large, dimensions of each room are not overpowering. “The feedback that I get most often is how inviting and intimate the house is even though it is so big,” she says. Concludes the lady of the manor: “I think that is testament to the fact that we all made sure that the rooms were not super-sized and that Lauren and Mindy made the interiors so warm and beautiful.”

INTERIOR DESIGN BY LAUREN OSTROW
ASSOCIATE DESIGNERS MINDY MILLER, RICHARD ROSENBLUM
WRITTEN BY SANDY BASS
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GRAPHICS BY TAL GELLER

TESTIMONIAL LETTER

I began working with Lauren Ostrow Interior Design in the Fall of 1987. Over the last twenty years they have done a variety of space planning and interior design projects for my family. These include the two homes we have lived in, my husband's personal office suites and four commercial properties in my husband's company.

In both of my homes, in addition to decorating, Lauren, Mindy Miller and her staff involved with interior space planning that was practical and resulted in efficient use of space in every instance. In my current home which is large, historical house that underwent an extensive and complicated renovation with many challenges, they were involved from the initial stage with the architect and his team. They modified floor plans when needed and worked closely with his team to reconfigure some of the spaces. Their input was invaluable. In the process, they also planned carefully to place every piece of furniture I owned into the new house, finding in many instances new locations and usages for my things. All the decorated rooms are very warm and inviting with a mix of beautiful patterns and textures. They are classic, interesting and aging well.

It has always been a pleasure to work with Lauren, Mindy and their staff. Their ideas are fresh and innovative. Each renovation and interior design and decorating scheme adapts perfectly to its respective environment and setting. I am very proud of the restoration and design of my house and especially of the warmth it exudes in spite of its size. I would hire Lauren Ostrow Interior Design again and I know they would enhance any future design project I might consider.

Joyce and Daniel Straus

P.S.

In 2012 I hired Lauren Ostrow Interior Design again for the apartment I purchased in NYC. We did a complete renovation and once again Lauren and her associates were involved from the very beginning in a collaboration with the architect to plan the space and select all the finishes. They then decorated the entire apartment. The finishes and furnishings are creative and beautiful and we so pleased with the result.

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