



A kitchen with a view

An 1894 farmhouse remodel keeps the focus on country living and historical charm.

BY MOLLY GUTHREY

Carolyn Joyce always wanted a farm of her own.

"I grew up in a small town in Wisconsin, in the middle of Dairy Land, where all my friends were farm kids," Joyce says. "My friend and I would switch houses so she could live in the 'city' — a great big town of about 2,500 — and I could live on her farm and do 'country' stuff, like swing on a tree swing and do 'dreamy' farm chores."

Years later, when Joyce was married and living in a town home in Burnsville, her dream remained. It was a dream shared by her husband, Karl Bouvin, the proprietor of Great Harvest Bread in Burnsville.

"We lived within walking distance of my husband's work," Joyce says, "but we were both hoping and dreaming of a place in the country where we could have a garden and maybe some animals."

Joyce and Bouvin found that place in 1998: An 1894 farmhouse on 18 acres near Northfield, Minn., which they now call Old Orchard Farm.

PHOTOS BY
NICHOLAS KAPANKE



"The location was beautiful, with its large cottonwood trees, and not too long of a commute to Burnsville," Joyce says.

"The man who was born in this house lives just over there," Bouvin says. "There are deep connections in this rural community to our house."

THIS OLD HOUSE

The culmination of the farm dream, though, was really just the beginning, because this dream-come-true was a fixer-upper. They started on the outside.

"We went to work," Joyce says. "We made plans to build a barn because I had a horse I wanted to bring out to the farm and the previous owner had torn down all the outbuildings.

"We planted a full orchard of fruit and nut trees," Bouvin says. "Apple, pear, cherry, plum, apricot, currant, hostaberry, cranberry, hazelnut, butternut, walnut. We also planted a vineyard of Minnesota-variety grapes."

The garden is like an enormous tossed salad: "Strawberries and raspberries and cut flowers and greens and lettuces and chard and kale and cauliflower," Joyce lists the garden goods. "Onions, tomatoes, pumpkins, garlic."

The inside of the old house needed a lot of work, too.

"We got a brand new furnace before we even moved in," Bouvin says. "The house was heated with wood before we purchased it."

The new furnace, though, had to work too hard.

"I think our (propane) heating bill was \$5,000 over six months one winter," says Bouvin. "We could not sustain that."

So the old house had to be properly insulated. And:

"We replaced every single window," Bouvin says.

"We added a metal roof," Joyce says.

"We replaced the siding," Bouvin says, "with Hardie Board."

The family also removed four old, nonworking chimneys, added a porch, refinished the hardwood floors, renovated the upstairs bathroom, painted and did some drywall work.

And then, 16 years and two kids later, it was finally time to remodel the kitchen. The thought of this renovation was much more satisfying to contemplate than projects related to heating, roofing or insulation.

"The icing on cake," Joyce says. "We had been waiting for certain things to be done, to wait for the budget to be available. We had been dreaming about this, discussing it, for a long time, more than 10 years."



HEART OF THE HOME

There was a lot to dream about when it came to the kitchen. “Everything was outdated,” Bouvin says. “Vinyl stick-on floors. A hole in the floor from where we took out the chimney.”

“It was small and not laid out well,” Joyce says. “They talk about a ‘triangle’ (of cooktop, sink and fridge); ours was more like a rhombus.”

It was also a lonely place.

“The kitchen was so small and so cold, the kids would take their food and go into the living room — the room where we had previously added heated floors — and I’d be left in the kitchen by myself,” Joyce says. “I was lonely. I wanted them there with me, eating breakfast, doing homework, working together.”

The family turned to Jason Myrlie of J. Carsten Remodeling for making a 21st-century kitchen fit in a 19th-century house.

“They found me on Houzz,” Myrlie says.

Besides liking J. Carsten’s style and review, there was another plus: Unlike others in the metro, Myrlie was willing to go the distance.

“No one was willing to go to Northfield, to a farm in the middle of nowhere,” Myrlie says. “I was willing to meet with them and talk with them about what they were looking to do at least.”



"I wanted to be able to include elements of a traditional farmhouse," Joyce says. "I wanted it to be imperfectly perfect, just like the house itself."

The remodel began just after Thanksgiving 2014 and was finished by January 2015. It was a bit of a departure for a design-build-remodel firm accustomed to city spaces.

"Beyond improving the function," Myrlie says, "the view was an important part of the design."

"I wanted to be able to look out and see our red barn from the kitchen island," Joyce says.

Everywhere Myrlie looked inside, there was work to be done.

"There was very little space," Myrlie says of the kitchen. "The sink was leaking, the oven didn't work, the fridge was on the other side of the room, all the countertops other than the main sink were portable pieces of furniture."

Joyce didn't want to get rid of everything old, though.

"Halfway through the process," Myrlie says, "she found an original 1945 farmhouse sink."

The wall-hung sink was salvaged from a shop in St. Paul.

Myrlie had to "make it work," tweaking a cabinet to house the vintage piece.

"It was difficult to fit in but it worked really well," Joyce says.

For lighting, the family was inspired by Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co., which stocks new interpretations on vintage styles.

The project did not involve adding to the footprint of the house.

"We didn't need a bigger kitchen," Joyce says. "We needed a better kitchen."



It wasn't just the kitchen, however.

Myrlie also helped the family remodel the downstairs bathroom.

"It was almost not usable," Myrlie says.

"The toilet was almost literally falling through the floor," Joyce says.

The new bathroom has a shower instead of a bathtub. This is a trending choice, Myrlie says.

"I've taken out five tubs in the last three months," Myrlie says.



Mirroring the look of the kitchen, the new bathroom features a custom cabinet and storage next to the new shower.





Although Joyce wanted granite countertops in the kitchen, she didn't want them to stand out.

"I didn't want shiny granite," she says. "Instead, we got a buffed granite that looks like an old schoolhouse chalkboard."

The vinyl floor is gone, replaced with a radiant heating system for coziness and engineered wood flooring for durability.

"Living on a farm with the dust and dirt and animals and children, the hardwood floors have suffered," Joyce says. "I don't want floors where I have to hold my breath."

For Myrlie, it was like working in a farmhouse. "None of the walls were square," he

said. "The ceilings were not level, the floors were sloped."

The island is no longer a moveable piece of furniture; it's now a 5-foot permanent structure with room for two to dine. This, too, was tweaked for an old kitchen.

"We reinforced the beams and posts in the basement to make sure the middle of the kitchen could take the weight from the island," Myrlie says.

The renovation yielded some surprises. Original wallpaper was revealed behind the kitchen cabinets, and ...

"Shoes," Myrlie says. "When we tore out the walls, we pulled out some old shoes and

a rollerskate that we think maybe fell down from the attic storage space."

A DREAM COME TRUE

Joyce finally has the farmhouse kitchen of her dreams: A rejiggered layout. Custom enameled cabinetry. Honed granite countertops. Rustic floors with a vintage vibe. A dining bench seat for the kids (with storage). An industrial-style stove with a dramatic range hood. A great view.

"I can see the red barn while I'm working at the island," Joyce says. "I can open the French doors and look out on our kitchen garden."



The whole family now can gather in this warmer, better designed space — Joyce is no longer lonely.

"The kids can sit across from me at the island while I'm making their lunches in the morning or doing their homework in the evening," Joyce says. "I have room for everyone now in my kitchen. It's a more comfortable place to be."

There are more friends outside, too: "Six ducks," Joyce says, "16 chickens, five goats, two horses."

It's a great place for the couple's kids, ages 9 and 12, to grow up. And, maybe, a place for their town friends to swap lives with these country kids for a week or two. ■

Molly Guthrey is a reporter and columnist with the Pioneer Press and a frequent contributor to Spaces.



With more than 20 years in the floor covering industry, our team is known for dependability, trust and integrity. Our crew will arrive on time, professionally install the flooring and leave your property clean and ready for move-in day.

At Shaughnessy Flooring, we hold a simple belief:
Deliver Quality Service at Reasonable Prices.

Carpet • Hardwood • Vinyl • Specialty Flooring & more.
And we offer complimentary design service.
Visit our Showroom Locations: Plymouth and Oakdale



14322 21st Ave N, Plymouth
763-450-5300 • www.shaughnessyflooring.com