



■ Arlington judge Bill Newman and his wife, Washington Mystics president Sheila Johnson, enjoy cooking for friends in their Middleburg home. Says the kitchen's designer: "The island is more of a furniture piece, and people gather around it."



Marilyn Dickey is a DC writer and former Washingtonian managing editor. She can be reached through [editorial@washingtontian.com](mailto:editorial@washingtontian.com).

## COUNTRY CHIC

BET cofounder and Washington Mystics president Sheila Johnson and her husband, Arlington County Circuit Court chief judge Bill Newman, do a lot of entertaining at Salamander Farm, their home near Middleburg. When they decided to renovate the kitchen, they contacted Anne Decker of Bethesda's Rill & Decker Architects. Says Johnson: "I wanted my kitchen to be not only beautiful but also functional. Bill and I enjoy cooking our finest meals for close friends."

Decker says her clients "wanted a breakfast area with a strong connection to the outside, so we created a breakfast room with French doors on all three sides that bring light into the heart of the kitchen." (It's visible in the background of both photos.) The kitchen floor is antique limestone, which has a rich patina and matches the paving outside. Because Johnson and Newman wanted the kitchen to blend with the rest of the house, the custom cabinetry—by Potomac Valley Builders, the project's general contractor—was painted to match the woodwork in other rooms.

The kitchen is a little dressy, says Decker, because it's located off the formal dining room: "The island is more of a furniture piece, and people gather around it." The island's countertop is a single piece of Calacatta gold marble, 2½ inches thick. "It was hard to get a slab that thick," says Decker, "so we had to send to Italy." The main countertop is honed granite.

The five-foot-wide La Cornue professional range has a mix of brass and polished nickel with what Decker calls jewellike detailing. Because Newman enjoys cooking, "there's a little prep sink to the left of the main range, so that's his working area." There's also a prep area for caterers.