

# HOME & GARDEN

## SEPTEMBER EDITION

Tuesday & Sunday, September 13 & 18, 2005

SUPPLEMENT TO THE RECORD-EAGLE

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# Kitchen islands can be a home paradise

BY MICHELLE ARNTZ  
Special to the Record-Eagle

Kitchen islands are designed with features tailored to suit the individual needs of the homeowner.

Sara Ann Busby, a certified kitchen designer with 24 years of experience, said that customers today often request that a functional kitchen island be a part of the plan.

"They (islands) generally allow for more people to be involved in the kitchen," Busby said.

With features that might include plumbing and ventilation, Busby feels that a homeowner needs to consult a professional.

"The first step is to hire a certified designer who will understand codes, safety issues and the aesthetics, as well as budget," she said. "They will interview you to determine your needs, design the project, order the materials and supervise the installation."

Working from her Elk Rapids studio overlooking the harbor, Busby brings her clients' perceptions of a dream kitchen to reality. The homeowners' individual "needs, family size and lifestyle" are important considerations.

Features such as sinks, microwaves, warming drawers and refrigerators are just a few of the options available when purchasing an island with the intended use of an extra food prep area, according to Busby.

Some families will use the island as a crafting area, serving island or homework area.

But before you get to the special features, the most important thing to consider is the walkway, Busby said.

Questions such as — What appliance doors open into the walkway? Is the counter top the right size to work on? Can you reach the center? — are very important factors, Busby said.

"We do islands of various heights — 36 inches for prep height, 30 inches for dining and 42 inches for bar height," she said.

Although Busby clientele is primarily upscale, she does work in all price points.

"It is very gratifying when a client that I worked with years ago on their "cottage" has a child or grandchild come in who wants to work on their first home," she said.

Islands are not just designed for the kitchen. Busby has incorporated islands to be functional in walk-in closets or to use with a bench as a dressing table. To ensure personal attention, she prefers to meet clients by appointment.

Leelanau County's Northwood Kitchens has five designers available to customers. Joe Scott, their project manager, likens a

kitchen to the "soul of the home."

He also finds that kitchen islands are in demand.

"Can I have an island?" — I hear that on a daily basis. Small and large families, young and old, married or single — everyone wants an island," said Scott, who has one in his own kitchen.

To help figure out what will work best, Scott meets with customers to discuss what will happen at their island.

"Are their school-aged children doing homework there?" Scott said. "Will it be an eating island or more for meal preparation/cooking?"

According to the National Kitchen and Bath Association, over 50 percent of kitchens are designed to include an island. One might contain pull-out drawers, pull-out wastebaskets and extra storage for pots and pans. Some have wine coolers and bookcases.



Record-Eagle/Greg Undeen

**Above:** A look at one kitchen island at Sara Ann Busby's new Elk Rapids showroom. She says that the homeowners' individual "needs, family size and lifestyle" are important considerations in choosing a kitchen island.

bed built into an open shelf section, under the counter.

For people leasing a property or a homeowner with a limited budget, several companies sell portable kitchen carts that are useful.

One such company, Rowcraft, a New Hampshire home furnishing store, offers solid wood and laminate wood carts on cast-

ers that can be utilized for extra workspace or storage.

As large as 54 inches in length and 36 inches in height, these rolling islands come with towel bars, spice racks, and counter tops that are half butcher block and half stainless steel. With that, everyone can have an island in their kitchen oasis.

For more information, see the following Web sites:

■ Sara Busby at sara@sarabusbydesign.com or call 264-9511

■ Northwood Kitchens at www.northwoodkitchens.com or call 941-1470

■ www.rowcraft.com

**Michelle Arntz is a local freelance writer.**



Special to the Record-Eagle/Michelle Arntz

**Northwood Kitchen's designer Gwynne Hamilton and project manager Joseph Scott. He meets with customers to discuss what they want; she creates a design from talks.**

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