

A home designed for cooking

■ When the Mayers planned their home in Stillwater, they packed it with gadgets to aid their many culinary pursuits.

By JANET ZINK
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KEYSTONE — It's Wednesday afternoon, and the enticing smell of pumpkin bread greets visitors to Kathy and Tom Mayer's house.

Their kitchen sees a lot of action. Whether it's the nightly family dinner, the annual wine-tasting party or a bakefest for the neighborhood holiday cookie exchange, there's always something cooking.

The Mayers knew it would be this way when, in 1999, they built their 9,500-square-foot, Mediterranean-style house in Stillwater, a small community of luxury residences in northwest Hillsborough County. Working with the custom home team at the Fechtel Company, the Mayers designed a kitchen that would easily meet the needs of a family of five. During the process, Mayer spent hours watching Home and Garden TV for inspiration.

She and her husband also drew on their professional experience.

Tom Mayer, now a telecommunications consultant, holds a degree in hotel and restaurant management from the University of Illinois, and Kathy Mayer once managed a cafeteria. They worked together at a hotel in Illinois, he as catering manager, she as assistant catering manager.

Their home kitchen is filled with state-of-the-art appliances and thoughtful details. The kitchen, Kathy Mayer said, is the most important room in the house. It's separated by a breakfast bar from the family room, which provides a view of the heated junior Olympic pool complete with lane dividers and starting blocks. Sixteen-year-old Tammy Mayer is captain of the Sickles High School swim team, which often practices at the Mayers' home.

That means there are often hungry



Times photo — KEN HELLE

Kathy Mayer and her husband, Tom, used their culinary backgrounds to design their kitchen. It has state-of-the-art appliances, including two refrigerators, two ovens and two dishwashers.

athletes waiting for sustenance.

"We have two dishwashers, and they're always full," she said. "And we have two refrigerators, and they're always full."

The side-by-side, cabinet-front Sub-Zero refrigerators are shallow and wide to make them easy to see and access. Two ovens with conventional and convection settings are equipped with two

timers each, so that more than one dish can be timed at once.

The gas stove has six burners, one of which gets extra hot to boil water quickly. A griddle fits over the middle two burners. A steamer is built into the granite counter top to the left of the stove. To the right, a built-in deep fryer drains into a pot located in a cabinet underneath. A faucet over the stove,

called a pot-filler, allows Mayer to fill large pots with water without having to carry them from the sink.

Right behind this extra-long work area is a center island with a butcher block counter top where Mayer can slice and chop without a cutting board. "It was hard to cut on in the first month because it looked so great," Mayer said.

But once she took the leap, she never turned back.

"I just plop everything down on here," she said.

She seasons the surface periodically with oil to keep the block looking good and to keep it from drying out and cracking.

The very latest

With its warming drawer, pot filler, and built-in fryer and steamer, Kathy Mayer's kitchen boasts some of the most up-to-date appliances. But her kitchen was built in 1999. Since then, appliance makers have added even more nifty possibilities. A recent stop at Residential Construction Specialties, a company that supplies appliances to such builders as Pletcher Homes, Hannah-Bartoletta Homes and Alvarez Homes, uncovered some of the latest conveniences.

COOK-TOPS: Wolf's latest entry to the marketplace boasts a completely smooth glass surface because a touch-pad control eliminates knobs. Five heating areas include one that can be set for two sizes of pots and a 12-inch-diameter surface to accommodate large pots and pans. All heating surfaces have a simmer setting, and one has an even lower "melt" setting.

For safety's sake, a universal off switch shuts down all elements at once, a lock child-proofs the unit, and indicators stay lit until surfaces have cooled. The cook-top sells for about \$1,500.

OVENS: The electronic controls on Wolf's 30-inch double oven are



Times photo — KEN HELLE

A pair of Dacor ovens sit side-by-side in the Mayers' kitchen.

hidden behind a stainless steel panel. Push a button and the control rotate into view. Both ovens feature a dual convection system with two fans and four heating elements that operate simultaneously or in sequence depending on which of eight cooking modes you choose.

There are three removable racks and a six-level rack guide. The bottom guide extends onto the oven door. The oven, with a stainless steel exterior and cobalt blue interior, also comes with a baking

stone. It sells for about \$5,000.

REFRIGERATORS/FREEZERS: The Jenn-Air Luxury built-in refrigerator/freezer comes with elevator shelves that can be lowered or raise simply by turning a handle so nothing has to be removed when you want to adjust the shelves. Two drawers have individual temperature controls. The built-in water filter has a light that indicates when the water filter is working, when a new one should be ordered, and when it needs to be replaced.

The freezer also has an adjustable shelf. The unit sells for \$6,998. Sub-Zero's 600 Series is available with a glass door and a subdued interior light that can be set to glow softly with the door shut. Open the door, and the interior light switches to full illumination.

Separate compressors control temperature in the refrigerator and freezer. A stainless steel 600 series refrigerator with glass door sells for about \$4,583. Sub-Zero also makes refrigerator drawers and freezer drawers that can fit under a center island or countertop. A stainless steel refrigerator drawer runs about \$2,900 refrigerator and a stainless steel freezer drawer with an ice-maker goes for about \$3,100.

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A small sink with a disposal in the island is used largely for food preparation, leaving the double-sided stainless steel sink on the other side of the kitchen for dishes.

A warming drawer in the center island holds up to four dinner plates of

food. It can be set to moist or dry heat.

The microwave is close to the refrigerators and low, underneath the counter, so that even 7-year-old Chase can easily heat a meal.

Halogen lights hang over the center island to shed light on this work area.

One corner of the kitchen is devoted to baking, with a cabinet filled with flour, sugar and other necessities,

storage for the food processor and mixer and a drawer for baking tools.

A pull-out trash cabinet holds two cans. Underneath, a vent from the central vacuum system can be kicked open and will inhale any crumbs swept in its general direction.

"It's all practical," Mayer said. "With this house, I really wanted to put in things that I would really use."