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# BACK STORY

“Dirty kitchens” are becoming the modern version of butler’s pantries—and for good reason.

By Nancy Erdmann

**B**utler’s pantries have a long history, originally serving as rooms for cleaning and storing silver. In Europe, butlers were known to sleep in them to keep the silver safe. Later, they were used by caterers to stage events. Today, these secondary kitchens, also known as dirty or back kitchens, not only provide storage and places to prepare food, but also provide a wealth of amenities that make life easier for homeowners, and keep the main kitchen from looking a mess.

“Initially, kitchens were not places for congregation, like the dining and living rooms were,” says architect C.P. Drewett of Drewett Works ([drewettworks.com](http://drewettworks.com)) in Scottsdale. “As we have developed a more casual lifestyle, the kitchen found its way into the primary living space, yet there’s always been a struggle with the visual clutter. The back kitchen conveniently allows for a place to do the dirtier prep work while allowing the forward kitchen to be purely for the show of cooking and serving.”

Landscape architects Kristina Floor and Chris Brown had Scottsdale architect Philip Weddle of Weddle Gilmore ([weddegilmore.com](http://weddegilmore.com)) design a combination pantry and back kitchen in their new Paradise Valley home. “Homes that are modern in character are employing this amenity to be able to keep the primary kitchen clean in terms of clutter, but have the ability to access appliances used on a regular basis,” says Floor. Many dirty kitchens contain second sinks, refrigerators, ovens, dishwashers and coffee centers, and include space for such clumsy-looking appliances as juicers, Crock-Pots and large mixers.

From a design aesthetic, these kitchens are extensions of the main kitchen, often incorporating the same cabinetry, lighting and finishes, notes architect Brent Kendle of Kendle Design Collaborative ([kendledesign.com](http://kendledesign.com)) in Scottsdale. There are often no doors separating them, yet they are situated out of sight of guests.

“Consider how many times you have been at a dinner party and someone inevitably feels compelled to help with the dishes,” says Kendle. “The party and its enjoyable connections are basically over at that moment. But with a dirty kitchen, those dishes are out of sight, out of mind, and if they want to stay dirty until the next morning, so be it. It’s all about enhancing the social experience.”

From top: A Drewett Works back kitchen by interior designer Claire Ownby; Philip Weddle’s solution for the Floor-Brown kitchen.



PHOTOS PHOTO BY WENDEE SECARA, PHILIP WEDDLE PHOTO BY BILL TIMMERMAN