

rise and SHINE

A traditional-style kitchen steps out of its comfort zone with a compelling mix of metals that brings warmth, character, and patina.

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Metallic accents distinguish this traditional kitchen. "Stainless steel is a given in most kitchens, so I added the unlacquered brass to bring a sense of warmth and patina," says interior designer Karen Ferguson. Black walnut butcher block tops a custom cabinet (for baking) attached to the island. The metal doors conceal cookie sheets and nonperishable ingredients.



THIS ATLANTA HOUSE had traditional architecture and furnishings, so when it was time for a kitchen refresh, interior designer Karen Ferguson kept it classic—but with a few twists. “I feel like any traditional space should have a mix of metals as part of the look, especially in the kitchen,” says Ferguson, an award-winning designer with Harrison Design.

To build layers of interest onto the kitchen’s neutral palette, she deftly combined brass, stainless steel, and antiqued mirror surfaces throughout the space, complemented by a silvery glaze applied atop the cabinetry’s warm white paint. Leaded-glass inserts in upper cabinets add an element of surprise.

Stainless steel and unlacquered brass on the custom range hood reappear to highlight a functional—and fashionable—butcher-block-topped cabinet attached to the island. Brass repeats on perimeter cabinetry hardware.

To complement the shine of metals, Ferguson selected walnut for the island and honed black Cardoso quartzite for the perimeter countertops, apron-front sink, and range backsplash. “One of the last things I selected were the island pendants, which have pewter, brass, and antique mirror,” she says. “The lights tie everything together.”

As the metals age, the kitchen will gain a new patina. Stainless steel will mostly stay the same, but unlacquered brass should dull and either turn brown or verdigris—much like pennies are all different, says the designer. “All the materials we used will stand the test of time—and seeing them change is the lovely part that is yet to come,” she says.

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the plan



The existing layout was functional, so interior designer Karen Ferguson kept everything in the L-shape room generally in the same place. The island includes an attached cabinet at one end, dedicated to baking. Two sinks—one in the island and one along the perimeter—add convenience.

TOP: Ferguson chose walnut for the custom island, even adding walnut-and-brass hardware to tie motifs together. “Walnut is a beautiful wood; the natural color is so rich, it really needs no stain,” says the designer. “But since we wanted the island to have a lighter feel, we had the walnut bleached to achieve that warm blond finish.” The countertop is a semiprecious stone called Cristallo Bianco. ABOVE: Ferguson anchored the range wall with a solid backsplash of black quartzite, then framed it in strips of brass. The custom hood of stainless steel and brass will gain a patina over time. OPPOSITE: Metal windows at the sink pick up dark tones used in small doses throughout the kitchen. The seamless look of the quartzite countertop and sink is embellished by the brass towel rack.



DESIGNER INSIGHTS: BRASS FACTS

In the '80s and '90s, lacquered, shiny brass was everywhere, so in the 2000s, people craved variations on this warm metal, says interior designer Karen Ferguson, who used unlacquered brass throughout this Atlanta kitchen.

- **Know the difference.** Unlacquered brass has a duller sheen and will change its color over time, whereas lacquered brass will remain bright and shiny. “I like working with both,” Ferguson says. “It really comes down to deciding which finish best suits your lifestyle and design intent.”
- **Explore its flexibility.** Brass is an excellent material to work with because it’s so malleable, says the designer. “We’ve even done brass countertops, which are stunning—especially mixed with matte black plumbing fixtures,” she says.
- **Investigate the upkeep.** Ferguson recommends a product such as Bar Keepers Friend to care for brass, although several homemade solutions (a paste of lemon juice and baking soda, for one) are easily found online.