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COMFY kitchens

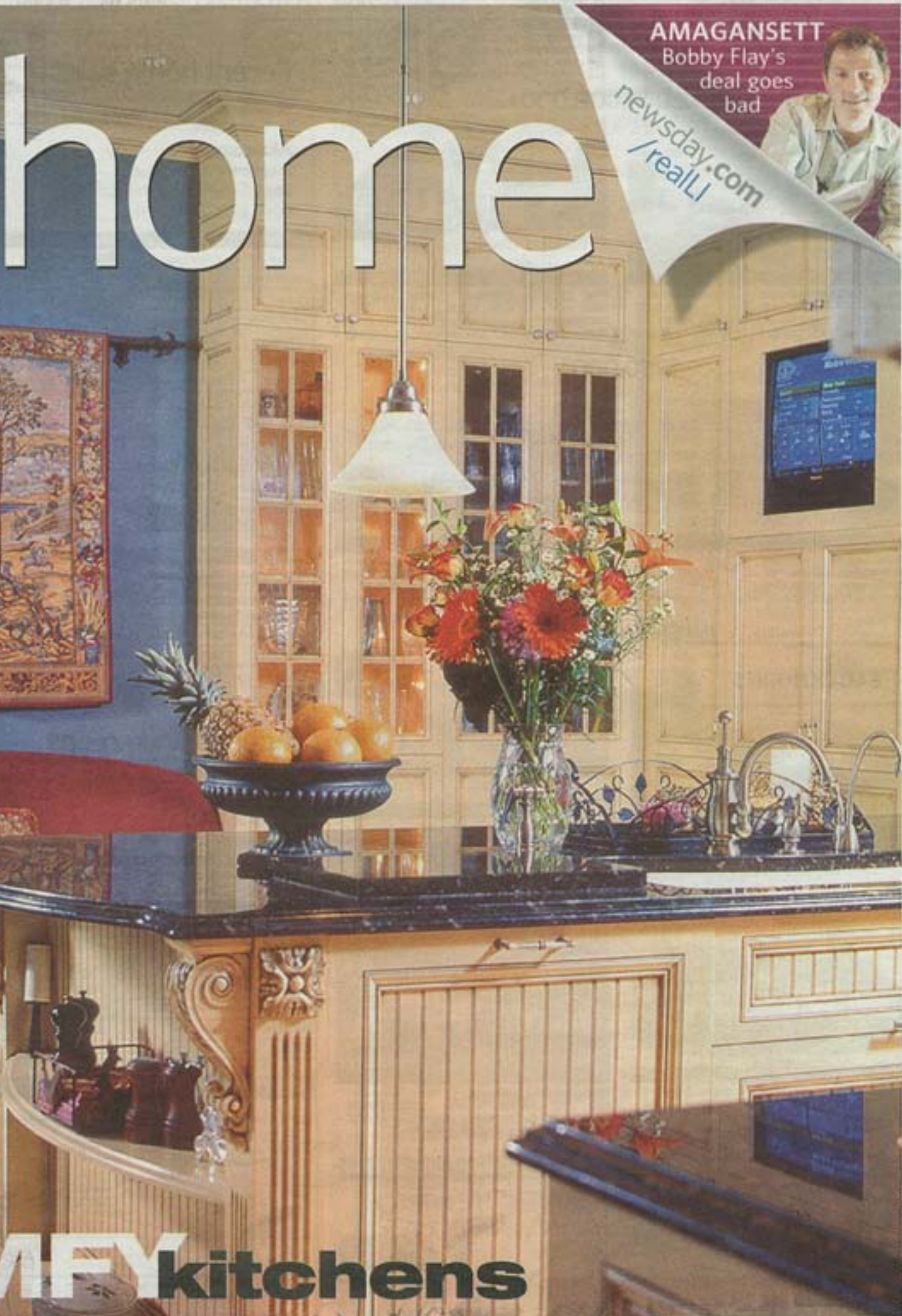


PHOTO BY MICHAEL KOSOWITZ

Tips for creating a comfy kitchen

Without a homeowner's financial constraints, and with no threat of red wine ever dripping onto the upholstery, Patricia Fisher was free to design a stunning space for the Inspired Designs showhouse. But she's happy to dish on how to bring the look home and make it work in the real world — budgets, spills and all.

1 Size it up

"You want to make sure things aren't too large or small," Fisher says. For accurate room planning, she swears by grid paper. "You don't have to be an architect to learn how to use it. Scale it to the exact room size. Then you can actually even cut out, with more grid paper, a table, chairs, a settee or banquette, and set it into the space, and fully count out the boxes to see how large the pieces are."

2 Shop smart

"I used fairly pricey items in this room," says Fisher, whose display included a \$5,000 upholstered settee and two \$5,000 upholstered chairs. But for everyday use, she'd make a few modifications. "It doesn't have to be an expensive piece of furniture," she says. "You can achieve the same look by shopping at Restoration Hardware, Pottery Barn, Williams-Sonoma. The key is to measure first, have a plan and shop carefully."

3 Spill-proof it

"Make sure the colors and fabric are forgiving as far as staining," Fisher says. One trick is to have the seats upholstered with materials designed for outdoor furniture. "There are a lot of wonderful outdoor fabrics that are available today," Fisher says they're nearly stain-proof and are "just beautiful." If you go with indoor fabrics, protect them with a spray such as Scotchgard, she adds.



ON THE COVER: The Roslyn Harbor kitchen of Mercedes Courland has a red sofa and wainscoting that make it inviting.

UPHOLSTER IT

Designer Mercedes Courland of Roslyn Harbor says larger-scale upholstered seating has become almost a must in today's high-end kitchens. "The kitchens are so much more opulent that the furniture has to be upgraded to the caliber of the cabinetry," she says. Courland says after she designed this red sofa for her own kitchen, guests spend so much time in there, she could almost do without the rest of the house. "It's the best thing I ever did," she says. "We couldn't live without it at this point."



GO FOR CUSHIONS

"One thing that's very trendy is putting the banquette into your kitchen," says Centerport interior designer Patti Johnston. "It takes up less room, and it's so cozy, it's hard to get people out of the kitchen," says Johnston, who owns Patti Johnston Designs. If you don't want the permanence of a built-in banquette, a cushioned bench or settee can serve the same function without the commitment. A pedestal table will make it easier to slide in and out than one with four legs. In designer Jbhryn Boyd's Huntington kitchen, shown here, pretty colors make for a soft, serene setting.



CREATE AN AREA

Even in a comfy kitchen, "I think you need a little bit of the stainless and sterility for the function," Fisher says. "There's nothing prettier to me than a stainless refrigerator or dishwasher front. It adds some sparkle, kind of like jewelry." Form and function peacefully coexist in this Water-Mill kitchen, designed by S.R. Gambrel at this new Joe Farrell house. Sleek stainless appliances and cool white cabinets by Ciuffo Cabinetry are warmed up by the cozy seating area.



THROW IN A WING CHAIR

"I really feel strongly that a kitchen should be more than a kitchen. It should be a place where people can be comfortable, gather and be encouraged to stay," Rinfret says. "When my kids are in the kitchen, that's where we get most of the talking done. It's a less intimidating atmosphere." Her own kitchen is designed for serious lounging. "I prefer wing chairs, so people can lean back and throw a leg over the side of it," she says. Rinfret shows how to make a comfy kitchen beautiful in this display she created for the 2007 Hampton Designer Showhouse in Bridgehampton.

More tips from designer Patricia Fisher on how to get the look



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