

THE BEST BROWNIE RECIPES IN THE WORLD

SAVEUR

Savor a World of  Authentic Cuisine

**RASPBERRY
SORBET**

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*Homemade
Ricotta*

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WHY WE LOVE WATERMELON

15 spicy, sweet, savory recipes from around the globe,
plus a guide to the most delicious varieties

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KITCHENWISE

Creativity by Design

Inside SAVEUR's new test kitchen

BY TODD COLEMAN

THE WRITERS AND photographers of this magazine travel to every part of the world to trace the origins of regional foods and culinary traditions, but at its heart, SAVEUR is a publication about what happens at home, in the kitchen—about the deeply gratifying, universal act of cooking. That's why one of our principal missions has always been to develop and test (and retest, and retest) our recipes with the home cook in mind. So, when our editorial staff recently moved its offices to a space on New York City's East 32nd Street, the opportunity to create a new test kitchen from the ground up was tantalizing. The facility, a 926-square-foot work area and dining room that shares an open-plan floor with the editors' offices and workstations, has become the physical and creative hub of the magazine. Just like a home kitchen, ours is a busy, welcoming place where the staff tastes various dishes, compares cooking techniques, and exchanges ideas. "The kitchen is the engine of what we do at the magazine," says SAVEUR's test kitchen director, Hunter Lewis.

That said, we place demands on our space and on our equipment that exceed those of even the busiest home kitchen. For any given issue, Hunter and his staff must test as many as 40 recipes to make sure that the instructions are foolproof and that the dishes come out just right. On a recent workday during the making of the present issue, Hunter shuttled between the kitchen's (continued on page 42)

SAVEUR test kitchen director Hunter Lewis at the stove, sautéing pea shoots and spinach.



1 A broad, steel-topped display counter (equipped with two Sub-Zero wine refrigerators) and two islands accommodate many cooks at once; our stainless-steel appliances, including three ovens, a warming drawer, and two refrigerators, are clustered on the kitchen's rear wall, far enough away from the islands to ensure an efficient flow of movement around the room. **2** The plates and other props we use in photo shoots are the haul from regular visits by food editor Todd Coleman to New York City-area antiques shops and thrift stores. **3** Project director Sergio Mercado (left) and studio director John Henderson, two key members of Clodagh's design team, worked closely with us to arrive at a design that would suit our needs. **4** The kitchen's central islands are fitted with wheels, making them easy to move around for the cooking demonstrations and other functions for which our kitchen is occasionally used. **5** This deeply savory macaroni and cheese, made from a recipe that appeared in our April 2005 issue, is a favorite for staff meals. **6** Steel-fronted drawers keep our most frequently used tools within ready reach. **7** All ten burners and the cast-iron grill on our Wolf cooktops are in constant use on the busiest days, when we test as many as a dozen different recipes.



KITCHENWISE

(continued from page 39) central cooktop island, where he was monitoring a double boiler full of chocolate and butter destined for a batch of brownies, and his desk, situated in an alcove within the main kitchen area, where he was researching sources for the rennet needed for making ricotta. Nearby, assistant kitchen director Ben Mims was toiling over several simmering pots, trying to determine what kind of beer worked the best for cooking bratwurst, while, a few feet away, kitchen assistant Krystal Stone was whisking sake with white miso to make a miso sauce.

During our first magazine close—that hectic period when we’re preparing to ship the issue to the printer—we discovered that our new kitchen could also feel like home. Editors would wander over to the fridge, page proofs in hand, looking for a snack. Late at night, the work islands would become conversation hubs, with some folks hopping up to sit on the counter while they talked and ate. While this dynamic arrangement feels



ANATOMY OF A RECIPE

Cooking is an intuitive and spontaneous process. Recipe testing? Not so much. There’s a practiced methodology we follow, and our new kitchen was designed to support it. Here’s how it works: an author sends us a recipe, and the kitchen staff sets out to find the ingredients, always buying more than double the amount the recipe calls for because we almost always test it a second time; that’s one reason our test kitchen had to have ample cold and dry storage. Before we start cooking, we prep the ingredients, measuring them, weighing them, and placing them around us in the order that they’re called for in the recipe, along with any equipment required. This demands considerable counter space. The point of this *mise-en-place* (shown above), as the process is called, is to create a calm, organized work area; without this prep stage, we’d be too harried to write down all the visual cues, cooking times, and other telling details that are crucial to refining recipes. We also have to be diligent about cleaning up after ourselves as we cook, which is why the huge sinks and garbage cans sit within easy reach of the prep table. When it comes time to taste, the finished dish is set out on the display counter and we take notes on the editors’ feedback. We press them for specifics: Are the flavors well balanced? If not, we make a note to adjust the seasonings. Is it crisp enough? No? Maybe on the next attempt we’ll try a different browning technique. If the recipe is a flop, that’s actually okay; a recipe tester can learn a lot from failures. —Hunter Lewis

completely organic, it hardly happened by accident. Clodagh, the New York-based designer who created our kitchen and dining room, is famous for integrating open kitchens into larger living spaces and for her affinity for natural materials and serene, low-maintenance environments. “I love kitchens and the overlay of art and function,” she says. “I wanted it to feel comfortable, a place where you can cook efficiently but still be creative.” Clodagh’s design is the product of an intensive process in which she and her team helped *SAVEUR*’s staff to articulate its wants and needs.

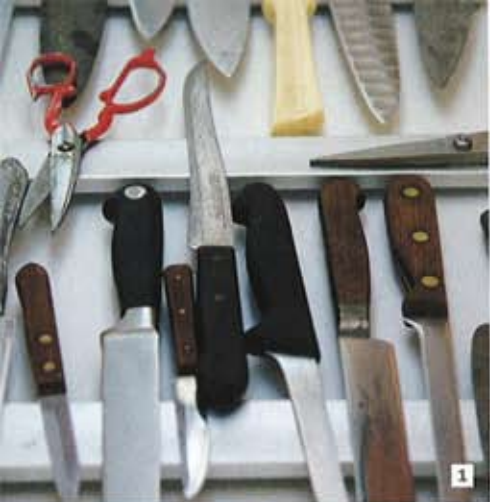
What strikes many first-time visitors to the kitchen that Clodagh came up with is the look and feel of the sensuous, textured surfaces. “We chose stainless steel for durability and ease of maintenance,” the designer explains, “and walnut doors to keep things from coming off as too cold.” She called on artisans with whom she’s worked for years to create the space’s built-in features. In the dining area, Rick Cuneo installed deep cabinets made of honey-colored maple, and Gregory de Laura and Tracey Stakelin of Delform Partners turned out a recessed sideboard and a long, low window bench in polished concrete. It was fascinating to watch them pour ordinary concrete and then, over the course of several days, sculpt and buff it until it had a veneer as smooth to the touch and as richly patterned as marble.

❖ *A recipe for macaroni and cheese and other favorite staff meals at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE113*

A CARDINAL RULE IN THE *SAVEUR* test kitchen has always been that we use only those kinds of utensils and equipment one would find in a typical home kitchen. Because of the volume of food we have to prepare and cook, we opted for the highest-quality, most durable home kitchen appliances to be had. Two large side-by-side refrigerator-freezers and two refrigerator drawers, both by Sub-Zero, along with a Thermador column freezer, offer ample space for the ingredients we use in our dishes, as well as for the items that cooks, farmers, and purveyors from around the world send us for sampling. And, much to the satisfaction of Ben, who handles a lot of the baking, our three Wolf ovens display the exact temperature at all times and maintain extraordinarily even heat distribution. A microwave and a warming drawer, also from Wolf, help us to keep all the elements of a menu at the proper temperature until everything is ready to serve.

My favorite part of the kitchen, hands down, is the pair of eight-foot-eight-inch-by-three-foot islands that command the center of the room. One, topped with deeply grained, cocoa brown walnut, is our main prep table and chopping block. The other comprises two five-burner Wolf electric cooktops and a sturdy cast-iron grill. Each of the units’ bases consists of a grid of cubbyholes where we keep our most frequently used pots and pans. These islands were originally conceived as conjoined units, but in the sort of happy evolution that a genuinely accommodating design makes possible, they may be kept separate so that traffic flows more freely around and between them. In addition to the islands, we have a movable cart, made by Thermador, that holds an electric cooktop and oven; it’s essential for in-house photo shoots, which often require moving the food we’re cooking to wherever the quality of light in the office happens to be the best. Last but not least, two Kohler sinks and two Thermador dishwashers, in operation almost ceaselessly, help us keep the kitchen tidy—a crucial requirement in such a busy place. 🍴

THE PANTRY, page 107: More information on the *SAVEUR* test kitchen.

**1****2****3****4**

1 Wall-mounted magnetic strips hold our collection of knives, which ranges from timeworn antiques to state-of-the-art specialty blades that various staffers have come to rely on during stints in restaurant kitchens. **2** One of the greatest benefits of our office's location is its proximity to the Union Square Greenmarket, where we purchase much of the farm-fresh produce we use, like these spring onions. **3** Kitchen assistant Vienna Bradley works at the deep, wide Kohler sink we reserve for scrubbing the endless parade of pots and pans we run through over the course of a day. A second, smaller sink is used for hand-washing and other tasks. **4** Kitchen director Hunter Lewis cooks at one of the kitchen islands, each of which is equipped with a grid of storage shelves for our everyday pots and pans. **5** To celebrate the completion of our kitchen, we invited two guest cooks, Satya Britten and Mohan, from the New York Hare Krishna Temple, to prepare a festive meal for Clodagh's staff and ours.

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