



Culinary Masterpiece

Beau and Lucy Stark created their dream family retreat on a century-old dude ranch. At its heart? A kitchen designed as the perfect place to sit and take it all in.

By Christine Lejeune

Photographs by Jason McConathy





In the beginning,

it took a little convincing to get Beau Stark to even visit the famous Granby-based C Lazy U Ranch. “My family had been there, and I had been there for work,” his wife Lucy Stark says. “I loved it. But Beau was hung up on the movie *City Slickers*. He was convinced he’d hate it.” She laughs. “In the end, we were there for about 18 hours before he decided we needed to buy a lot there.”

You can’t blame anyone for falling in love with the place: The century-old 8,500-acre luxury dude ranch offers trail systems for horses, hiking and biking, plus easy access to the Colorado River, snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling . . . not to mention a spa, pool and other accommodations befitting a popular vacation destination. The Boulder-based Starks bought their lot—just one of 40 home sites on the ranch—and hired architect Carl Rohde to bring to life their new place, a gorgeous four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bath retreat.

“We love the outdoors,” Lucy Stark says. “We wanted our kids to grow up loving the outdoors, too, riding horses and playing in the dirt and running up the mountain.” The ranch was perfect, she says, and these days, the family spends nearly every weekend there—and almost always brings friends along, too. “We

entertain all the time,” she says. “We’ll have between 10 and 16 people here every weekend.”

Not surprisingly, the kitchen—the heart of most any home—was a priority when it came to design. The Starks worked with Rohde and Winter Park’s Terra Firma builders, as well as Jason McConathy of New Mountain Design (a custom design and cabinetry firm) and interior designer Jennifer Jelinek of Golden-based JJ Interiors to create a kitchen that would be the perfect gathering space—a warm, welcoming centerpiece that would be comfortable for guests, show off the mountain vistas and still function as a smart, working kitchen, because, as Lucy says, “I’m a cook. I’m in there all the time.”

In the end, Stark got her cook’s kitchen—plenty of well-lit workspace; a five-burner induction stove; a custom-designed spice rack set against the oven backsplash with sliding metal doors and LED lighting; slated granite atop the barnwood island—and then some.

“The entire side of the house there faces east to the Indian Peaks, so I knew that I wanted a huge window in the kitchen that opened out to overlook it all,” Stark says. The answer? A NanaWall of folding windows above the sink that open up like an accordion onto the

Warm and woody surfaces blend with the copper sink and unexpected modern light fixture. The palette echoes the ranch landscape.




sprawling deck and outdoor bar seating. “You really feel like you’re outside,” Stark says.

The shape and unusual angles of the kitchen led to other special features, too. The Starks had their heart set on a bar, McConathy recalls, but it wasn’t included in the architectural plans, and there wasn’t an abundance of extra space. So he stole a sliver from the pantry to create a tidy, tucked-in bar with metal, patinaed pocket doors. “I had said at one point about wanting a sort of Murphy bar that could just fold up into the wall,” Stark says, “and Jason took that crazy idea and made it something that actually works, something really useful and beautiful.”

McConathy was also a driving force behind the angled slab of cross-cut cottonwood that sits atop the island, providing a peninsula bar of extra seating. The tree—urban reclaimed wood his firm salvaged from Salt Lake City—took root in 1876, the same year Colorado became a state. “We counted the growth rings, and Beau had the idea to put a marker to show Colorado’s statehood, and one at 1919, the start of the ranch,” McConathy says. “It’s one of my favorite parts of the kitchen.”

Floating above the island is another highlight: the modern, glamorous piece designer Jelinek calls the “porcupine light” and Lucy Stark compares to a sea urchin. “I loved it immediately,” Lucy Stark says. “It was one of the only things my husband and I didn’t agree on. But I won”—she laughs—“and now it’s one of his favorite parts of the room.”

“We were so lucky, really,” Jelinek says, “because he trusted us—they both trusted us. They knew they wanted a kitchen that felt rustic but had some modern elements, and they gave us some flexibility to help steer them in that direction, toward something they’d really love.”

Of course, there’s not much about the kitchen (and the house) that’s not to love, Stark says: The hours outdoors that the place affords, the community, the family time, the chance to relax, and, of course, to cook and entertain and soak up the natural beauty that surrounds them. “Once we get to the ranch, we just never leave,” Stark says. “The whole team working together made a place that’s just pretty fantastic.” 





The Stark family enjoys shifting gears to ranch life, including cooking up a storm with local game.

The Starks' Double Bar 5 Ranch Chili

"My husband hunts for elk at the ranch every year, so we generally end up with a lovely freezer full of elk, which is delish," Lucy Stark says. Here, their go-to crowd-pleaser elk chili recipe.

Double Bar 5 Ranch Chili

Serves 8 to 10

Ingredients

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| 1 lb. ground pork | 2 15-oz. cans of black beans |
| 1 lb. ground beef or elk | 4 dried chiles (New Mexico, guajillo, pasilla, de arbol, ancho) |
| 1 lb. beef or elk steak, cut into one inch cubes | 1 12-oz. bottle of dark Mexican beer |
| 2 red onions, diced | 1/2 c. brewed coffee |
| 1 to 2 jalapenos, diced (to taste) | 1/4 c. brown sugar |
| 10 c. canned tomatoes (either diced or if whole, crushed by hand) | 2 T. ground cumin |
| | 2 T. chili powder |

Place a Dutch oven or large pot over medium heat. Add ground pork and beef. Sauté until browned, then transfer to a bowl. Add diced onion to pot and stir until almost translucent. Add jalapeno, then stir until onion just starts to caramelize. Add cooked ground meat back to the pot and add all of the remaining ingredients. Don't be tempted to brown the steak with the other meat—it can make it tough. Adding the steak at this point (even if completely frozen cubes) will make it tender and delicious. Bring to almost boiling, then let simmer for as long as possible (4 to 12 hours). The longer, the better! Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add cayenne pepper if you need a kick. Serve with a traditional chili fixins: sour cream, shredded cheddar cheese, diced onion, avocado, diced jalapeno, tortillas, corn chips.