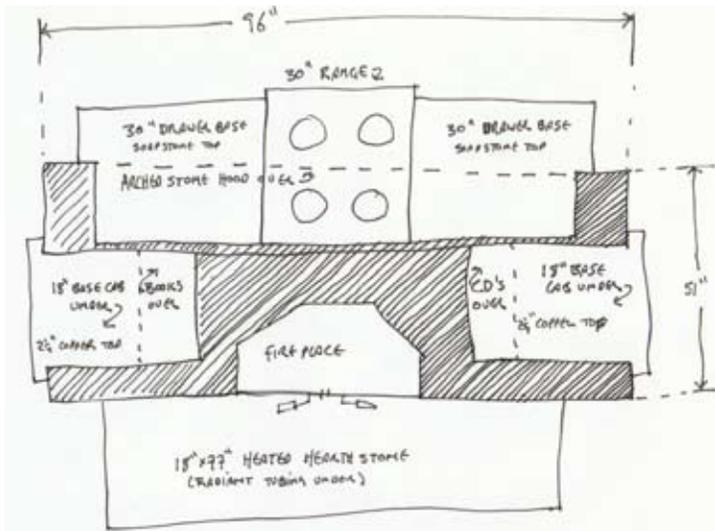


Soapstone Fireplace



Our house is small at 1607 sf and we had a fairly large footprint scheduled for a dry stack stone fireplace with a gas range pushed up against the back of the firebox. However our NC building code was going to require a major fire-break between the masonry firebox and the gas range which threatened to push the range too far out into our already small kitchen. The solution we came up with was to use an energy efficient wood stove in a zero-clearance fireplace configuration manufactured by RMG Opel from Quebec (\$4,300 installed). This opened us to a new way of looking at the footprint of the fireplace. We were able to hollow out the ends to incorporate an 18" base cabinet on each side for pantry storage with copper countertops with a computer center on one side with a bookshelf over it for family organization and a CD and Tape storage area on the other side. So we added 36" of cabinet space to our kitchen and pulled the range to 1 1/2" from the back of the zero clearance fireplace.

The living room side of the fireplace

The hearth has a short length of 1/2" PEX under it connected to the re-circulating hot water system, it's always warm to the touch. Truly an "Ahhh, good to be home" experience when lighting those wood fires on cold winter evenings. Beth laid the stone tiles between the arch and the mantel on the morning of our wedding (while I was hooking up the kitchen sink). The Opel stove features two 8" B Vent" stacks that rise to the black vent visible near the ceiling to pull hot air through the heat exchanger and into the room without fans.



Green Building

construction details

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By cutting the 12" x 12" soapstone tiles into 3" x 12" we were able to preserve the stacked stone look we had been hoping for with a minimum of slab work. We cut all the slabs on site with carbide and diamond blades on carpentry tools so our fabrication costs were very reasonable. The total budget for all the soapstone slabs, including all the arches, two countertops on either side of the range, and the radiant heated hearth stone in front of the fireplace was \$776.80. The 420 sf of 12" x 12" x 1/2" soapstone tile was \$2,499 @ \$5.95/sf from Green Mountain Soapstone (plus shipping). We built the frame for the stove with 2x4's and Hardibacker. The hood has a roof mounted Nutone RF35 200 CFM exhaust fan with halogen puck lights on a dimmer for work lighting. We kept the grout joints to a minimum and used a black un-sanded grout to finish it up. The final cost for everything was approximately \$10,000 including labor, about what we had budgeted for the drystack stone fireplace but with the added benefit of 36" of cabinetry and a more energy efficient firebox in a smaller footprint.



Setting the hangers for the hood

Carpenter Frank Mangieri is shown adjusting the steel hangers we used to hang the hood front while the glue was setting up. We glued the 18 gauge steel clips into saw kerfs and screwed them to the top of the hood armature to hold the weight of the assembly while the tile mastic set up. Soapstone is so easy to work that all the cutting and polishing was done on site using normal carpentry tools. The curves were cut with a diamond dry cutting blade on a worm drive saw. We polished the surfaces with a belt sander and radiused the countertop edges with a carbide router bit. We used a diamond wet saw to cut all the 1/2" tile.



The kitchen side

The 18" cabinet in front of the stool and it's mate on the far side of the fireplace are used for extra kitchen storage. The 2 1/4" thick copper counter top on this side serves as our home computer center with bookcases above for home files and cookbooks. The other counter top and bookcase are dedicated to phone books and CD's. The counter tops on either side of the range are soapstone that has darkened from use. The cabinets and stainless steel pot racks are from Ikea.