



after

have the nerve to GO DARKER

a boost from taupe & beige paint palettes enlivens a couple's kitchen

by joetta moulden • photography by janet lenzen

Before (right): The kitchen was very white, lacked warmth and felt unbalanced by the pecan wood island.

After (above): The right shade of neutral — C2 Paints' #7405 Kalamazoo — warmed the kitchen considerably. Glass-front cabinet doors break up the sea of cabinets, while recessed can lights emit a more pleasing light than the old, harsh florescent light fixtures. The curved counter in the foreground, reinforced by hidden supports, now sports four attractive display niches.

before



April and Joe Gauss first called me to help them with their white kitchen because they were at an impasse. They thought they needed to replace their white ceramic tile flooring and beige tile backsplashes and needed help with their cabinets' color direction.

They also wanted a solution to reinforce the end of the curved cabinet, which their grandkids enjoy climbing to "cook." Joe, an excellent "weekend" carpenter, had refaced the island with beautiful pecan wood and initially considered continuing the lovely wood throughout the rest of the kitchen. Fearing visual overload, April was in favor of painting the existing cabinets — but what color?

"Looking at the granite for inspiration, Joe and I saw dark, bluish-gray and mauve tones in the stone,"

April says. "We love teal green, but vetoed several green paint colors and then vetoed mauve. Gray/blue was Joe's choice, but I was hesitant. It seemed like a lot of that color. In Fort Worth, we had a barn red kitchen and loved it...so we were considering many paint colors, but couldn't find one that seemed perfect with the granite."

During the first visit, the couple's dramatic contemporary art collection throughout the living and dining rooms caught my eye. It was the "star," displayed against neutral walls and furnishings. For continuity, I felt it was important to have the kitchen flow seamlessly into those two nearby rooms and to incorporate more of their artwork in the kitchen.

My initial impression was the floor and backsplash tile were in perfect condition and, color-wise, worked with

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trade secrets

- Why sacrifice valuable counter space with appliances? Add an electrical outlet inside an upper cabinet and create an inexpensive, functional appliance garage.
- Paint is the least expensive way to get the most bang for your buck.
- Decorate your kitchen, too. Cookbooks, plants, baskets, rugs and artwork add both warmth and your personality to this often neglected room.
- Sometimes the most effective strategy is not to replace the cabinets, flooring and backsplashes in your kitchen, but to rethink the surfaces that already are paid for.



Joe removed an old convection oven from this cabinet and transformed it into a practical "appliance garage"—without losing valuable countertop space.

the other downstairs rooms. "It's paid for," I said. "Let's try to make it work and, by doing so, save you thousands of dollars."

I suggested the cabinets and double pantry doors would look less severe if Joe could replicate the same Shaker-style door panel he used on the island by applying 1/4-inch-thick wood rails to the cabinet and pantry doors — less expensive than replacing the door.

I also suggested replacing the dated florescent light fixtures with a lighting plan of recessed can lights that Melissa Melendez, my design intern, could create for their ceiling. Since Joe is such a craftsman, I encouraged him to add matching wood front panels to the refrigerator and dishwasher so they would "disappear."

WHY NOT NEUTRALS?

Knowing that a neutral paint color on the cabinets would harmonize beautifully with the bark of the pine trees just outside the windows, as well as with the granite counters, tile floor and grout, I discussed this concept with April. Since lighting conditions always affect paint, especially at night, Melissa and I selected three colors from C2 Paints' fan deck. April's homework assignment was to buy three 18-by-24-inch C2 Paints samples for \$6 apiece from Definitive Paints (cheaper than buying three quarts of paint), tape them to the cabinets and live with them for a couple of days to see how the colors looked in the morning, at night and on sunny and cloudy days.

"The color issue was truly a 'leap of faith,'" April says. "I was totally shocked when you suggested a neutral tone because I believed it would make

the kitchen look too dark. Joe was convinced he would have to tear out the backsplash because he did not like the granite stripe, and he did not like the tile floor at all. Your simple suggestion was to just add another Kilim runner from Cost Plus World Market to break up the expanse of white tile."

To select the fitting neutral color, we laid the paint swatches directly on top of the granite. Then we held them up and studied them from across the room.

"We did tape the large C2 samples to the doors and live with them," April says. It became apparent one color blended beautifully in all lights: C2 Paints' #7405 Kalamazoo. The color is perfect, and now the granite stripe is far less noticeable, which we like. And the island has become the center of interest."

THE GLAMOUR OF GLASS

My clients are quite resourceful and clever and always add tremendous ideas to their projects. April and Joe were no exception. Midway through the project, they decided they wanted glass-front cabinets in one section of the kitchen to break up the sea of upper cabinets. After seeing the doors off the cabinets, I agreed totally. What a difference the

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before



Before (above): The old refrigerator stuck out physically into the room and looked visually "busy."

After (left): New stainless appliances, recessed can lights, taupe-painted cabinets and bronze hardware calm and simplify the kitchen.

after

glass doors make, reflecting even more light into the room and adding visual warmth as well.

"They add a dimension that is far more interesting than a wall of solid doors. They lighten the space by taking you from the pale walls (Sherwin-Williams' "Vellum" SW #1116) to the taupe cabinets back to

the pale color seen inside the cabinets through the glass. We love the doors," April says.

"As for the lighting, it was great to not have to bring in a lighting expert to develop a lighting plan, since you had Melissa working with you." April says. "We followed her diagram, although the electrician had to shift the


grid over a few inches to accommodate a beam that supports the second story.

"Now the kitchen is so much brighter, without dark spots, and with the sliding dimmer switches, it is great having a choice of either general or task lighting. I think the granite looks warmer, too, with the incandescent, rather than florescent light."

CLEVER CABINERY



The rounded counter's shelves were dated and of little use. Adding two vertical supports and closing in the side with doors to conceal toys and children's books solved the open cabinet's reinforcement — simply and inexpensively.

"The end of the cabinet was curved



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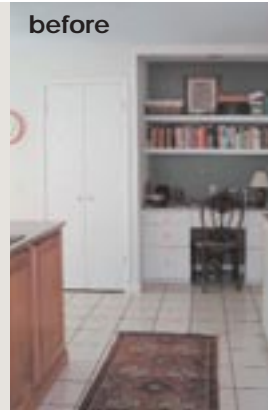




after

Before (right): The pantry doors were plain-Jane, and the desk shelving lacked style and artwork.

After (left): A black Hitchcock chair inherited from Joe's mother, neutral paint, and colorful artwork blend the desk area into the kitchen's new palette. Joe transformed the pantry doors with Shaker wood rails, paint and bronze hardware.



before

fronts. "They were ready to be replaced, and I am surprised at the difference the stainless appliances make and how well they blend with the cabinets' paint color," Joe says. "We are enjoying the kitchen's clean, defined look."

And what do friends and family think of the kitchen makeover? "My favorite comment came from a friend who remembered the totally white kitchen 'before,'" April says. "She said the room looks as though it belongs to the house, as if it should always have looked this way."

For me, it was the ultimate compliment. ■

but had no real support for the weight of the granite from the wall forward," April explains. "It was impossible to remove the shelves and slide in barstools, because the base was surrounded by cut floor tiles." Creating a cabinet on the flat side gave it strength while the supports created four distinct display niches for the couple's impressive collection of artwork. As I always tell my clients, when your room gives you lemons, make lemonade.

With the addition of the Shaker wood trim, the tall pantry doors now look quite custom. "I was worried that I would have to make new pantry doors with flat panels to match the cabinet doors I'd made," says Joe. "You said to just 'fake' them with thin rail and style strips, which I thought would stand out too far from the door frame. However, I am the only one who notices the extra 'reveal.' And fortunately there were no door knobs to deal with, so your idea

worked out just fine."

"I am also glad we worked with the existing tile floor and backsplash, which not only saved money but a lot of mess," April says. "When you decide to take that tear-out step, there are always other new building projects that get included. I'm certain that the curved counter would have been remodeled," Joe adds.

The couple chose to replace their appliances with stainless ones, rather than add panels to their

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