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The dishwasher and trash compactor show off new black panels provided by the manufacturer, which saved the homeowners from replacing appliances that still worked. They did opt to replace the white-bodded vent with a black glass microwave and charcoal glass cooktop. The cabinets were painted a deep charcoal. All of these changes helped create consistency in look.



The appliances were a real mix in this kitchen: almond-colored trash compactor and dishwasher, a coppery brown cooktop, the ovens were black glass, and the cooktop top was white as was the vent. The homeowners also wanted to make the island more functional—a place for casual dining.



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# kitchen facelift

2

a 24-year-old townhouse gets a modern, consistent look

by joetta mouldeu  
photography by janet lenzen

Running a home makeover business allows me the pleasure of solving real-life problems for families—working with their existing possessions—without spending a lot of money on unnecessary things.

So it was great fun to hear from family friends Vaughn and Warren Chancellor, who were moving to Houston from San Antonio, and who requested guidance to make the tired kitchen in their 1978 townhouse look younger and more in keeping with their lifestyle.

“We had never lived in an older house that needed work, and, boy,

did this one need a redo,” Vaughn explains. “Having moved from a new home we designed, we found ourselves with a kitchen that could only be described as ‘early tacky.’ It was visually cold—poorly illuminated by an unattractive fluorescent fixture with linoleum floors, stained stock cabinetry and a dysfunctional sliding glass door,” she says. “There was a total absence of detailing that I desired, like trim around the doors and windows, crown molding and plantation shutters,” Vaughn says.

“The door leading to the carport was solid, which provided no light or visibility,” Warren adds.

“The island was of little use (the oven door wouldn’t open all the way without hitting it), and there was no place to sit. The door to the living room swung into the sliding glass door in the kitchen. Additionally, the room had ugly wallpaper, a tired stainless sink, cheap laminate countertops and a pull-down shade on the kitchen window,” he says.

Vaughn and Warren knew they wanted to modernize the room and create a warm, social center for friends and family to gather. They wanted the room to have the same elegant, black tie look that their adjoining dining and living rooms presented. On their wish



*A new black sink and faucet were added to complement the kitchen's new décor. Joetta also suggested that they extend the new height of the tile backsplash to 31 inches.*

list, they wanted to incorporate their black refrigerator, add a new wood floor, replace the sliding door with sparkling glass blocks and add a new glass door to the carport. Additionally, they wanted the island to function for casual dining for two, replace the countertops and backsplashes and replace the stainless sink with a porcelain one. They wanted custom shutters in both the sink and door windows to be installed by Just Window Shopping.

I am a real stickler for consistency—appliance colors, as well as door and cabinet hardware—need to match. So when I first visited the kitchen, the appliances were a real mix: the outdated electric cooktop was coppery brown; the dishwasher and trash compactor were almond; the ovens were black glass. The vent over the cooktop was white.

“We had mentally budgeted to buy a new dishwasher because it was the wrong color,” Warren explains, “but to our amazement, Joetta explained that the manufacturer provides several colors of door panels behind the metal trim kit on the dishwasher door.

I changed the black door panel in a few minutes with a screwdriver!

“Joetta also pointed out that since the double ovens and dishwasher were already paid for, that we could replace the appliances eventually with newer models, as they ‘died’ from old age. We saved enough right there to buy the wine chiller that I really wanted,” Warren says with a smile.

That left only the white hood as a visual problem. The couple opted to install a black glass microwave oven with vent over a new charcoal glass cooktop, thus making all the appliances black—and consistent.

To keep the dark appliances from jumping out visually from the cabinets, I suggested they paint the cabinets a deep charcoal—softer than harsh black, but dark enough to blend the black appliances into the kitchen seamlessly. Additionally, wood trim was specified for the top and base of the upper cabinets. A new black porcelain sink and black faucet set were selected to further dress up the kitchen to their liking. With new, brushed pewter hardware repositioned neatly into the corner of each cabinet door, the kitchen

plan began to take on a cohesive, upscale direction.

Next Vaughn and I went shopping for ceramic tile. We found a discontinued closeout sale of smooth-textured, neutral eight-inch tiles in warm beige with pink undertones, but there was not enough in stock to use on the backsplashes. So we switched to a coordinating six-inch stone-colored textured ceramic tile for both the island and backsplashes. For design interest, I suggested installing the smaller tiles diagonally, and grouting them in dark taupe, which adds style as well as function: since grout discolors with age, why not use darker grout to begin with?

For a newer look, I suggested they extend the height of the backsplash on each side of the sink window to 31 inches instead of stopping the tile just at the height of the upper cabinets. We chose another, less expensive bullnose edging to trim the tile throughout, one that did not actually match either tile, but that blended perfectly. (The bullnose that "matched" the stone-textured diagonal tile cost three times that of the one we opted to use.)

Because the cabinets were going to be a dark charcoal, a new wood floor was chosen in a light, whitewashed stain, to keep the room from feeling heavy and to keep it looking young and fresh.

I showed the couple a photo of an island that had one end opened up for barstool seating, featuring sexy, turned wooden legs. They loved it, and the old island was demolished and a new, slimmer one constructed. Now the oven doors open fully and they can sit at the counter with legroom to spare!

The sliding glass door was replaced with glass block, a glass door was added to replace the hollow-core carport door. For consistency, the walls were painted

the same taupe as the living and dining rooms. By adding more window light to the kitchen, replacing the fluorescent light fixture with recessed can lights, and adding undercounter lighting (hidden behind the new wood trim) cooking is a joy in this kitchen.

One significant change was quite inexpensive. "Joetta suggested sawing the existing paneled kitchen door in half vertically, and hinging the doors so that they stacked flat against the living room walls," Warren explains. "This not only allows twice as much light into the kitchen, (because the single large door does not block half of the glass block wall when opened), but the new doors isolate the kitchen from the formal dining area in a more attractive, functional way. We feel that all of the changes added value in excess of our actual expenditure," Warren says, "and feel the style put into our kitchen 'redo' greatly enhanced the value of our home."

*Joetta Moulden offers home makeovers using your own home furnishings. Joetta has opened a new shop that sells home accessories on her Web site. Visit the shop at [www.shelterstyle.com](http://www.shelterstyle.com), e-mail her at [joetta@shelterstyle.com](mailto:joetta@shelterstyle.com), or call 713.461.2063.*



## trade secrets

### THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOUR KITCHEN RENOVATION BEGINS

- Think outside the box when choosing kitchen surfaces. A rough-textured ceramic tile backsplash can mimic unhoneed, natural stone and cost far less.
- Do add crown molding to the ceiling and wood trim around Sheetrock windows, to increase your property value.
- Mix up textures in a kitchen for design interest: try smooth countertops with textured backsplashes, smooth-painted cabinets with brushed pewter hardware; add earthy, textured accessories.
- Consider painting existing cabinetry instead of replacing it.
- Just because your island is solid cabinetry now doesn't mean it cannot be opened up by adding turned legs, and used for seating.

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*The homeowners had a new, slimmer island built so that one end of it opened up for barstool seating. Tile with dark grout was used on top of the island. A sliding door was replaced with glass blocks.*