

DIY DECORATING



AFTER

# KITCHEN TRANSITION

Former schoolteacher Sue and husband Wayne first called me because their 1970s kitchen was not working for them anymore. The kitchen was boring — all white without any contrast. A dated “Sputnik” light fixture accented heavy texture on the ceiling, and scalloped wood trim hovered over an awkward divided sink that Sue just hated. The cook top was old, and the white refrigerator stuck way out into the room, gobbling valuable square footage.

A BIT OF  
CONTRAST AND  
ACCESSIBLE  
NEW  
APPLIANCES  
UPDATE A '70s  
KITCHEN

BY JOETTA MOULDEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
JANET LENZEN

**AFTER:** (Top of page)  
Widening the doorway was inexpensive and made a vast improvement in both looks and functionality. The new tile floor is accented with a dining room area rug from Lowe's.

**BEFORE:** (Left)  
A narrow doorway hid the potential in this dated '70s kitchen, making it impossible to fully open the freezer door.



BEFORE

**PUSH COMES TO SHOVE**

It's those little daily annoyances that add up and push us toward a remodel. The biggest hassle in Sue's kitchen was the small door leading to the dining room.

"We could not open the pantry or freezer doors completely, and some days it drove me nuts," Sue says.

It was so bad that sometimes they had to pull the refrigerator out from the wall in order to open the freezer door fully. The couple also had acquired a Lab puppy and wanted to remove the carpet from the adjoining living room and consider different flooring.

**RESURFACE & REPLACE**

During the first meeting, my intern, Jennifer Guerra, and I listened carefully to Sue and Wayne's concerns, reassuring them the bones of the kitchen were great and that they did not need to replace their cabinets. Rather, they just needed to resurface the countertops and replace their dated appliances. We discussed buying a counter-depth refrigerator and recessing



**BEFORE: (Left)**

*Because all-white kitchens offer no contrast, they can be boring. Adding accessories to break up the whiteness can add visual confusion.*

**AFTER: (Right)** *New appliances, granite countertops, tile and simplification of accessories make this kitchen a standout. The Sharp television hangs from a bracket hidden in the cabinet and swivels to serve both the breakfast room and kitchen.*



**BEFORE: (Left)** *A wicker chaise seemed out of place in the breakfast room.*

**AFTER: (Right)** *The refreshed breakfast room features a new table and chairs with Thomas O'Brien slipcovers from Target and monogrammed by All Sew Embroidery.*





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## DIY DECORATING



A recessed can light, new shutters from ASAP Blinds, Elkay undermount single-bowl sink and Price Pfister faucet from The Home Depot give the kitchen a face-lift. Amerock hardware is from Lowe's.

## TRADE SECRETS

- To eliminate costly mistakes, hire an objective professional to help you stay within your budget.
- Make a list of the things in your kitchen that most irritate you on a daily basis and correct them.
- Some 24-inch existing wall ovens can be replaced with 27-inch models, but check with your carpenter before buying to make sure your opening can be widened and lengthened to accommodate them.
- Sometimes the most effective strategy is to not gut your kitchen, but to rethink the cabinets that already are paid for.

ovens in the size we needed, 27 inches, were surprisingly expensive and cost more than the counter-depth refrigerator.”

TIP: Gathering prices and specification sheets on appliances are the first steps in establishing a budget for any kitchen remodel.

## FURDOWN VS. STORAGE

They were happy to find Bob Laurin and Don Adam from Southkey Remodeling in Clear Lake to transform their kitchen. The concept of building in the refrigerator without a furdawn above it was a difficult one to grasp, but after I e-mailed a couple of photos, Sue and Wayne could visualize the change.

Storage always was a problem since they like things put away. They were happily surprised to gain additional storage space with spacious, new cabinets added above the stainless refrigerator, which appealed to Sue's sense of order and her desire for clutter-free living.

TIP: A counter-depth refrigerator is narrower and taller, which often means the cabinet and furdawn above it needs to be reconfigured. Bringing the cabinet forward, flush with the refrigerator, not only looks modern and built-in, but improves functionality, too.

## OPEN SESAME

The most dramatic change came with widening the doorway to the dining room. Although it is a load-

bearing wall, there still is plenty of vertical support, and this inexpensive change gave them a tremendous bang for their buck.

“I knew that granite countertops and stainless appliances were going to look great, but widening the doorway and replacing the old tile and carpet with the new larger tiles were just spectacular additions,” Sue says with a smile.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

Another big change was in the lighting. “The recessed lighting plan and under-cabinet lighting that Jennifer drew for us eased our worries about what would replace that outdated ceiling fixture,” Sue explains. “After the lighting was installed, we realized we had been living in the dark and didn't even know it!”

## HAPPY FAMILY

Sue and Wayne describe themselves as low-key people who enjoy family, grandchildren, friends and their “very rambunctious” dog. And all seemed pleased with the makeover.

“I loved working with you because you are so accepting of what we have and how we live,” Sue says with a smile. “You have a way of saying, ‘This is great and we can work with this.’”

“I am a very visual person, so I loved the photos you e-mailed,” she adds. “You reinforced our belief that we did not need new cabinets, but could spend money on resurfacing and appliances instead, which saved us from making costly mistakes.”

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it into a custom cabinet and white vs. stainless appliances. After much research, the couple decided on stainless appliances from Proven Products.

TIP: Since the best kitchens offer contrast between the flooring, countertop, backsplash, cabinets and walls, I suggested they keep their existing white cabinets, add crown molding, resurface the counters in a dark color and choose a backsplash in a contrasting neutral shade.

Sue wanted granite and had fallen in love with “Tropical Brown” (installed by Stone & Wood Concepts in El Lago), and after looking at the sample with their cabinets, I suggested they install a diagonal layout design of a medium-tone tumbled marble or a neutral stone-like rough tile backsplash that would be darker than the cabinets and lighter than the chocolate granite. It also worked with the wall color, “Toasted Almond” by Olympic Paint and available at Lowe's.

TIP: Neutral tones are best for expensive kitchen surfaces like granite and add tremendously to the resale value of your home. A shiny surface like granite is definitely complemented by a matte backsplash. Save splashes of color for accessories, fresh produce and flowers.

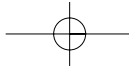
## SHOPPING LIST

Like anything else, the more prepared you are, the better the outcome. During the first meeting, I gave them some homework assignments on the spot: First, go “window shopping” for appliances to see what's in the marketplace and second, decide whether to go with white or stainless models, both of which would work.

For continuity, I suggested they repeat the breakfast room shutters in the kitchen window. The already-paid-for kitchen floor tile flowed seamlessly into the adjoining utility, dining, and living areas, but could be punctuated by coordinating, room-defining area rugs. Matching tile also would make the spaces feel larger.

After discussing it, Sue and Wayne decided they really wanted larger, darker tiles, which they found at Master Tile. “It seemed really extravagant since there was nothing ‘wrong’ with the old floor, but in the end, it was exactly what we needed to do,” Sue says.

The couple budgeted \$20,000 for the kitchen remodel, and they stayed right on track, with about half of their budget going to new appliances. “Appliances cost so much more than they did when we last bought them,” Sue explains. “The double



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