

MAKING IT WORK

A designer navigates around fixed installations in a townhouse to create a dream kitchen

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROGER BROOKS
STYLING: PATRICIA GRAY AND ALBAROSA SIMONETTI

THE OWNERS OF THIS TOWNHOUSE along the sea wall near the Cambie Bridge decided it was time for a new kitchen, something that would be less cramped than the one they'd been living with. That was the idea, a notion, really. The details were not included.

They turned to interior designer Patricia Gray to breathe life into the idea. Together, the broad strokes, right down to the fine details for a larger, open-concept kitchen with clean lines and accent lighting transformed not only the look of the space, but the feel of it, too.

"They wanted a new kitchen because their kitchen was very tiny and enclosed. They wanted it somehow opened up," Gray says.

So the designer began by examining the bones of what was there. **EF**



DESIGN

This tall chocolate-brown corner unit houses dishes on pull-out shelving. Beside it, a Miele plumbed coffee machine was equipped with a cup-warming drawer. The door above it flips up to give access to the microwave oven.

Renovating a concrete townhouse comes with certain constraints, she explains. The plumbing was fixed; it could not be moved. The wiring for the electricity presented additional limitations. Could walls be removed?

"You have to see how much you can push those parameters," Gray says.

Working with a contractor, she measured and juggled the options, attempting to determine how a new kitchen was going to work.

One wall was removed; another came down, except for one section where electrical wires issued through the floor. That part of the wall stayed and was transformed into the end of a new island that redefined the space.

The stainless steel side-by-side freezer/fridge that the owners wanted to keep was given a new home with a built-in look. It now sits inside a former cabinet space that was reframed.



And a focal point was created – an entire wall of travertine tiles with taupe and grey highlights. It attracts attention immediately.

Not to distract from the focal wall, Gray installed a single floating stainless steel shelf above the sink to showcase the homeowners' collection of antique Japanese porcelain. All overhead cabinetry was eliminated, but she ensured there would be plenty of storage space, including a slide-out pantry. 137

Stainless steel dividers keep order in the island's top drawer. The drawer fronts extend to be flush with the side of the island, which includes part of a former wall that could not be completely removed due to electrical connections.

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The focal wall, tiled in travertine, has a floating stainless steel shelf. The countertops are Caesarstone quartz. The heated floor is clad in porcelain tile. A two-drawer Fisher & Paykel dishwasher is built into the cabinets to the left of the sink.



The recessed lights, including those in the range hood, are on separate dimmer switches to create various moods.

New lighting was installed throughout the space – recessed in the ceiling, on the underside of the stainless steel shelf on the main wall, in a corner nook, and on the range hood over the island. All the lights are controlled by individual dimmer switches to provide for various settings and combinations depending on need and, as Gray explains, “to set the mood.”

The new kitchen showcases how beauty and function can dovetail, Gray says. The space was extended only slightly – about a foot – to allow for the stools to be added to the island – but the openness gives it a much more impressive footprint. »

AN ENTERTAINING VIEW

A Coal Harbour penthouse gets a new kitchen that is open to sweeping vistas

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROGER BROOKS

VISITORS WHO WALK INTO the kitchen of this high-rise sub-penthouse condo in Vancouver's Coal Harbour district, find that their attention is immediately drawn to the wall. Then, they turn their heads to take in the view. But their gaze inevitably returns to the wall, a 14-foot expanse clad in white Statuario marble.

Art sometimes has that effect.

Interior designer Patricia Gray, who designed the space, calls it her signature: a focal wall. "Because this is a major focal wall, I didn't want upper cabinets," Gray says. "We opted instead to do this beautiful slab of marble, like a big piece of art."

Gray redesigned the entire interior of this downtown condo, turning the three-bedroom unit into an open-concept two-bedroom suite. The two new bedrooms are larger; the third one was transformed into a walk-in closet for the master.

But the real transformation took place in the kitchen. ☞



A former enclosed balcony is now an eat-in kitchen nook; it boasts a fabulous view.

There, Gray removed a wall that had enclosed the small galley kitchen, opening the space to the living room and extending the size of the condo by incorporating an enclosed balcony into the living space; it created an eat-in nook as part of the new kitchen. The balcony had been unusable space before. Enclosed behind a patio door, it was too hot to use during the summer and too cold in the winter. Now, it is a beautiful and functional part of the expanded floor space.

The end result is what Gray calls an inviting chef's kitchen. "It's beautiful and functional at the same time," she says.

The owners have a large extended family and love to cook, bake and entertain. They are thrilled with the result.

"It's stunning," says Gray. "Kitchens are the most expensive room to renovate or build in a home, so it's important to get it right."

Gray says the homeowners wanted to upgrade and maximize the space in this 30-year-old condo. She studied the space to determine the orientation of the views and the way the light entered the rooms at various times of the day, as well as how the living spaces would relate to each other.

After that, she did what she calls "the homework," by putting the specifications into a computer to produce renderings, ensuring the concept would work. "Our goal is to plan everything out before we start – construction documents, materials, colours, furnishings, lighting, artwork – because everything is priced before we start construction," she says.

On the focal wall, Gray installed a floating stainless steel shelf with recessed lights that shine down, and a strip of LED lights that shine upward, creating a beautiful soft mood for the evenings. The shelf harmonizes with the look of the stainless steel range hood, and echoes the pulls on the built-in ovens and cabinets.

"It's those little details; it's like having a custom-made suit," Gray says.

Now, the owners can entertain. And when they are not, they can look out from their kitchen nook at their view of English Bay with the mountains in the distance. ▶



A white-oak floor in a herringbone pattern grounds the space. Induction stovetop, panelled refrigerator, oven and warming drawer: Miele.

