

WIDE OPEN SPACES

By JULIE CATALANO | Photography by JENNIFER SIU-RIVERA

One look at this fabulous San Antonio redo and it's clear that a true kitchen remodel is more than just new appliances and a coat of paint. Taking a kitchen from so-so to spectacular may be one of the biggest investments for a homeowner — but the results are worth it.

“The home was built in the late 1980s, with a half-wall dividing the family room and the kitchen,” says Julie Bradshaw, ASID, RID, owner of Bradshaw Designs in San Antonio. “They were looking for something more open.”

The room was in desperate need of improved traffic flow, adds designer Crystal Romero, RID, who describes the former layout as “awkward. There was a hallway in between the kitchen and family room, a wasted space.”

Craig Scott, president of CROSS, a construction company in San Antonio, explains the process, “We ‘grew’ the kitchen by removing the wall on the right side, pushed back the interior kitchen wall four feet to absorb the hallway, and then recreated the opening into the dining room which really made the project.”

The transformation was stunning. “It brought the traffic flow through the dining room into the kitchen. Most people are scared to remove a load-bearing wall, and those are the most dramatic projects, but if you spend a little more, you are completely redesigning the space instead of just updating it,” says Scott.

Taking out a wall presented a storage challenge. “We had to make sure the homeowners were okay without all of the cabinets that could be there if we didn't have an opening instead of a wall,” says Romero. The “super-organized” homeowner, she adds, “doesn't keep a lot of dry goods, so a huge walk-in pantry wasn't necessary.” A small pantry with a U-Line undercounter beverage refrigerator was sufficient.

The designers also opted to extend the cabinets all the way to the top of the 11-foot ceilings. “We thought long and hard about that,” says Romero, “but in the end we thought, why not? Bigger is better, and it really adds to the drama of the space.” The soaring cabinetry makes use of every inch of wall space — elimi-



nating that two feet or so of “air” between cabinets and ceiling — and are topped off with beautiful crown molding.

A striking custom-made island became the focal point of the new space — a vast improvement over a peninsula that had a tendency to trap people in the room. Drawers provide storage there as well as underneath the counters on the perimeter.

“We are very efficient in our kitchen designs by including a lot of drawer space whenever possible,” says Bradshaw. “Food and dishes come out to you; you don't have to get down on your hands and knees to dig around to find things.” A combination of 7-, 9- and 12-inch pulls in satin nickel finish were used on the drawers and cabinets.

Large and low walnut-stained barstools, with leather seats and nailhead trim by Hickory Chair Furniture Company, provide comfortable seating. Open lanterns over the island are from Hudson Valley Lighting in polished nickel with a black iron frame, “which are nice in a kitchen because there is no glass to clean,” says Bradshaw.

Taj Mahal Quartzite countertops, fabricated by Delta Granite & Marble, Inc., of San Antonio, are used throughout, with the island top having a double-thickness laminated mitered edge. Muted colors of cream, white and a touch of green make up the natural stone countertops. “The paint colors were derived from that,” says Romero. “True white wouldn't have worked in here.”

The kitchen was completely rewired “to accommodate today's standards,” says Scott. “Obviously, electrical needs are far greater than what was required even in the production homes of the 80s, what with recessed lighting, task lighting, appliances, trash compacter, disposal, and in some cases, more than one dishwasher.” Plumbing was moved to accommodate the new location of the sink.

The wide plank oak flooring was a “direct glue-down onto the slab on the job site, stained and varnished in place.” Older baseboards were replaced with taller, custom versions for a more contemporary look. In keeping with the light and airy theme, two windows that overlooked the pool became one large custom picture window by Marvin Windows.

Luxurious kitchen redos “can change the way you live,” says Scott. Instead of a room to visit occasionally, “it becomes an entertainment and gathering center because of its beauty, spaciousness and good flow. We see it all the time with clients. The kitchen becomes the place to be.” ❖



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