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KITCHEN ISSUE

CONTEMPORARY RUMSON MASTERPIECE
CAPE MAY DESIGNER SHOW HOUSE

Shape Shifting

THE RECONFIGURATION OF A SOUTH ORANGE KITCHEN MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE



WRITTEN BY MARIROSE KRALL
PHOTOS BY ANNA HERBST
DESIGN BY JULIE CHINA
ARCHITECTURE BY DARREN CHINA

CEILING | The industrial light fixtures above the dining table required rods of two lengths to accommodate the sloped ceiling and skylight.

WINDOWS | The project included adding windows in the space that used to be the butler's pantry. As a result, the new kitchen is much brighter and the homeowners can enjoy a beautiful view from the sink.



BEFORE

The multipaned door in the far wall was the entrance to the former butler's pantry. This project involved removing the pantry and expanding the kitchen space to the exterior wall.

The Unsworth kitchen was in need of an overhaul. The awkward, L-shaped space was the result of an earlier addition to the home, and it was not conducive to family activities or entertaining. “We inherited this lovely, large space, but it just wasn’t working for our needs,” homeowner Sally Unsworth says. “We needed to be able to congregate and have dinner prep all within the same general area.” To achieve that goal, a reworking of the space was in order, says architect Darren China of Idea Space Architecture + Design in Maplewood. “It involved gutting the entire kitchen and reorganizing.”

The revamp included removing a butler's pantry and relocating a small powder room and pantry closet to the short leg of the L. The larger main space benefits from the addition of new windows, which add much-needed light. The new sink, positioned under the windows, has been a game-changer for Unsworth. “You can wash dishes and look out at the backyard and enjoy the peacefulness,” she says. Designer Julie China, Darren's wife and a partner at Idea Space Architecture + Design, adds that the windows' effect on the room has been dramatic. “There's so much more light now. That move was really impactful.”

The new kitchen's décor has an up-to-the-minute appeal while remaining faithful to the home's pedigree. “We live in a Victorian, so we had to work with being in an old house,” Unsworth says, “yet we wanted it to be modern.” Julie China notes that her clients “have a modern vibe, something we're seeing a lot of in our community because so many people are moving here from the city.” Because the area's architecture includes a lot of older homes, the designer is well versed in combining

contemporary and vintage elements in a home.

The homeowner describes this space as “transitional modern”; Darren China calls it “industrial-meets-farmhouse.” The farmhouse sink and Shaker-style cabinets may be traditional touches, but they’re sleek enough to work well with the industrial light fixtures over the island and dining table. “We do very well marrying those styles together,” Julie China says.

A major design feature is a wall of tile behind the perimeter cabinetry. It has an “earthiness that provides a contrast to the lighter tones of the wall and the cabinet colors,” the designer says. That tile is a nod to Unsworth’s childhood home. Her mother, a ceramic artist, actually made the tile that was used in the kitchen while Unsworth was growing up. The homeowner wanted to be “mindful of the warmth of our old childhood kitchen” while creating a new one.

This kitchen was designed, in part, to accommodate Unsworth’s own children. The rubbed-bronze cabinet hardware was chosen because “with two little kids, we knew we didn’t want stainless steel pulls. Fingers are on everything.” The porcelain floor tile is also practical. It’s stain-resistant and sturdy, major benefits for a busy, dog-owning family.

Though this project involved tearing down walls and bringing in some modern elements, “we were able to respect the existing architecture and the home’s character and reimagine it,” Julie China says. Unsworth notes that the new space meets her family’s needs perfectly. “It’s been fantastic. I think this kitchen has the entertainment ‘wow’ factor.” **DNJ**

SOURCES: design by Julie China and architecture by Darren China, both of Idea Space Architecture + Design in Maplewood; contractor, Leeor Zorel of The Zorel Group in South Orange; wall color, “Decorator’s White” by Benjamin Moore; cabinet hardware, Restoration Hardware; quartz perimeter countertops, Caesarstone; pendants over island, Visual Comfort; light fixtures over table, Lambert et Fils in Montreal, Quebec, Canada; handmade ceramic backsplash tile, McIntyre Tile in Healdsburg, California; sink, Blanco America Inc. in Lumberton; faucet, Brizo in Indianapolis; range, Sub-Zero and Wolf.

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