



Elements OF STYLE

By Jennifer Sergent

A few years ago it seemed like every renovated kitchen had the same granite countertops, the same recessed lights, the same wood cabinetry. But designers say that's changing as homeowners in the Bethesda area look to inject more personality into their kitchens.

Whether it's through dramatic open shelving, colorful backsplashes or whimsical breakfast nooks, homeowners are looking for ways to make their kitchens feel one-of-a-kind. Here are nine ways local residents have made their kitchens shine.



Anne and Robert Hawkins with son Jonas, 5, and daughter Sedona, 7, in their Chevy Chase kitchen.

Mix and Match

Anne and Robert Hawkins were going for an Italian bistro look in the kitchen of their new house in Chevy Chase. "I wanted something that really stood the test of time," Anne says.

The Hawkins worked with Doug Roberts of Bethesda's GTM Architects and designer Shell Azar, a childhood friend of Anne's who runs SAS Design Studios in New York. Industrial and metallic accents mingle with crown molding and a grooved-wood ceiling. Storage comes in the form of traditional white cabinets, glass-front cabinets and open shelves. Creamy white marble contrasts with honed black granite. "It's a traditional look with modern features," Roberts says.

Anne Hawkins carefully chose the glassware and plates for the glass-front cabinets, and the sculptural white pitchers for the open shelving. Along with metal chairs and pendant lighting, the kitchen achieves "a nice balance of clean elegance and industrial chic," Azar says. Hawkins especially loves the marble-topped island, which shows the signs of its use in the manner of a well-loved bistro. "You do see the circles," she says of the marks left by glasses.

Use Furniture as Art

Steve and Jessica Tave enlisted Cabin John-based Anthony Wilder Design/Build to redesign and enlarge their kitchen, which was essentially a bottleneck galley between the dining room and the large family room of their Bethesda home.

Architect J.P. Ward and kitchen designer Shannon Kadwell borrowed space from the family room to expand the kitchen and make it a more open area. But the new design left no walls for displaying art. As a result, Steve Tave says, "we wanted the kitchen to be its own work of art."

Ward says the striking red island base, which has an eggshell finish on one side and high-gloss cabinets on the other, was designed to look like a piece of furniture. The Silestone countertop stretches down to the floor on one end, creating a waterfall effect and echoing the drywall enclosures around two banks of Konst cabinetry. Open shelves across from the island are also painted red, providing a dramatic backdrop for a rotating sculpture gallery. "Every time we walk through the space, we just can't help but be happy," Tave says.



ROBERT C. LAUTMAN



Lose Overhead Cabinets

Kitchen designer Nadia Subaran was thrilled when Glen Echo homeowner Patricia Ozeki said her top remodeling priority was banishing the overhead cabinets. "That's a huge trend we're seeing," says Subaran, the principal designer at Aidan Design in Silver Spring. Moving storage to large drawers or a custom pantry armoire makes the space feel larger and frees up the walls for more interesting design elements.

"I wanted something that was not too kitcheny," Ozeki says. "It just makes the place more spacious, not having cabinets." In their stead: a wall of handmade, hand-glazed and textured tile; elegant sconces; and floating shelves made of alder, the same wood as the island base. The deep-gray armoire, meanwhile, provides a beautiful backdrop to the petal-like pendant light that hangs over the breakfast table. Along with the soapstone countertops, the new design has "a warm, rustic farmhouse feel, but with some really modern punches," Subaran says.

ROBERT RADIFERA

Make a Custom Piece

As in many town houses, Wendy Danziger's Bethesda kitchen was tight on space. "It was very small—it was unworkable, and I needed more counter space," Danziger says. In addition, one of the walls had an odd pass-through to the entry foyer. The opening took up valuable space and didn't add anything aesthetically.

Danziger, an interior designer, hired longtime collaborator Jan Goldman to help her figure out how to fix the space. Goldman, owner of Kitchen Elements in Olney, decided to fill in that wall and attach a custom table flanked by two tall storage cabinets. The new storage space allowed her to remove the upper cabinets from the wall behind the stove and to cover that area with a swath of glass tile and a dramatic range hood.

The new table replaced a freestanding round table that took up more space. Danziger highlighted the area with a contemporary light fixture and art she found at the Bethesda Row Arts Festival. Danziger uses the new piece as extra prep space and as a table for meals. "Even though it's not a huge kitchen," Goldman says, "it really just exploded in usefulness and storage."

JOHN SMITH



Go Big

Laila Soltz was looking for an island that would serve as the workhorse of her Silver Spring kitchen. She wanted it to provide ample storage on all sides and to be clear of appliances and equipment so she could use it for food prep or as a buffet for entertaining.

Soltz and her husband, David, hired Stephanie Fried of Jack Rosen Custom Kitchens in Rockville to do the work. Fried chose the island's cabinet finish to complement other pieces of furniture in the home, most notably the custom armoire that was built to hold the refrigerator and freezer. The dark base also anchors the room's light colors, and its unusual L-shape was a happy medium between a too-long rectangle and a too-wide square.

"It's pure storage and working space," Soltz says—important for the kosher kitchen, which must be able to accommodate separate sets of plates, silverware and cookware, one for meat and one for dairy. "Everyone is so comfortable here," she says. "The island has a beautiful presence to it."

STACY ZARIN-GOLDBERG



Introduce Some Whimsy

Bethesda designer Lorna Gross-Bryant saw an opportunity in the Chevy Chase kitchen remodel she was orchestrating for a couple with Houston roots and a love of the Caribbean: She could introduce the tropics in the sunny breakfast nook.

While she kept the main kitchen “classic—not overly ornate” to fit the couple’s traditional taste, she brought sun and sand into the nook with woven-back chairs upholstered in a tropical print; a round table with a carved pineapple base; and rattan bar stools with seat fabric featuring island women carrying baskets on their heads.

The goal, Gross-Bryant says, was to reference the faraway in the everyday.

“I think of eating areas as your opportunity to get really whimsical,” she says. “It’s less formal, more casual and a place where you can have a little bit of fun.”



ANGIE SECKINGER



Open Your Cabinets

Chevy Chase architect Bruce Wentworth often incorporates open shelving into his kitchen designs, not only to open up the space, but also to punch up the look. There are lots of ways to make the shelves visually interesting: You can vary the depths, change up the materials or build cubbies.

When open shelving doesn’t fit with the aesthetic of the house, he says glass-front cabinets can be a way to create a similar, striking look. Hank Hendrickson and Anne Derse didn’t want their renovated kitchen to conflict with the architecture of their ‘60s-era Dutch colonial in Bethesda. Wentworth suggested glass-front cabinets rather than contemporary-leaning open shelves. “Glass makes the room look larger, and it fits with the traditional style,” Wentworth says.

“I really wanted to take advantage of the beautiful light that comes in from the windows,” Derse says. “The cabinets provide more reflection.”

GEOFFREY HODGON



Create a Focal Point

Chevy Chase kitchen designer Jennifer Gilmer used tile to add personality to the Silver Spring kitchen of Arielle and Aton Teitelbaum. "I wanted something that was very different, but functional," Arielle Teitelbaum says, "a combination of modern and earthy."

Rather than stacking double ovens on

the wall of the long kitchen, Gilmer placed them side by side, leaving the space above exposed for vibrant orange stained glass tile. On the kitchen's other two walls, Gilmer chose rough-cut stone tiles that complement the gray cabinetry and warm butcher block on the island. "They give the kitchen a more natural feel, and it's a nice

frame for this beautiful splash of orange," Gilmer explains.

"We're a very kitchen- and food-centric family," Teitelbaum says of her husband and three kids, who keep kosher and entertain for every Jewish holiday. "This is a really great change—it's like night and day from the original kitchen."

BOB NAROD



Don't Be Afraid of Color

From a designer's perspective, tile for the backsplash is like fabric for upholstery. "There are so many options—it's like candy," says Laura Fox of Kristin Peake Interiors in Rockville.

Fox worked with Jack Rosen Custom Kitchens to update Bennett and Roscoe Brady's North Bethesda kitchen. When the Bradys chose a distinctive blue granite for their new kitchen counters, Fox paired it with a strong, cerulean-blue glass backsplash, noting that they love color. "Backsplashes are where you can have a little bit of fun," Fox says.

The kitchen is now a destination for both husband and wife. "I talk to my wife while she's cooking," Roscoe Brady says. "I didn't like to before. I liked her, but I didn't like the space." The couple is already reaping the benefits of spending more time there. Says Bennett Brady: "I think my cooking has gotten better." ■

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STACY ZARIN-GOLDBERG