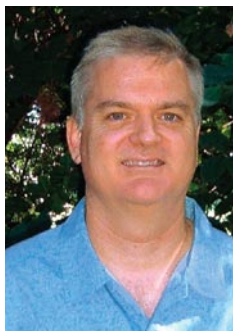


A \$40,000 Kitchen Remodel

How do you renovate an entire living space for what would cover only the cost of a typical custom kitchen's cabinets? Wisely. Here, **Bryan** shares his family's wishes for a new kitchen and the demands he had of the architect. **Tina** explains how she designed the kitchen to satisfy her client's needs by incorporating reliable details sure to bring a sense of space and function to even the most cramped homes.

BY BRYAN JONES, HOMEOWNER,
AND TINA GOVAN, ARCHITECT



Range hood

How they saved: Our Ikea range hood is a prominent feature of our kitchen. It reinforces the modern, clean-lined look that we had hoped for. It's vented through the roof and operates well. At roughly \$500, it cost half of what some stainless-steel hoods go for.

Sink

How they saved: We couldn't stomach spending hundreds of dollars on a sink for the kitchen, especially when we knew similar-looking products were available for a lot less. We used Ikea again and found our sink for an incredibly low price. It is solid ceramic, and in four years of use, we have not had a scratch.



Cabinets

How they saved: The kitchen cabinets are from Ikea and start at around \$200 each. After the cost savings, we appreciate their function and flexibility most. In fact, if we wanted a “new” kitchen, we could replace all the cabinet fronts quickly and inexpensively. They simply click into place with hardware that we found to be of high quality. It has held up extremely well over the years.

Flooring

How they saved: To tie the kitchen floor into the rest of the main-floor living space, we had to install hardwood flooring. We opted for a low-grade product that reflected what was currently on the floor and have grown to appreciate the natural, less refined look. Common-grade oak can be found for roughly \$5 per sq. ft. in our area.

It's a common scenario. A small house, perfect for young newlyweds, becomes cramped as their family grows. Finally the time comes—usually when kids are in the den crying amid a floor full of toys, dogs are knocking over their food bin, and spouses bump for the eighth time while making dinner—that a decision is made: “We need a bigger house!” Moving isn't always an option, and building an addition is the fastest way to blow a modest budget. The best solution is to consider improving the existing layout, as was the case with the Joneses and their small kitchen in Raleigh, N.C.

Homeowner: Our kitchen was functional, but it felt small, especially when my wife and I tried to cook together. We wanted a kitchen that felt open and airy, and a space that would evoke a sense of calm.

Architect: The Joneses didn't need more square footage, but they did need better use of the space they had. The kitchen was imprisoned in a



Before

Cramped cooking. Beyond being dated, the old kitchen was also out of tune with the family's modern lifestyle and tastes. Photo left taken at A on floor plan.

box that separated the other areas of the house from each other. Freeing the kitchen from its walls made an enormous difference in how the space looked and felt. What had been three confined rooms became one large space, accommodating kitchen, dining, and living. It is a common misconception that different functions must be separated by full-height walls. A wide variety of activities can take place in one common space if you define areas with changes in ceiling or floor height, half-walls, or alcoves.

Opening the kitchen to the areas around it also allows for long diagonal views through the house, enlarging the feeling of the entire space. We enhanced the sense of spaciousness further by vaulting the ceiling and installing large French doors that open to a deck opposite the kitchen. Replacing the living-room windows with these doors has made a huge difference in how the house feels and functions.

Improve flow by considering household lifestyles

It's not a new idea to create a kitchen that serves as a place to prepare meals and entertain guests. As a culture, we are drawn to this part of the home, the core of activity. Creating ways for people to interact in the kitchen allows the space—and the home—to work.

Homeowner: While our old kitchen was technically functional, it had several choke points that were so inhibiting that we could not have more than one couple over for dinner and be comfortable. Besides having a kitchen that felt open, we wanted a kitchen that allowed us to move freely through and around it.

Architect: While the old kitchen felt like solitary confinement, it now feels like the hub of the house. Placing an island where walls once were creates a place to eat, hang out, or spread out a buffet. Bryan and his wife

now can keep an eye on the kids in the living space and carry on a conversation with guests while they cook.

A simple rearrangement of access also has vastly improved the circulation flow. Traffic to the bathroom and mudroom that had been channeled through the kitchen now flows much more freely through the living room.

Wash the kitchen with light

Creating access to daylight is imperative because few elements can create such a strong sense of openness. But daylight is only half of the equation. A good lighting scheme illuminates worksurfaces and art collections, and it can help to distinguish spaces in a house.

Homeowner: We have a beautiful canopy of oak and poplar trees on our lot that shades the house but created a dark interior space. Before our renovation, we installed skylights in the living-room area to gain more natural light. Unfortunately, that light couldn't reach the kitchen. We wanted a lighting scheme that was relaxing, but one that would light the kitchen well.

Architect: The addition of the skylights was a great start to lighting the interior of this dark home. By removing the interior walls that segregated the kitchen, a lot more natural light was able to flood the space. Light and views now are shared among spaces rather than being confined to individual rooms. Having multiple views out of the kitchen always makes it feel bigger.

This kitchen, like all others, can't depend solely on natural light. Recessed cans give general illumination, undercabinet fixtures light the countertops, and hanging fixtures highlight the eating areas. Most are on dim-



Doors

How they saved: We enjoy the concept of shopping at stores that reuse old resources, such as Habitat for Humanity's ReStore. We got our new doors from there for 30% to 40% less than what we would have had to spend for them new. It also gave us a good feeling that we were keeping waste out of our local landfill.

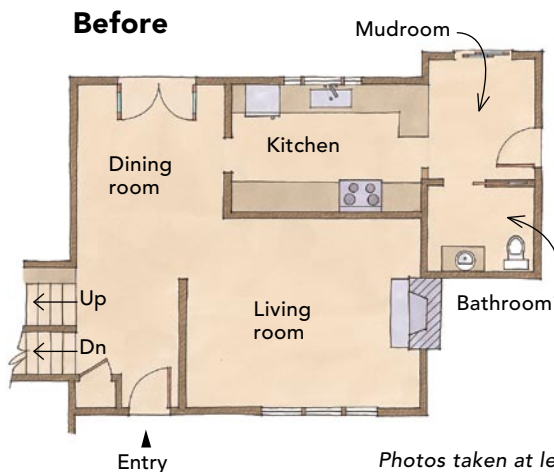
mers so that the ambience of the room can be controlled depending on the occasion.

Create a space that feels like home

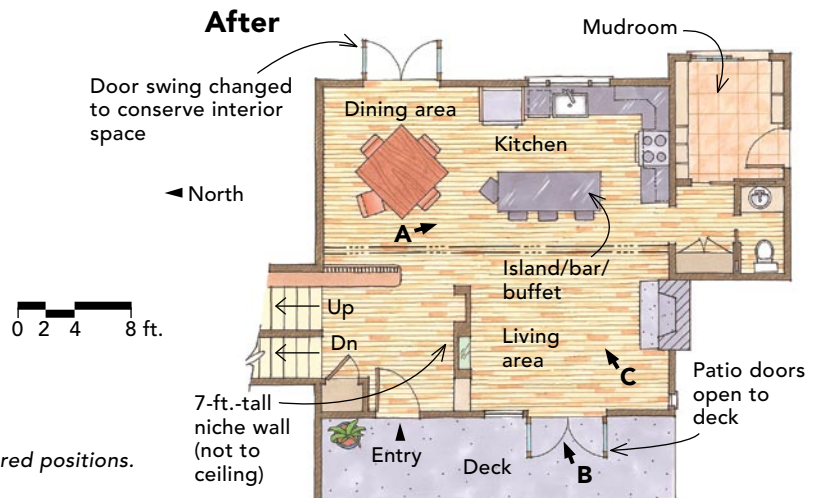
Style is subjective, and the way a kitchen or space is created should reflect lifestyle, tradition, and personal design sensibilities.

Homeowner: We allowed Tina quite a bit of freedom when it came to designing the look of our new kitchen. While we didn't get into the specifics of what we wanted, we offered a few general guidelines. We wanted the kitchen to have a simple, contemporary feel with an Asian influence.

Architect: Nancy (Bryan's wife) and I had each spent time living in Japan and shared an appreciation of simple, uncluttered design.



Photos taken at lettered positions.



Drawings: Martha Garstang Hill



A distinctive style. A simple, unrestrained layout with complementary finishes and fixtures creates an Asian-influenced kitchen and living space that works. Photo facing page taken at B on floor plan. Photo above taken at C.

Because our design aesthetics were similar, I was comfortable with having them make some of their own choices for items like cabinetry, appliances, and fixtures.

By using bands of flat wooden trim, flush cabinet doors, minimal wall cabinets, and a few niches and shelves for art, we achieved a certain Asian simplicity.

Do it for less money than you think

The grandest kitchen remodels don't always have such grand funding. Fantastic design can occur when efficiency and cost are brought

to the forefront. Using resources—including retailers that sell moderately priced or refurbished goods—can help to achieve dramatic results for relatively little money.

Homeowner: We had a budget of \$40,000 for this project and ended up finishing the kitchen and adjacent spaces at just under that figure. We were convinced that we could re-form the kitchen through good design, so we hired an architect who would be sensitive to our needs. It's the single best investment we made. Second on the list would be our

choice to use modest appliances, fixtures, and materials to finish the entire space.

Architect: We controlled costs by keeping big fixtures in the same place, and we concentrated on opening connections among indoor spaces and creating access and views to the outdoors.

I helped to reduce the costs further by limiting the number of drawings I produced. An architect often can give direction to a project, but not incur costs that result from producing a lot of detailed drawings and specs. □