

before & after



Little makes us feel as good as turning the home we have into the home we want. Just take a look at this month's projects for proof. A dilapidated kit cottage gets new life as an island jewel, while a nondescript backyard becomes a lush garden. An expat designer draws on his native soil to create a place that feels familiar. A kitchen becomes a calming force, and freshened facades not only increase market value but bolster homeowner pride.



The once dark, dreary kitchen, inset above, was updated with a mix of traditional and contemporary elements, including Golden Leaf granite countertops, a stainless steel range, apron-front sink, and bin-pull cabinet hardware. **Opposite top** Hooks affixed to the beadboard paneling beneath the message blackboard in the breakfast room make convenient drop-off points for jackets, bags, and the family dog's leash.





light fare

Bright style and storage ideas abound
in this tranquil remodeled kitchen

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The kitchen and breakfast room of this 1920s suburban Chicago home are classic beauties. But that wasn't always the case. It took a thoughtful architect and the home's owners to breathe new life into these once-outdated spaces. In realizing the revival, they increased efficiency, turned several small, dark rooms into one light-filled expanse, and ushered in a fresh, serene color palette.

Divided into a duplex at some point in the last century, the home's original foursquare layout had become a maze of disconnected spaces. To improve the flow at the rear of the house, and transform a rarely-used 128-square-foot bedroom into an informal eating area, local architect John Richert, of Crossroads/Blue Sky Design/Build, removed a supporting wall dividing the kitchen from the bedroom and transferred the load to a new header (an overhead structural beam). Now an expansive archway separates the kitchen from the new eating area.

Far left Opening up the wall between the old kitchen and a bedroom-turned-eating area allowed space for a large central island. New 1920s style pendant fixtures serve as task lighting for the work space. **Left** The new informal eating area has room for a full-size table and a built-in desk/buffet created from the same semicustom cabinetry as in the kitchen proper.

floor plans

Below The new eating area opens directly onto the improved kitchen, and an added door allows direct access and sight lines to the foyer and front door. The cooking area is now accessible from two sides, and a 3½-foot space between the island and the refrigerator gives plenty of clearance for the large single door and bottom freezer drawer. "The new layout let us spread out the appliances and keep all the doors out of the way of one another," says the architect. Another doorway connects the kitchen to the living room.



In the know

BEADBOARD PANELING

Grooved wood paneling is an easy way to add cottage charm, as well as texture and architectural interest, to the walls of any room. It's typically used as wainscoting below a chair rail, but in this case the poplar beadboard rises to a height of 5 feet on the walls, emphasizing the 10-foot ceilings.

In addition to the vintage look, the treatment serves as an extra layer of protection. The wood won't get marked up every time a chair bumps it, as would drywall. And, when painted with an interior latex semigloss, it's easy to maintain.

This kitchen features true beadboard, solid wood pieces that can be cut from any species at a lumberyard. The edges of the standard tongue-and-groove planks, ¾ inch thick by 3½ inches wide, are interlocked and then nailed into place. The architect recommends applying beadboard over a plywood substrate for a strong backing and to limit the movement of the pieces.

A faster, easier, and more economical approach is to purchase beaded sheets of plywood or medium-density fiberboard at a home improvement store. Sold in 4-by-8-foot panels, these products don't have the deep groove patterns of the true material, but they won't warp and crack, so they're ideal for such high-moisture areas as bathrooms and laundry rooms.



Richert improved circulation in the kitchen by opening up the formerly tight, U-shaped arrangement, eliminating the peninsula, and creating a 7-by-2¼-foot island. But even with the annexed space and the addition of extra base cabinets, storage was limited. To increase the kitchen's capacity for upper cabinets, Richert did something practically unheard of—he filled in a window, this one above the old sink. "The wall of windows on the back side of the room provides plenty of light," he explains, "and moving the sink to the new island maximizes wall space and creates a relationship with the eating area."

The old kitchen's eating area, with its views of the backyard through a bank of five double-hung windows, provided another opportunity to build in storage. This corner was just begging for a window seat. The architect obliged, creating a combined seating-storage unit from standard 18-inch-tall-by-24-inch-deep upper cabinets that are usually installed above refrigerators. This solution was faster and more cost-effective than constructing a custom unit. And there's now a convenient spot to take a break from food prep and gaze into the garden or for a friend to settle and chat with the cook.

The refreshed decor, including all new 2½-inch-strip white-oak flooring, blends the remodeled areas with the rest of the home. A soft monochromatic palette includes simple white cabinets with a mix of solid- and glass-front doors. Crisp beadboard and trim, both painted to match the cabinetry, highlight the pale Cafe au Lait walls.

The combination of relatively minor interior modifications, with new appliances and surfaces, have changed the way this kitchen functions and relates to the rest of the house. In fact, the homeowners are so pleased with the results that they are planning further upgrades and will soon brave the remodeling experience again.

SEE RESOURCE GUIDE, PAGE 124, AND HOMEMAG.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.