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DESIGN DOUBLE-UP

*Form and function fuse
when two pros redo a kitchen*

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The renovated kitchen goes easy on upper cabinetry and gives direct access to the family room. Combined with open shelving and pale walls, the overall design makes for an airy feeling. Dark Brazilian hardwood floors ground this well-used space.



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WHEN A DESIGNER’S CLIENT IS ALSO A DESIGNER, their business relationship can be a marriage made in either heaven or hell. This is the story of a celestial pairing.

Arden Fischer is the owner of Fischer Custom Cabinets in Newmarket. His client was Jill Finney, a design consultant whose own home needed a major renovation and, especially, a new kitchen addition.

“The focus of this renovation was very much around making a user-friendly kitchen that gets a lot of use,” said Jill. “We’re a family of five. We home cook pretty much everything. My husband Paul is also an avid home canner and preserver. This kitchen had to take a beating.”

Jill knew exactly what she wanted. More important, she was able to tell Fischer exactly what she wanted. “When I met Jill the first time, she actually had the plans of what the space would be,” Fischer recounted. “She had the wall measurements on the plan. She had the appliance package ready for me, so when I designed the kitchen I knew exactly the sizes of fridge, wall ovens, prep sink. She was very thorough. She really did her homework.”

With contractor Geoff Woodmansey (praised equally highly by both designers), Jill and Paul got just the kitchen they wanted. Being a one-storey addition, it could accommodate a high ceiling. Its roughly 15-foot by 22-foot space was large enough for the island topped with honed limestone, a drinks centre with its GE Monogram beverage fridge, a desk space to the left of the sink, and the appliances that Jill specified. ☞



A largely monochromatic backsplash of pale ceramic subway tiles is accented by the strict geometry of a window frame and open shelves. In contrast, the wall next to the Thermador convection-microwave wall oven and warming drawer features square ceramic tiles with subtle colour variations.

“We really thought it through from beginning to end and back again.”



(Left) The small number of upper cabinets is offset by a pantry near a corner. It's concealed behind glass-paned pocket doors that allow unobstructed passage into the rest of the house. In the island, the Fisher & Paykel cooktop's telescoping downdraft vent does away with the need for a range hood.



Viewed from the sunken family room, the desk and the fridge-freezer bookend a black honed granite countertop. The cabinetry is bookmatched oak veneer with an espresso stain and boasts Blumotion fittings for quiet operation.

The high ceiling did cause one glitch that was overcome by Fischer's ingenuity. The fridge-freezer is actually a separate fridge and a separate freezer (both by Frigidaire) chosen by Jill and installed side by side. Their matching stainless steel doors and trim kits unify the two pieces, but they sat just a little too close to the floor for Jill's design sensibilities. So Fischer installed two steel-fronted drawers, which look almost like a toe-kick, under the appliances to lift them just enough.

Jill and Paul kept the look sleek throughout the room by mostly eliminating upper cabinets and opting for open shelves. Jill noted that "if you eliminate uppers from a kitchen, sometimes that creates the need for storage space. We could put in a pretty large pantry, which helped make that decision easier."

"I do like the floating shelves," said Fischer. "They give a nice focal point to the kitchen. I like the way there are windows above the shelves, so there's sunlight coming in. That was Jill's idea. The fact that the windows are the same size as the shelves, and the sink is centred on those shelves – it's nicely geometrically arranged. There's a certain weight to each side."

"This project took a lot of our time and thought and planning," Jill recalled. "We didn't make quick choices about how to lay this kitchen out or what finishes we wanted to use. We really thought it through from beginning to end and back again before we made the final decisions. It came together really well." ❦