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# kitchens & baths

PHOTOS BY TONY VALANIS



by Lori D. Roberts

# bigger *and* better

A MORE SPACIOUS KITCHEN MEETS A COUPLE'S NEED FOR THE PERFECT ENTERTAINING SPACE

**T**he property was perfect. A winding driveway led to a peaceful lot with large, mature trees and an open green space in the Traders Point area.

The interior, on the other hand, needed some work. Andy and Stephanie Simonson are a social couple, and they wanted a kitchen where they could cook and entertain. They also required something that would stand up to a pack of dogs. The couple volunteers with the South Central Newfoundland Rescue, so they sometimes have a foster “Newfie” hanging out with their own pets—two Newfoundlands, one golden retriever, and one mutt. (That’s roughly 500 pounds of dog, in case anyone is counting.)

“The house had been fairly neglected for years, and the kitchen was a 1970s smaller, dark, cramped kind of kitchen,” Stephanie says. “We needed a big, open space where we could entertain. We have people over probably three weekends a month. We needed something that was open, inviting, and very practical.”

The couple turned to Nancy Stanley, a senior designer at Kitchens by Design, for suggestions on how to take an old, dark kitchen and turn it into something bright and spacious. Stanley found the answer outside. Previous owners had built onto their second-floor bedroom, supporting the addition with posts and leaving the lower area otherwise empty. Stanley suggested building out the main floor and creating a new kitchen space.

“The house kind of called for the kitchen to be there,” Stanley says.



*A Dacor range sits below a backsplash of handmade brick tiles.*



*The Simonsons' kitchen boasts special features, such as a hidden outlet on the kitchen island, a magnetic spice rack, and an ingrained mahogany countertop surrounding the prep sink.*

The couple agreed that it made sense to rebuild rather than renovate the existing space. Stanley combined the new and the old rooms to create a bright, airy kitchen and adjoining dining space.

Rich wood tones add warmth to the kitchen, and textured surfaces give the room a casual feel. General contractor Mike Simonson, who also happens to be Andy's brother, removed the wall between the kitchen and sitting area, allowing light to flow in from the front of the

house as well.

A large, granite-topped island serves as a focal point in the new kitchen. Alderwood cabinets offer a cherry feel without the cherry wood price tag, and Stanley helped the couple select a cabinet style that offered sleek, clean lines. Stanley also encouraged the Simonsons to go with Capolavoro granite in a charcoal base with salmon, white, and green tones running through it. The brushed surface is a little less formal than the polished

surfaces so often seen in contemporary kitchens. But the granite itself was initially a hard sell, Stephanie recalls.

"Andy said, 'Trust Nancy,'" Stephanie says. "I'm really glad we did because we love it. But it would not have been our first choice."

Texture plays an important role in the kitchen floor, which is covered in a hand-scraped maple wood designed to hide dog toenail scratches and small dings. The wood enhances the warmth

in the cabinetry and stands in contrast to the stainless-steel appliances. A 48-inch Dacor gas range with matching hood includes two ovens to accommodate multiple cooking jobs, and a nearby wall holds a GE Advantium oven and Andy's pride and joy—a Miele coffee center.

"That was his must have," Stephanie says. "We could not have a kitchen without it. He had been looking at a coffee-maker like that for probably decades."

The typical sink configuration has been reversed. The main sink, in a rich charcoal-composite material, sits in the island, conveniently close to the dishwasher and the everyday flatware drawer. The copper prep sink is set in an ingrained mahogany counter along the perimeter, just under three kitchen windows that offer a view of the grounds. Stanley suggested the three-window configuration, as it removes the pesky middle bar that's in the center of a two-window setup.

A brick-tiled backsplash from California-based CR Studio 4 adds a rustic feel to the area. Stanley points out that the handmade tiles ensure the finished prod-



*An indoor grill was taken out, but the family kept the white-brick archway.*

uct has depth. The metallic-brown finish plays off the cabinetry.

"With all the lightness and warmth of the cabinetry, we wanted something a little deeper and a little richer to create the dimension," Stanley says.

When the couple first moved into the house, they wanted to do away with much of the original kitchen. But Stephanie decided to keep a graceful brick archway that sat over an indoor grill. The grill could go, but she wanted to work the archway into the new design. The couple spoke with three designers, but only Stanley came up with the idea of keeping the archway and replacing the grill with a convenient beverage center, complete with a countertop and sturdy shelf. The brick is painted white in contrast with the warm tones of the new kitchen.

The Simonsons have done kitchen renovations in the past, but this is the first time they enlisted the help of a professional kitchen designer. They don't regret the decision.

"Our advice to people is that if you can afford a designer to design the space, that's the way to go," Stephanie says. ☺

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