

Traditional details tie a functional, modern layout to a century-old house

Vintage

BY NICOLE STARNES TAYLOR

Homeowners Jennifer Sargent and Matthew Cazier envisioned a light-filled kitchen with a clean-lined, modern aesthetic that still reflected the grace and charm of their 1918 house in the center of Seattle. Such a kitchen would welcome family and friends with sunlight and views to the garden. Its simple layout would be an inspiring backdrop for cooking and a welcome change to the existing kitchen's blend of outdated details.

Typical of kitchens a century ago, the existing room was dark, bare, separated from the rest of the house, and depressing. Although the cabinets were fairly new, they were bland, and the layout divided the kitchen into a cooking area and a seating area that was rarely used. The entry was constricted, and the cabinet layout meant that the cook was always in the traffic flow. Despite these design issues, the house had been well cared for, and the rooms had wonderful scale and proportion. The spaces just needed some new life breathed into them.

Kitchens should allow people to celebrate the art of cooking and the joy of gathering and entertaining. I try to elevate the feel of a kitchen with details such as wood floors, coffered ceilings, and fancy lights. In an existing house, I look



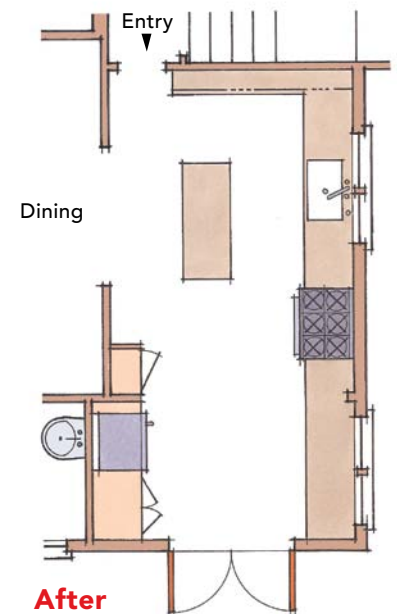
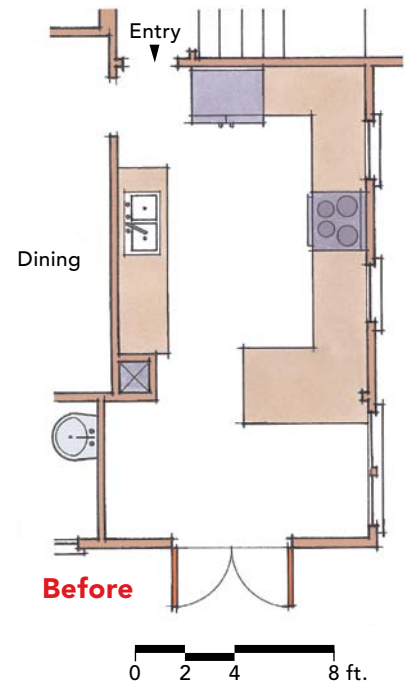
Fixing a generic design and an awkward flow.

The low height of the main entry was changed to a more welcoming arch. Moving and enlarging the entry to the dining room opened up the plan and improved traffic flow, and new cabinets completely transformed the old kitchen.



Before

Modern



SMALL CHANGES MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

The original location of the entries to the kitchen combined with the cabinet layout to create a traffic pinch point. The entry from the dining room was a narrow door that left the two rooms feeling separated. The original layout also placed the cook in the traffic flow. Moving and enlarging the dining-room entry and introducing a new cabinet layout solved these problems.

MAKING NEW FIT OLD

Blending a clean, modern aesthetic into an older house calls for details that reference the existing design as well as new features that harmonize rather than shock. One approach used here was to add some industrial details. Timeless and clean, the industrial look fits well with both the house's century-old roots and its owners' modern tastes.



1 Carrara-marble countertops offer a look that's clean but that also suggests the house's original era.

2 Black painted window frames and wall-mounted task lights look both industrial and chic, lending an informal air.

3 The extended-jamb detail eliminates casing and creates a more modern look.

4 The period-style faucet and sink reference the original house (photo p. 75).

5 The coffered ceiling continues a detail from the dining room to help unite the spaces.

6 Shaker-style cabinets look traditional yet uncluttered.

7 A wall free of upper cabinets lends an open feel to the kitchen.

8 Deep pantry cabinets offer voluminous storage and allow for a sleek refrigerator installation.

Architect

Nicole Starnes Taylor, makedesignstudiollc.com

General contractor

Nicole Dumas, dumasbuildllc.com

Cabinetmaker

Scott Freeman, majorminorbuilt.com



DETAILS

Windows and exterior doors marvin.com

Lights schoolhouseelectric.com

Dishwasher bosch-home.com

Faucet barwil.co.uk

Stove bluestarcooking.com

Fridge liebherr-appliances.com

Sink rohlhome.com

at the original details to see how to integrate the newly remodeled space with the original home. Next, I look for new details that can enliven the space and speak to the client's personality, aesthetic, and goals for the project. In kitchens, I find that adding an industrial bent keeps them from becoming precious and stuffy.

Open a wall to improve flow and feel

With general contractor Nicole Dumas doing the work, we replaced the small door between the kitchen and the dining room with a 6-ft.-wide cased opening to better connect the two rooms and to tie the kitchen visually to the rest of the house. At the other entry to the kitchen, we replaced the low, flat ceiling under the stair with an arch that followed the rise of the stair's stringers and added 8 in. to the ceiling height in the center. Not only is the arched opening in keeping with the historical period of the house, but it makes the experience of entering the kitchen more dramatic.

By eliminating the peninsula and extending the kitchen into what had been the seating area, we increased storage without adding upper cabinets, helping to make this narrow room feel open and bright. An island made from an old wood table that Jennifer found at a neighborhood furniture store replaced

the seating at the old peninsula. The table's reclaimed wood brings texture and warmth to the kitchen. Nicole replaced the table's dilapidated wood top with Carrara marble, connecting it with the other countertops.

Blend period details with new

Carrying traditional details into the kitchen helped integrate the new space with the rest of the home. These include the faucet and the coffered ceiling, the baseboard, and the casing at the new opening between the dining room and the kitchen. The Shaker-style cabinets were painted on-site (Benjamin Moore Van Deusen Blue HC 156). While painting cabinets in the shop is often cheaper and can speed the job, painting on-site yields a superior end product. Every joint between shop-painted cabinets is painfully visible, and retouching dings from installation is extremely challenging. Particularly when working in old homes, painting on-site allows carpenters to employ all their tricks to make new cabinets fit seamlessly, even against an out-of-plumb wall. Prior to painting, joints between cabinets can be sanded flush, and small dings can be repaired.

The countertops and backsplashes are Carrara marble. A beautiful material with a traditional look, it is an excellent surface for rolling out dough, and at the end of a kitch-

en's life, it can be removed and reused. It requires annual sealing and prompt cleanup of spills, but even so, it will stain over time. Some view this as patina, while to others it's just staining. I provide samples for clients to slather up with such things as red wine, curry, mustard, and butter. This exercise has given many clients the confidence to install the material, and so far they all love it.

We broke with tradition along the exterior walls. To maximize views into the lush backyard, we replaced the old, standard-height, French doors with 8-ft.-tall Marvin Integrity units. To bring in even more light, we placed headers high in the walls so the new windows could be installed with their tops as high as possible. The windows are painted black and depart from the traditional by having no casing. Instead, the jambs extend $\frac{3}{4}$ in. beyond the face of the wall. This 1x jamb is installed first, and then the drywall is mudded up to it. It's a tidy detail that we have done on several projects since.

Princeton Junior light fixtures from Schoolhouse Electric complete the industrial composition. These fixtures over the windows provide task lighting and offer an alternative to recessed lights. To keep the narrow kitchen feeling open and bright, we used no upper cabinets along the north wall. More sconces along this wall light work zones below and keep the wall from feeling overly long and unstructured. I like their jaunty, angular, never-perfect presence against that big white wall. □

Architect Nicole Starnes Taylor owns Make Design Studio in Seattle. Photos by Aaron Leitz, except where noted.