

Midcentury-Modern



Kitchen

Great storage and sharp details pull this remodel into the present



BY STUART SAMPLEY

Although originally charming, the house wasn't ideal for Kevin, Erin, and their two young kids. Designed in 1955 by architects Lundgren & Maurer, the one-story midcentury-modern house in Austin, Texas, lacked an efficient layout and enough room for a growing family. It was in dire need of a remodel, especially in the kitchen, which didn't work for Kevin and Erin, who love to cook. They hired me to clear the path to a better house, with a standout kitchen at its core.

Find much-needed space

Made to accommodate only one cook at a time (and not much else), the house's galley kitchen was dark and too small for a family that likes to make meals together. The remodel was limited by budget, so adding to the house wasn't in the cards. The floor plan also dictated that we keep circulation open so that the kitchen wouldn't block

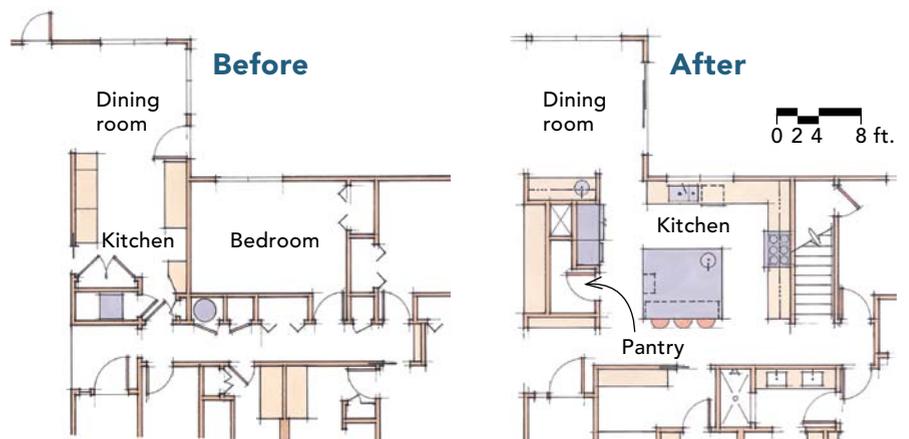
Kitchen masqueraded as closet. *Virtually unchanged since the house was built in the 1950s, the kitchen was intended as a tight workspace with no provisions for eating or socializing (photo top right). The remodeled space benefits from the large custom window that looks out onto the backyard. The overall scheme of white is balanced by the black countertops and pantry wall, and warmed by the natural ceiling and orange cabinets.*

The kitchen's flow revolves



GAINING WITHOUT ADDING

Meant for cooking only, the original kitchen had been relegated to the middle of the floor plan, where it had little space or natural light. The author reconfigured the plan, moving the kitchen into the larger space formerly occupied by a bedroom that faced the backyard. The extra square footage makes room for a big island and better workflow, while a pantry wall serves as a partition between the kitchen and the living and dining rooms.



around the island.



Subtle storage. Surrounded in pecan veneer, a black convection microwave oven and refrigerator blend with the matte-black cabinets and doors of the pantry wall to create a quietly dramatic side to the kitchen. The door on the left opens to a pantry, while doors above the fridge and below the oven provide storage for lesser-used items. A stereo speaker is concealed just above the oven.



access to the master-bedroom suite. My solution was to move the kitchen into the space previously occupied by an adjacent bedroom and then to align this new kitchen with the exterior wall so that it would look out onto the backyard. The new layout extended the size of the kitchen to an ample 16 ft. by 16 ft.

Where the original kitchen once stood, we added a pantry wall to centralize kitchen storage; the pantry wall also houses a bar in the dining room and a media alcove in the living room. With the kitchen considerably larger, there was now enough room for Kevin and Erin's first and most important request: a kitchen island.

Modeling helps to plan the space

No matter the size of the kitchen, every inch counts. I like to begin the design process by talking to clients about how they're going to use their kitchen. At Kevin and Erin's place, we talked about the need for an island for meal prep, and for space so that family and friends could visit with the cooks but not be in the way.

Kevin and Erin move around each other frequently while they are cooking, so we couldn't leave the space between the island and the lower cabinets to standard measurements. I set the island dimensions at 82 in. by 72 in. but wanted to be sure that this size would work. When the kitchen framing was up, the builder mocked up the planned size and height of the island with a piece of plywood. We then had Kevin and Erin practice walking by each other between the island and the facing counter to confirm that the island dimensions were just right.

Forget the triangle

After our discussions, we were able to put together a personalized process flow that revolved around the kitchen island. In the new kitchen, food from the fridge or pantry moves onto the island, where it's cleaned and prepped at the sink. The range is within a couple of steps of the island. After meals are over, the items that need to be washed by hand are cleaned in the sink located below the big window that looks out to the backyard. The recycling and trash drawers are to the left of the sink, and the dishwasher is to the right. Dishes are returned to the upper cabinets on the right when they're clean. With all the important work activities taking place among the island, the countertops, and the pantry area, the other side of the island is open

DETAILS

Cabinets: Kent Medford, Cabinets Deluxe; cabinetsdeluxe.com

Convection microwave oven: Miele; mieleusa.com

Countertops: Silestone; silestoneusa.com

Custom window: Fleetwood; fleetwoodusa.com

Faucets: Kraus; kraususa.com

Floor tile: Marca Corona; marcacorona.it

Paint: Sherwin-Williams Black Magic (matte), Panda White, and Gold Coast; sherwin-williams.com

Refrigerator: KitchenAid; kitchenaid.com

Stainless-steel sinks: Ticor; ticorsinks.com



Island living. The large, nearly square island is central to the kitchen and provides work and storage space, as well as seating for casual meals. The painted MDF cabinet doors give the room a clean and simple look complemented by the cypress ceiling above.

for the guests and the kids to interact with the cooks without interrupting their work.

Compartmentalizing the storage

Our next task was to identify the elements that would ensure the kitchen functioned the way the clients wanted. Many vital elements are grouped together in the pantry wall, which houses the refrigerator; a convection microwave oven; audiovisual equipment for the kitchen; and storage over the fridge, below the oven, and in the pantry itself.

Grouping all those kitchen essentials into a compact area opened up the countertop space and reduced the amount of cabinet clutter. Without upper cabinets over the kitchen sink wall, we could add a larger window, which contributes stunning backyard views and lots of natural light. Beams added to support a cantilevered porch roof made it possible to install the window without a header, creating a nearly seamless connection from inside to out. □

Stuart Sampley, AIA, is an architect in Austin, Texas. Photos by Patrick Wong. Writer Adrienne Breau contributed to this article.



Design highlights

- **Mitered toe kicks** make cleaning easier.
- **Clean lines** are accentuated by reveals between the ceiling and the walls.
- **The big window**, with its thin black frame, extends to the ceiling and creates a seamless visual transition to the outside.
- The **spacious island** has bookshelves and large cabinets below the eating area.
- **Painted MDF-faced cabinets** are economical and sleek.

Architect: Stuart Sampley; stuartsampleyarchitect.com

Location: Austin, Texas

Builder: Jake Badger; jgbcustomhomes.com