

the best of new & old

Despite dark cabinets and dated appliances, this kitchen functioned efficiently in its small space. Keeping the same work triangle—while filling the room with light-color surfaces and custom touches—imbued it with modern-day style.

Even in a room as dark and dated as the old kitchen in Marilyn and Joe Wortman's townhouse, there was something worth keeping.

"It was a functional kitchen," insists interior designer Debi Reinhart. The modest 8x12-foot space provided an efficient U-shape work triangle, even if it wasn't so easy on the eye. So Reinhart suggested making no structural changes to the kitchen. "I didn't think that by gutting the kitchen I could improve the space," she says.

"In the interest of cost saving, to have gutted it, we wouldn't have gained anything."

Instead, Reinhart and the Wortmans embarked on a project that would—literally—lighten the load of the heavy, oppressive cabinets and boost the kitchen's charm. Marilyn didn't have to go far for inspiration. She and Joe are "empty nesters" who recently moved from a larger home into a townhouse. "I had just finished doing the kitchen in our previous

Marilyn Wortman extols the virtues of her 8x12-foot kitchen, *top right*: "I can stand at my sink, go to the right to get to the oven and microwave, or go to the left for counter space," she says.

Colorful flowers grace three custom-painted tiles that add a personal touch to the backsplash *bottom left*.

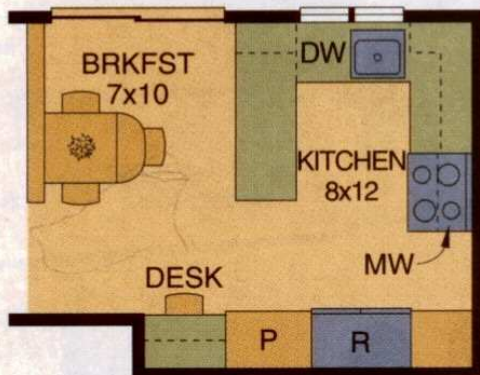
Rather than lose some impact of the painted ivy motif by running it at the top of the backsplash, designer Debi Reinhart trimmed off about one-third of the 6-inch tile, then flipped it so the ivy stretches just under the windowsill *bottom center*.

Faux-painted exposed bricks on the soffit corner *bottom right* lend a touch of whimsy.





■ The layout of the original kitchen worked well, so no structural changes were made.



Marilyn, *bottom right*, who had always lived in houses with large kitchens before moving into a compact townhouse with her husband, Joe, enjoys the efficiency of a smaller kitchen.

At 7×10 feet, the breakfast area *opposite* is about as large as the kitchen and serves as a convenient spot for meals. Marilyn uses the countertop between the two spaces as a buffet-style serving area when her children and grandchildren visit.

■ All of the cabinets received new fronts, painted white, and the dated appliances were replaced with new white ones.

■ The desk was raised a few inches to make it more comfortable, and glass-front cabinets were installed above it to provide display space for Marilyn's collectibles.

■ New countertops and hardwood flooring round out the additions to this crisp kitchen.

home, which we sold," she says, "and I had done it all in white. I dearly loved it and hated to leave it."

The same color scheme seemed perfect for the new kitchen as well. All the cabinets got new fronts, which were painted a crisp white, and Marilyn was able to replace her harvest gold appliances with brand-new ones—also in white.

Other new additions included a sparkling white solid-surfacing countertop, custom tile on the backsplash, and a warm, homey hardwood floor. "By doing that, she had a brand-new kitchen," Reinhart says. "It was a wonderful way to retrofit a very skillful plan."

Abundant storage was a must-have for Marilyn and Joe, whose 1950s townhouse is quite compact. "You can't have any wasted space," Reinhart says. "By the time you are an empty nester, you have collected all your life. You want to keep those important life treasures."

Pullout shelves in every cabinet offer a storage solution and prevent having to bend and reach to dig a bowl or pan out of the bottom cabinet; the shelves now slide out with a quick tug. "I would suggest them to anyone," Marilyn says.

Reinhart recommended installing panels on each end cabinet for a more custom, polished look. A generous pantry holds canned goods and dry foods and is conveniently located next to the refrigerator.

In addition to the major changes, a few tweaks here and there gave the room a custom look at a much more modest cost. Reinhart pulled out the surrounding cabinetry a bit so the refrigerator would sit flush with the cabinets, and she disguised the appliance with matching paneling. Marilyn says that guests who see her new kitchen always wonder where the fridge is because it's hidden so skillfully among the bank of cabinets.





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The desk, which sits against one wall, was lowered for more comfortable sitting. The cabinets directly above now have glass inserts, which provide display space for Marilyn's collectibles.

The custom-painted tile on the backsplash lends a bit of color, as well as a garden feel, to the room. Four framed botanical prints, which hang to the right of the desk, add a more classic, sophisticated feel than the former busy-print wallpaper they replace.

For an extra helping of personality, the Wortmans hired a custom painter to add even more color to the kitchen. Paintings of exposed brick, cracks in the plaster, and a few weeds peeking between the bricks now dot the soffit. Joe jokes that after rehabbing the entire house and



drywalling over some exposed brick in the family room, he couldn't believe that Marilyn actually wanted a painter to put some of that "brick" back in the kitchen with trompe l'oeil.

Even in its small space, the room lives large. "This kitchen does it all," Reinhart says. "It doesn't miss anything. You can cook, there's seating, a desk for writing, and even a spot to display treasures."

Marilyn, too, is pleased with her new kitchen. "My kitchen is really my delight," she says. "I never cease to enjoy it when I come out in the morning." □

For purchasing and designer information, refer to the Buying Guide beginning on page 112.

Photographer: Jim Hedrich, Hedrich-Blessing.
Interior designer: Debi Reinhart, ASID. Field editor: Elaine Markoutsas. Written by Sarah Wolf.

A much-needed pantry, above, stores food and household items. It sits against the same wall as the refrigerator, which is hidden behind white panels that help it blend unobtrusively with the cabinetry.

In a compact townhouse such as this, storage is at a premium. Plenty of cabinets, all with convenient pullout shelves like these left, maximize every square inch.

Reinhart lowered the desk right a few inches to make it more comfortable for sitting. The curved "transom" above the glass-front cabinets isn't really a transom at all—rather, it's a skillful trompe l'oeil painting that brings color and the illusion of space into the kitchen.



