



simply green

by mindy pantiel photography by jon jensen produced by barbara mundall

An environmentally conscious Oregon couple finds a design team to transform a cluttered kitchen into an organized, airy, eco-friendly space.





Wheat-board cabinet boxes. There's no formaldehyde (widely found in particleboard) in wheat board, so there's no outgassing, which can be detrimental to indoor air quality.

No-VOC paint. The walls are covered in virtually odor-free paint that contains no volatile organic compounds, which emit gases that compromise air quality and may be a health hazard.

Large low-E windows. They admit more natural light than the existing windows, which decreases the need to turn on light fixtures during the day. They also improve insulation, which lowers heating bills.

Sustainable wood. The desk and island curve are topped with walnut from a sustainable Oregon forest. A Forest Stewardship Council label certifies that wood products come from well-managed, environmentally responsible companies.

Marmoleum floors. They're totally sustainable and all-natural, composed of linseed, cork, and rubber.

Biking to work and composting are part of the daily routine for the pair of passionate environmentalists who own this Portland, Oregon, home. So when it came time to renovate, the couple—doctors and parents of two young boys—ranked an Earth-friendly kitchen on par with a beautiful space suited to the architecture of their 1915 Craftsman bungalow.

Designers Erin Davis and Arlene Lord took that mandate seriously, pushing green ideas to the forefront as they got to work.

And there was plenty of work to do. Ask Davis to describe the condition of the existing kitchen, and she answers bluntly: "It was hideous." Thanks to a bad 1970s remodel, what should have been an inviting gathering place was the antithesis of cottage charm. "There were dark raised-panel oak cabinets; leaky aluminum casement windows; a tiny, unusable island; and almost no access to the outdoors," Davis says. "It was not pretty."

But the owners wanted it to be. The couple dreamed of a light-filled space where they could

entertain friends and family while keeping messes at bay. And, to maintain environmental responsibility, they wanted it within the existing footprint—a relatively meager 240 square feet.

The designers immediately identified the bottlenecks to entertaining: No. 1 was the narrow doorway that separated the kitchen and dining room. "The only way to allow space for more seating and to ease traffic flow was to open up the wall," says Lord, who enlarged the 30-inch gap to 60 inches. "Doing that created enough room to put a curve on the new island and generate space adequate for four counter stools."

Next they tackled the section of the kitchen the owners dubbed the nerve center. Located between the island and the back door, the existing area with its open shelving and small laminate desk where all four family members huddled to do projects and home office chores was a clutter magnet. Even worse, a wall concealing an old chimney jutted into the room, making navigating the space difficult at best.



French doors with
sidelights replaced
inefficient, unattractive
aluminum sliders.

Furniture-style details tie the renovated kitchen to its Craftsman roots. Architectural touches include a small shelf above the range that looks like a mini fireplace mantel and glass-front cabinets.





“We kept the details simple to restore the cottage charm.”

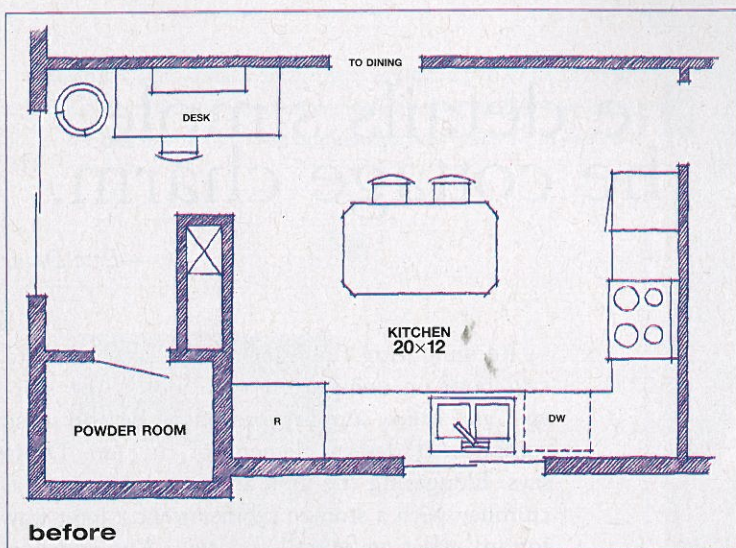
—Erin Davis

Reconfiguring the tight area to accommodate two boys on computers, two adults, file storage, and office supplies proved to be the most complicated design element of the job, Davis says. Elongating the desk area and replacing the chimney with a storage cabinet went a long way toward affecting overall function. The addition of file drawers, individual cubbies for each family member (housed in a row of cabinets above the desk), and new French doors that open to the rear deck further transformed the space. “The things we did were visual and psychological,” Davis says. “Opening a doorway and taking out the chimney made it feel more spacious without the addition of any square footage.”

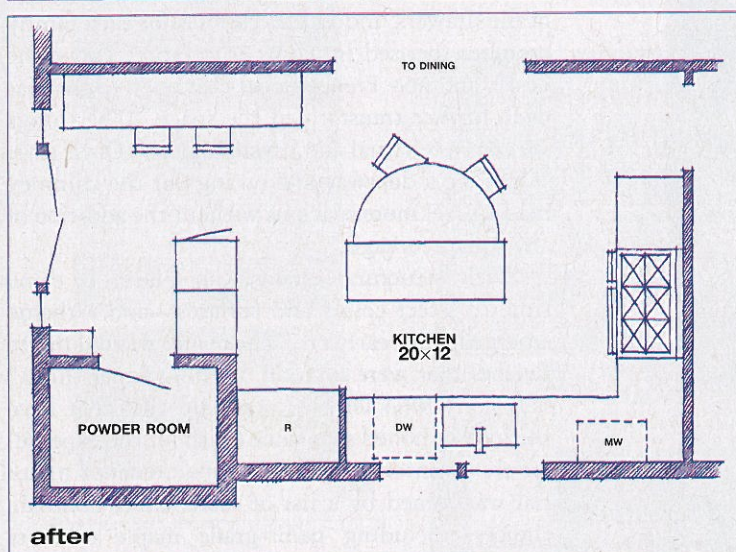
With structural changes in place, it came time to select colors and surfaces—and a theme emerged fairly early on. “The owner wanted matte finishes that were textural, nothing super shiny,” says Lord, who selected porcelain tiles that have the look of honed soapstone (without the expense) for the countertops. The low-maintenance material was joined by a list of sustainable, nontoxic choices, including paint-grade maple cabinets with wheat-board boxes, no-VOC paint for the



Compact fluorescent lighting. CFL bulbs hidden inside period-style fixtures use 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.



before



after



before

walls, custom hand-crafted backsplash tiles, and marmoleum floors. The soft yellow, brown, and moss green earth-tone palette answered the clients' request to bring their love of nature inside.

Particular attention was paid to the furniture-style piece selected to support the walnut section of the island. "You can see the curve of the island and the carved leg from the front door so they had to look good," Davis says. "We originally planned to use a leg from an antique table, but the proportions were wrong so we had one custom-turned."

Throughout the space, several small but effective nods to the past infuse the requisite historical connection. Among them: beaded board from the entry repeated on the wall behind the desk, corbels on the living room fireplace replicated on the

shelf brackets above the range, and white-painted trim continued on the window and door casings. "The light cabinets and walls give it a very fresh appeal," Davis says. "We kept the details simple to restore the cottage charm." ■

Designers: Erin Davis and Arlene Lord

For more information, turn to Sources on page 118.

No added square footage. The renovation was done within the bounds of the existing kitchen, maintaining rather than expanding the home's footprint.

No waste. All of the old appliances were donated to Habitat for Humanity. Similarly, the cabinets, windows, and doors removed during the renovation were given to other local causes. This kept usable items out of the landfill and rewarded the eco-conscious homeowners with a nice tax write-off.

Keeping the desk organized is no problem thanks to concealed cubbies above and built-in file drawers below. Eco-friendly corkboard provides the perfect surface for tacking up reminders and the kids' artwork.

