

making

MINIMAL LIVABLE

A BOLD REMODEL TURNED A COLORADO KITCHEN FROM CRAMPED AND SHABBY TO SLEEK AND FUNCTIONAL WITH MORE THAN ENOUGH SPACE FOR FAMILY TO GATHER.

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BEFORE



When the necessary update is just the beginning

The remodel of Jaris and Robert Smith's kitchen gave them a minimalist work space, left, that ultimately serves their family with functionality and convenience. Adding a room allowed ample cabinetry, while cool grays and clean lines achieve a modern look.

After two decades in their Denver-area home, Janis and Robert Smith made the call: The split-level's green shag carpet had to go.

So did the dim lighting and the outdated colors.

And the worn-through parquet flooring.

"One thing led to another, and we basically gutted the house," kitchen designer Chris Awadalla says. "But the kitchen was definitely the star of the show."

The Smiths had imagined a hub for family gatherings, yet after 25 years living there, the space had come to feel shabby and cramped. Get-togethers happened elsewhere.

"What makes a kitchen warm is the people in it," Janis says. "Rob has a big family, and we wanted them here."

Without a quick remedy for the 195-square-foot space, the Smiths and Awadalla decided on a full do-over. "They were willing to consider anything," Awadalla says. "I said, 'Let's look at doing this with a clean style.'"

The Smiths were reluctant at first. Minimal design doesn't have a reputation for warm welcomes. But Awadalla showed them some drawings, explaining that minimalism was about function, practicality, and a clean look. They liked it.

"He talked about things you can clean easily. About replacing cabinets with drawers because that's what we prefer to use. Basically making the space work for exactly how we live," Rob says. "So much of it was functional. He saw what we wanted and gave it a name."

Awadalla expanded and updated the kitchen, adding restrained dashes of color, lots of storage, and enough room

for a bustling family of cooks. Knocking out a wall between the kitchen and adjacent office added 113 square feet. That meant space for a new pantry—the old one was on the lower level—plus a new office nook in the corner.

The Smiths' bright red oven inspired floating shelves of the same color that pop like racing stripes against the timeless grays. Sliding the oven down the wall 2 feet added counter space, enough for each of Robert's four siblings to stake out a spot at family gatherings. Flat-front drawers and slab doors contribute to the minimalist look, as does the subtle backsplash tile that stretches to the ceiling on the range and sink walls. "I didn't go crazy with the backsplash. I kept it simple and subtle," Awadalla says. "It's easy to clean because it's large tile. It blends because it's white, but it contrasts with the countertops."

Making contemporary style approachable came down to details. Soapstone counters, black with natural veins, add an organic touch. So do the cabinets' matte finishes (no glossy treatment here). The No. 2 oak flooring—a budget-price flooring grade characterized by vivid color variation and natural markings, such as knots—warms the space right up.

"Design can be clean and modern without being cold," Robert says. "You can mix materials to bring warmth to any style. For us it was about finding the right person to help us."

Last Christmas, Janis and Robert's family gathered at their house, in their kitchen, to cook. Everyone found a place. With the relatives in a circle, Robert raised a glass to toast.

The kitchen was full of people, and it was warm.



BEFORE



Women's Studies 101: kitchen at jalisco

A glass panel under the rail, left, delineates the kitchen from the sunken living room. "The old railing with ugly square wooden posts divided the view," says designer Chris Awadalla. "Janis didn't like the idea of glass at first, but now you can see all the way into the living room—it's one continuous space. So much cleaner."

the plans

Homeowners Janis and Robert Smith's kitchen lost a wall but gained an office nook. Other minor tweaks simplified the traffic flow.

BEFORE



AFTER



The existing oven was a keeper and guided all other color choices in the room.

minimal with warmth

Add some soul to a sleek, contemporary kitchen with these tips:

DISPLAY PERSONALITY. A favorite collectible, a well-loved cookbook, or stationary on a desk helps a room feel lived in.

AVOID GLOSSY FINISHES on cabinets and countertops. A low sheen goes a long way toward making a space feel approachable.

DASH IN BRIGHT COLOR. Break up all those neutrals by adding warm colors with rugs, towels, or even appliances.

LEAVE SOME OPEN WALL SPACE in lieu of additional cabinets. Temper any utilitarian feel by making room for fun artwork or pottery on a floating shelf.

Two sophisticated grays, above, keep this spacious kitchen from feeling monotone.



Adding space to the kitchen meant accessing an office area, this place, long overtaken by an old computer desk and some 3,000 CDs. Arradilla built a custom cabinet for the hallway that now houses most of the CDs, although Jacis keeps her favorites at the ready in two kitchen drawers.



signature pieces



Don't you love that shapely matte-white dinnerware set on the Smiths' kitchen shelf (opposite)? Designer Eva Zeisel shirked convention in the early 1900s with ample, curvy, sensual designs inspired by the human body. She was the first woman to join Budapest's local pottery guild, igniting a career in ceramics that took her from making humble pottery in her own garden to crafting internationally noted designs. Find more of her stuff—mostly tableware—in permanent museum collections around the globe, including MoMA and the Met. But grabbing a few pieces of your own won't mean spending collector-caliber cash: The whole set is \$550 at Design Within Reach, dwr.com (individual pieces also available).

Awadalla likes the *Noire* soapstone countertop, above left, because this pure black lacks any hints of green, which is common for other black stones. The Smiths love it because it's functional: "It's great to be able to set anything hot on it," Jaris says. "And today I was feeling lucky that it doesn't stain—I overflowed coffee all over it."

Custom-matched paint allowed Awadalla to repeat the apple red color, above, of the Smiths' Viking range throughout the room to unite the space.

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“I NEVER WANT TO DESIGN A SPACE THAT FEELS LIKE YOU CAN'T TOUCH ANYTHING. **THIS FEELS LIVED IN.** IT FEELS COMFORTABLE.”

— kitchen designer Chris Awadalla