

COMPLEMENTARY STYLES

Designer blends contemporary with vintage for a clean and airy kitchen

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FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS QUINCE FLOWERS

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Joan and Bernd Rilling's former blue and yellow French Provençal-style kitchen was given a facelift that transformed it into a vintage-modern space featuring an understated neutral palette and industrial-style furnishings. The new glass backsplash tiles from Saltillo Imports changed the look right away. "All of a sudden the cabinetry that I didn't quite like but was willing to work with, I love now," says Joan.



Small glass backsplash tiles were used above the stove to create a subtle yet eye-catching decorative accent. Putty-colour tiles, granite and stainless steel blend seamlessly with the painted wood Shaker-style cabinetry. Small windows on either side of the Viking stovetop used to be covered with wooden shutters. Interior designer Natalie Chong removed the shutters, then added moldings and Roman shades made with modern striped fabric. To create the illusion of taller windows, the shades were hung well above the windows. "The actual size of the windows is pretty much what you see," says Chong.



WITH ITS RECESSED-PANEL cabinets and granite countertops juxtaposed against a muted glass backsplash and industrial vintage lighting, this family kitchen is a perfect blend. Its two contrasting yet complementary personalities aptly reflect the decor styles of owners Joan and Bernd Rilling. "The kitchen is a great mix between contemporary, which is Bernie's taste, and eclectic vintage, which is very much Joan," says interior designer Natalie Chong of Nest Design Studio.

After living in a two-bedroom house in the Kingsway for 10 years, the Rillings and their twin girls recently upsized to a much larger five-bedroom home in the same neighbourhood. Though their new house met their desire for additional space, there were aspects of the decor, especially in the kitchen, that they knew they wanted to change. "It was certainly not our style," says Joan. "The decor was very traditional and we prefer a more contemporary aesthetic."

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Mid-century modern Eames-style chairs from Shelter offer an interesting contrast to the pine farmhouse dining table and hardwood flooring. A vintage schoolhouse pendant light offers the perfect finishing touch. To soften the space, Chong replaced short cafe curtains with long linen-blend draperies. She then accented them along the bottom with the same striped fabric seen on the windows in the kitchen area.



The original kitchen was decorated in a traditional French Provençal style. "The colour of the island was a country blue and the backsplash tiles were white with little blue flowers," says Joan. But since the house was just over five years old, and the kitchen relatively new, instead of starting from scratch, the couple agreed to work with the existing architectural elements they liked, such as the cabinetry and hardwood flooring. Joan, however, could not live with the backsplash tiles or the blue island. "They were deal breakers for me," she says. "I told my husband they're non-negotiable and need to be included in the budget."

After a referral from a friend, the Rillings hired Chong to help them refresh the large kitchen. From the start, the experience working with an interior designer, the couple's first, was highly collaborative. "My job was to guide them in the right direction," says Chong. "And Joan had a pretty good idea of what she wanted going in." ☞



As the owner of Rightsize and Organize, Joan is a professional home organizer who has an appreciation of good design and what works in a house. “I love homes and I’m probably addicted to decor magazines, so I know what I like in terms of furniture,” says Joan. “But for things like the backsplash tile and paint colours, I couldn’t decide. That’s where Natalie was bang on.”

From the beginning, Chong agreed that the bones of the kitchen were great. “The house is laid out very well and they were really happy with that,” she says. “Pretty much the only thing they weren’t very happy with was the finishes. So even just changing paint colours made a huge difference for them visually.”

The blue-and-white backsplash tiles were replaced with modern putty-colour glass tiles that complement the colour of the granite countertop. The blue island was painted a warm antique grey, and the wall colour went from a pale yellow to a fresh warm white. Cabinetry hardware was changed from brass to brushed nickel. It was these small changes that made a huge difference to the overall look and feel of the space.

Chong also suggested changing the style of the window coverings. “There used to be cafe curtains on the windows in the dining area,” says Joan. “Now I can’t believe how much the new draperies soften the look of the space.”

To finish the kitchen, industrial-age furniture, such as brushed-metal bar stools and the Eames-style chairs in the dining area, were added. Above the island two vintage pendant lights replaced one brass chandelier. “Natalie found them at Queen West Antiques, but they’re from a science lab from a school somewhere in Iowa,” says Joan.

Today the spacious refinished kitchen caters to the Rillings’ love of cooking and entertaining, but what the couple love most is that it feels light and airy, which they attribute to the new neutral colour palette. “I love the brightness from the overall use of white,” says Joan. “It still feels warm but clean and modern. And, as someone who’s supposed to help people move into smaller spaces I shouldn’t say I love all the storage too, but I do.” ☛

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