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Keeping it CUSTOM

Learn how designer Tanya Smith-Shiflett utilized every corner of this Oakton, Virginia, kitchen to create a functional and comfortable family space.

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Small kitchens can still pack a punch. Tanya maxed out functionality to ensure this 750-square-foot kitchen fit all her client's needs. With floor-to-ceiling cabinets, stunning accent lighting, seating space and a splash of color, this space is a testament to the intersection of functionality and personality.



(above) Though some homeowners opt for overlays on their appliances, Tanya's clients didn't mind integrating stainless steel among the wood tones. "The cabinetry was so pretty around it, so it was okay to put that piece there," she says. "We still did cabinets on the dishwasher and a glass pane on the wine fridge."

(right) No more digging for what you need! When dealing with skinny cabinet widths, pull-out shelving can conceal loads of bottles, snacks, condiments, and more in long, cavernous spaces. Plus, a layer of glass on your wine fridge adds a small distinction to your panels without distracting from the overall appearance.

When you only have 750 square feet to work with, the phrase "measure twice, cut once" takes on an extra layer of importance.

When designer Tanya Smith-Shiflett of Unique Kitchens and Baths set out to tackle the nook-like kitchen during this complete home renovation in Oakton, Virginia, she knew her team had to carefully maximize the potential in every wall and doorway. The homeowners wanted natural wood in a functional space for their family of five, but they left most of the design choices up to Tanya. "Our goal was to create something warm and timeless," she says. "The plum-ish color in the island creates depth, but the oak really creates a kitchen that transcends generations."



Tanya's design team landed on natural, easy-to-clean marble with gray veining to line the range wall and provide a simple and aesthetically pleasing shelf for go-to cooking ingredients. "That's kind of our signature thing we do right now," she says.

Three backless stools are silent design heroes under a bolder island coated in Unique Kitchens and Baths' custom color match, "merlot." The simplicity of the wooden seats provides contrast with the island structure itself, allowing them not to be swallowed up by the room's dramatic centerpiece.



CUSTOM CABINETS

In addition to design, Unique Kitchens and Baths also offers custom cabinetry. While Tanya's team originally debated whether to coat the island in an olive or navy shade, they opted for a custom-created merlot tone, an eclectic color just dark enough to pass as neutral without looking brown. Splashes of modern design, like the island hues or marble backsplash, work harmoniously with the nods to classic farmhouse style, like vintage oil paintings and a deep sink with brassy hardware. "Anyone who looks at this kitchen can tell it brings all the old in with the new," Tanya says.

FORM + FUNCTION

Tanya blended an array of cabinet styles to ensure the family can accommodate their appliances, storage needs and easy-to-grab cooking essentials. Interior organizational options range from standard shelving and deep drawers to pocket doors and more.

"The aged brass mesh inserts above the doorway store seasonal dishes like Christmas plates and trays that can be kept out of the way throughout the year," she says. "We tried to add glass to the cabinets intended to display more elegant items. The wife loves to collect, so she had some neat glasses to put in there, and their dishes matched nicely."

"Anyone who looks at this kitchen can tell it brings

all the old in with the new." 

Milk-glass wall sconces and white-oak upper cabinets introduce elements of timeless style, while the marble backsplash and ledge and plum lower cabinets edge into modern territory. The contrast in finishes keeps things visually interesting while maintaining neat, clean lines.





The homeowners were happy to display their plates and bowls behind glass-paned doors. “When people have mismatched dishes, you don’t really want to see those coming through the cabinets,” Tanya says. “But the wife is a collector, so they had nice sets from traveling a lot.”

Windows across the back of the home permit an abundance of natural light to enter the space during the day, Tanya says, so lighting was a quick addition to the project. Aside from the vintage-looking pendants over the island and sconces by the range, canned lights and a chandelier over the table afford the kitchen extra illumination. “They’re a young couple,” Tanya says. “They wanted something fun and a little more transitional, so we just went with those lights and they fell in love.”

(right) This Oakton, Virginia, property was designed true to its name—with a ton of oak! But with her keen eye for design, Tanya added a dash of stainless steel, sleek marble accents and room-warming rugs, so the oak’s presence didn’t overpower the space.

(below) While the lighter marble fit seamlessly with the cabinets on the outer countertops, Tanya kept the island sink and soapstone quartz surface dark to blend in with the plum-like base. The brass faucet and handles paired with two vintage-inspired pendants add a gleaming touch to the kitchen center.



MASTER YOUR KITCHEN FLOW

Though cabinets can be reimagined throughout the years, your kitchen flow and budget will be a lot smoother if you consider cabinet layout and organization at the start of your build or renovation. Tanya weighs myriad considerations when designing kitchen storage.

DEFINE YOUR BUDGET. First, she helps clients nail down what changes or additions will impact their budget: Are they open to moving walls? How many large and/or built-in appliances will they need for weekly meals? How will those appliances fit into their space?

GET CREATIVE. If you’re designing on a budget, Tanya says to opt for a closet or built-in pantry instead of a walk-in with a door, which requires extra walls—and quickly hikes up the project price.

CUT DOWN CABINETS. One of the biggest design mistakes Tanya has seen homeowners make in their kitchen storage is including too many cabinets. She prefers to play around with drawers, which also allows for easy maneuvering around the kitchen when popping in and out of your storage. “When you include so many storage areas, you just create too much space, and then you don’t end up using what you can’t reach,” she says.

