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The island in this kitchen was reconfigured to eliminate the raised counter and seating area, and ventilation was added above the cooktop. The designer incorporated ample display space for the couple's spirits and decanter collection.

A modern kitchen featuring white shaker-style cabinetry with glass-front upper cabinets displaying decorative items. A large white marble island with a curved edge sits on a dark wood base, which includes glass-fronted storage for bottles. The island is topped with a gas cooktop, a sink with a chrome faucet, and a vase of white flowers. To the right, a stack of three stainless steel appliances (oven, microwave, and another oven) is integrated into the white cabinetry. The floor is made of light-colored wood, and a white door is visible on the far right.

Change Is Good

A couple desired several new additions to their kitchen but refused to budge on a few key elements

By Chelsie Butler

Located on a former Boy Scout reservation, a kitchen just outside of Louisville, Ky., had a million-dollar view of the beautiful rocks and waterfalls outside, but the design needed an update. Although they wanted to stay within the same floor plan – with the existing wood flooring – and keep the main sink location in front of the spectacular view, the homeowners definitely needed some changes to the design.

"It was the home's original kitchen from 18 years ago," said Thomas Lutz, owner/designer of his firm, Just 4 You, LLC. "It was not in great shape and was cosmetically aged."

Together, Lutz and his clients determined the goals of the project, which were to:

- Reconfigure the island to eliminate the raised counter and seating area
- Add needed ventilation above the cooktop
- Update the wet bar and add an area for mail sorting with a fire safe and a paper shredder
- Greatly improve the lighting plan
- Enhance the cabinetry design and function
- Incorporate some generous display space for their unique spirits and decanter collection

Island Woes

"My clients did not like the function of the island," said Lutz. "They never used it as a place to gather and eat, opting instead to use the generous eat-in area two steps down from the kitchen with a view of a wooded ravine."

Lutz designed a larger island for the couple's cooking needs with a prep sink on the corner and the necessary ventilation above the island cooktop, which the previous space had lacked. Another goal with the new island was to incorporate some display space to showcase their extraordinary collection of colorful wine and whiskey decanters.

"The couple own a beverage company that makes drink mixes," said Lutz, "and one of their passions is collecting these unusual bottles."

He came up with a way to expand the island and display the collection on the front, using LED lighting on a hidden touch dimmer for highlighting.

"This expansion of the island resulted in a generous amount of countertop surface in front of the work space area and allowed further setback of the hood and cooktop from the front," he added. "I'm pleased with how I was able to include all of the serious function on one side and showcase the homeowners' art on the outside."

New Additions

The homeowners desired an area to pay bills and house a fire safe and a paper shredder, as well as a separate wet bar area. Lutz was able to configure a functional mini-office space right at the kitchen's entrance to the garage. He incorporated a fireproof safe into the cabinets, and the shredder is in a pullout drawer in the same area.

The improved wet bar sits just outside the kitchen, leading to a large entertainment area complete with a fireplace, seating and a piano. Since this is where the couple entertains, this was another reason not to feature the island as a gathering spot.



The improved wet bar features a cast-glass countertop with an integral sink also cast in the glass. The bowl features a deeply textured and mirrored underside that radiates a silver appearance when lit from the lighting above.



The new cabinets are framed, and the same door design — a wider rail/stile than the typical Shaker door and little step on the inside of the frame — was used consistently on both the stained cherry and painted white cabinetry.

Let there be Light!

As the previous space housed only dated can lights, Lutz and his team incorporated the latest in lighting technology and layered in a variety of light sources, including the latest LED undercabinet, display and toe kick lighting.

"I'd like to give a special nod to Tresco Lighting by Rev-A-Shelf," said Lutz. "The company sent out its owner and some engineers to initially help us specify the right kind of lighting applications."

The toe kick space features warm LED tape lighting, and the underside and interiors of the cabinets use a combination of Elli-V light strips and spots – all controlled by concealed, dimmable touch switches. Another use of this "trick" lighting is on the shelves above the wet bar sink – these shelves can be set to any color or can rotate through a rainbow of colors via a wireless, remote device.

Countertop and Cabinet Debates

Lutz's clients wanted to install more of a traditional cabinet look – flush, inset doors with a flat panel – but the scale/height of the new cabinetry dictated that they use a framed cabinet. They were also insistent on doing everything white, as it had been before, but Lutz persuaded them into finishing the wet bar and island in a contrasting wood and color as accents. Those two areas are done in a stained (Windsor) cherry wood, while a custom door style features a wider rail/stile than the typical Shaker door and a little step on the inside of the frame. The same door design was used consistently on both the stained cherry and painted white cabinetry.

The wife chose a white marble countertop with a honed finish, even though the material requires more care than granite or quartz. According to Lutz, "She saw it once and could not talk herself out of it."

In the wet bar, the clients commissioned an architectural glass artist to design and fabricate the cast-glass-top countertop with an integral sink also cast in the glass. The bowl features a deeply textured, mirrored underside that radiates a silver appearance when lit by the lighting above.

Tricks of the Trade

As with most projects, it's understandable that there can be a few hiccups along the way. First and foremost with this kitchen was the lack of ventilation, which when installed, needed to be placed in the correct location over the island to cover the capture area, which Lutz says was accomplished by the expert installers.

"Since there had been no ventilation in the previous space, I was adamant about satisfying this important issue in my design," he added. "As I developed a general plan and the footprint for the island evolved, it allowed me to place an efficient, stylish hood over the cooktop and not obstruct the view through the kitchen."

Another issue was accommodating the different kinds of lighting in a place where it could be concealed. Lutz used an area in the lower-level utility room and was able to put in all of the transformers and accessible wiring below the kitchen, mounted to the wall.

The clients wanted the cabinets to reach the ceiling at 123 inches and tie into the existing crown molding, which would add more storage space above the refrigerator and the wall oven. Those tall cabinets were not going to be easy to access, so Lutz used a remote activator to flip up the large doors with the use of special hardware and servo-drive motors.

"The clients love this feature and enjoy demonstrating this high-tech mechanism for their guests," he added.

The last but not least challenge was always looming, and that was



A variety of lighting was used from Tresco Lighting by Rev-A-Shelf, including LED undercabinet, display and toe kick lighting. The toe kick space features warm LED tape lighting, and the underside and interiors of the cabinets use a combination of Elli-V light strips and spots – all controlled by concealed, dimmable touch switches.

keeping the solid oak kitchen floor that had always been there. In trying to be considerate of the existing footprint, Lutz said he was able to cover 98 percent of the perimeter and island areas with the new cabinets, and with the other two percent he pieced in small spots of new flooring, which when sanded and finished looked exactly like the original oak floor.

According to Lutz, one of the most important things about this and any other project is to listen to what your client envisions – it's not all about the designer's vision. At the same time, he uses his experience to steer his clients in the right direction – making sure to do things right the first time.

"You do not want to have to redesign again in two years," he added. "And these clients said the very words every designer wants to hear at the end of the project: They wouldn't change a thing." ■

Sources

Designer: Thomas Lutz, Just 4 You, LLC; **General Contractor:** Laife McGary, The Remodeling Co, LLC; **Photography:** Phototech

Appliance Installation: L & L Services; **Beverage Center, Microwave & Refrigerator:** GE; **Cabinet Installation:** Tom Lutz & Phil Worsley; **Cabinetry:** Grabill Cabinet Co.; **Cooktop, Oven & Warming Drawer:** Wolf; **Countertops:** Caibe & Co.; **Decorative Hardware:** Atlas Homewares; **Dishwasher:** Asko; **Functional Hardware:** Blum, Rev-A-Shelf, LLC; **Hood:** Zephyr; **Lighting:** Tresco Lighting by Rev-A-Shelf