



classic kitchen defined

A MERIDIAN-KESSLER
KITCHEN REFLECTS THE
HOME'S AGELESS ELEGANCE

By Lori D. Roberts

blame the green countertops. For 15 years, they served their purpose in the stately Meridian Kessler home. Paired with dated cabinetry and stenciled designs, the kitchen exuded a '90s family home vibe. Now the nest is empty, and Mom and Dad had a chance to look at their kitchen with a critical eye. The green countertops had to go.

The couple figured they could replace the countertops with something a more timeless and classic, and they'd enjoy another 15 years in the kitchen. Truthfully, though, the cabinets weren't standing the test of time any better than the countertops. The couple decided to send the cabinetry out with the countertops.

Then the wife happened to open one of the many glossy home magazines that feature fancy homes and kitchens (without green countertops or dated cabinetry). Her eyes fell on a picture of a grand Wm Ohs-brand kitchen island with enormous, stately carv-

The detailed hardwood floors by The Great Indoors, the ornately carved island by Wm Ohi, and faux-antique oven from La Cornue add vintage appeal to the Meridian-Kessler kitchen, all in keeping with the overall historic feel of the century-old home. The marble countertop will add to the space's look as it ages naturally.



A warm color palette of oranges, browns and copper eschews today's hot colors, such chocolate brown or seafoam green—contributing to the historic Meridian-Kessler kitchen's ability to stand the test of time.

ings on each corner, and she fell in love. She jumped on the Internet to find out who sold Wm Ohs brand furniture locally and came up with Rob Klein of Conceptual Kitchens. "I took the picture in and said, 'Let's start here,'" the wife says.

Klein, owner of Conceptual Kitchens, is used to people showing up with an idea and a page torn from a magazine. Kitchens are his specialty, although his company handles other areas of the home as well. "When you do something like this day in and day out, it's very easy to come in and listen to what the client has to say and be able to interpret it into a correct design," Klein says.

Walking into the couple's home, Klein was struck by its ageless beauty. The home is classic Meridian Kessler, with arches, plaster and lath walls and hardwood floors. He wanted to create a new kitchen that would flow seamlessly with the rest of the home, not stand out in jarring contrast.

Klein helped the couple redesign their kitchen space, incorporating classic cabi-

netry, appliances and colors that suit the home's timeless elegance. The green is gone, replaced with rich gold, brown and copper hues. The couple liked their kitchen so much that they hired Klein on a couple of other projects.

"What started as new countertops became a new kitchen, a new bath and a new library," the wife says.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

The couple—he's retired, she still works outside the home—are casual kitchen users, hanging out in the kitchen in the mornings and evenings. They call themselves sporadic entertainers, having friends over occasionally and throwing bigger parties less often. They needed a kitchen cozy enough for the two of them and functional enough to accommodate large gatherings, where guests tend to congregate in the kitchen.

The couple has remodeled their kitchen three times in the 27 years they've lived in the home. The first redesign was a facelift,

while the second relocated a laundry room and added kitchen space. This time around, the couple wanted more floor space and room to display the wife's extensive glass collection. But they didn't want to give up the wall that separated the kitchen from the adjoining sunroom. Klein agreed, not wanting to move walls that had been holding up the house for nearly 100 years.

"It was such a pretty room. I wanted to keep it intact," Klein says of the sunroom. "The home has been here for so long. The less you can do to upset an old home, the better off you are."

Instead, Klein added space by reconfiguring the kitchen space and incorporating more efficient cabinetry that was easier to access and use. After a heating specialist concluded that a radiator along one kitchen wall was no longer a necessary heating element for the home, Klein removed it and relocated the room's wet bar, which was awkwardly shaped and placed against the far kitchen wall.

"During our one big party of the year, it was useful," the husband says of the old wet bar. "But that was the only time."

Designing a large kitchen can be as challenging as designing a small one, Klein says. Many homeowners tend to want to group the major activity centers, which can make the kitchen seemed cramped. But on the other hand, a sprawling kitchen floor plan may be inefficient.

Klein installed the dishwasher on the perimeter of the kitchen, a few feet down from the new sink. The refrigerator—hidden behind stylish kitchen cabinetry—is a few more steps away, but still adjacent to the center island so ingredients are still at hand. A cozy breakfast nook is tucked into the far corner, while the relocated wet bar is in another corner. Klein added two handy refrigerator drawers under the wet bar to keep cold ingredients close by, cutting down on cross-kitchen trips.

"You want to utilize all aspects of the kitchen, and you can only spread out the kitchen so far," Klein says.

A MIGHTY ISLAND

Credit the island with taking a leading

role in the kitchen redesign. It's the same one spotted in that glossy magazine—a sprawling, rectangular cherry wood design topped with a slab of gold and earth-toned marble. The size doesn't detract from the elegance, with its carved trim and beveled edges defining the kitchen's enduring quality. Originally, the homeowner picked out the marble over a larger piece of granite, and Klein seconded the use of marble despite the stone's reputation for needing a greater amount of homeowner care. "We found this marble and love it," the wife says. "Rob said, 'I promise you'll love it.'"

Klein's a big fan of marble, which he says ages gracefully with its surroundings: "I think there's nothing prettier in a kitchen than marble. So many people are afraid of marble because it does scratch, it has a tendency to etch, and it will stain. But I've never seen a piece of marble that looks ruined because of it. The imperfections become a part of the character of the kitchen as it pines with the house. It tells a story."

The wife was tired of her old wall-mounted double ovens, so Klein directed her to a La Cornue brand CornuFé range that now sits in the island. The range resembles an

antique oven, with its brushed metal knobs and trim against a cream backdrop, and stays in character with the home and its new kitchen. But the decidedly modern 44-inch cooktop boasts five gas burners, and the two convection ovens offer convection heating on one side and six cooking modes on the other.

The sheer size of the cooktop—as well as local building codes—necessitated a range hood. Klein helped the couple choose a large, sleek model with a painted finish that matches the island below. He also suggested making it longer and narrower, retaining its function without impeding the cook's view of guests who might be sitting at the island. The light over the stove is an added benefit of the range hood.

CABINET UPGRADES

While the island set the stage for the kitchen redesign, the white oak floor with its beautiful floral and vine design of exotic woods guided the couple's cabinet choices. Green countertops may have been destined for the junkyard, but the floors were going to stay. The couple chose Wm Ohs cabinetry in a light wood color, opting for a French

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country design that matched the character of the home and its unique floor. The decision wasn't wasted on the floor's designer, Brian Depp of The Great Indoors.

"When I went back to patch and refinish the floor after they got in all the new cabinetry and counter, I almost cried," recalls Depp, owner of The Great Indoors. "It looked so good."

Klein says Wm Ohs has a flawless reputation in the industry, partially because the furniture grade cabinetry ensures that each piece has been designed to fit together perfectly. "Until you have lived with an old kitchen, you don't know how nice it is to get cabinets that close," the wife says.

Klein also encouraged the homeowners to use fewer traditional cabinets and incorporate more drawers in their selections, since the drawers are easier to access and organize. Even the microwave is in a drawer: The stainless-steel appliance pulls out and is accessed through the top. This allows the microwave to be installed at waist level, freeing countertop space for food preparation purposes.

Interior designer Marika Klemm of Marika Designs assisted with the kitchen décor and helped select the appropriate colors for the walls and window treatments. Klemm took her inspiration from the marble on both the island top and the countertops that line the perimeter of the kitchen. "There's browns and oranges and whites; so many colors in the marble had a lot to do with the color palette," Klemm says.

Klemm chose a rich gold for the walls and incorporated copper, brown and orange into the accessories. The bar stools at the island and the seats around the breakfast nook are covered in orange leather, which coordinates with one of the smaller window treatments. The glass collection comes in a combination of browns, oranges, greens and yellows, easily fitting into the kitchen palette. Klemm punctuated the color and the glass theme with glass tile backsplashes along the sink and wet bar. "It ties in with the countertops, but it also has its own personality," says Klemm of the iridescent tile.

Can the new kitchen serve the couple for at least another 15 years? "We put in a traditional kitchen so that when you walk into the kitchen, it doesn't feel like it was remodeled," Klein says. "It feel like this may have been an original kitchen, and it goes along with the rest of the house."

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