

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

KBB

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF **NKBA** | **KBIS**



• *THE
OUTDOOR
LIVING
MOVEMENT*

• *MEET THIS
YEAR'S
THIRTY
UNDER 30*

WHAT'S IN
STORE FOR

KBIS

2022



Tailor-Made

for a
Repeat Client

Removing a wall in a cramped kitchen opens the space to plenty of bespoke elements

By Chelsie Butler

A HOMEOWNER WAS IN THE MARKET for a new kitchen, so she looked to Paul Linnebach of Minneapolis-based Mantis Design Build since they had worked together on a previous project that went viral on social media a few years prior. His client, a professional who travels often, didn't need a huge kitchen, but she wanted one that opened to the adjacent living room, which had previously been impossible with the wall separating the two. She also wanted a less-congested kitchen and a space she actually enjoys spending time in.

FULFILLING THE CLIENT'S WISH LIST

First and foremost, Linnebach knew he was going to tear down the non-load-bearing wall in the mid-century modern-style home and make the utmost of the narrow, dark kitchen with a few clever adjustments. Without the wall,

ABOVE For the custom range hood, designer Paul Linnebach and his team used a hand-applied, metal-infused plaster finish polished to a satin sheen to give it the appearance of a solid block of forged steel. He loves how the appearance of the backsplash tiles can shift with the slightest change in the light.

there is also a clear view of the backyard out of the windows opposite the kitchen, which Linnebach's client says is the best view from the house.

"With open sight lines, the once-dark kitchen now feels bright and spacious," he said. "We also increased the size of the recessed lighting to further enhance the room's illumination."

As a standing fridge would have looked awkward and bulky in the new layout, which eliminated some storage space and the location of the former range, the designer installed two side-by-side undercounter freezer and refrigerator units. This back wall also accommodates the range, which is now located between the two windows.



The homeowner does have a full-height refrigerator in the basement she uses for overstock, but her constant travel means less meals cooked at home. Linnebach also incorporated a beverage refrigerator in the new kitchen.

Another goal for the project was to replace the client's Ikea units with custom storage and open shelving. The designer knew he wanted something that harmonized well with the rest of the home.

"We chose warm walnut tones to balance out the steely blues and rich hues of the space," he explained. "We installed open shelves on the upper walls to provide visual interest and keep the kitchen feeling spacious, as well as to display some of my client's favorite stone and porcelain cookware in the kitchen."

CREATING BESPOKE HIGHLIGHTS

To fulfill his client's desire for a seating area where she could enjoy a quick meal or that could serve as a place for a guest to sit while she was cooking,

Linnebach added a small extension to the counter he dubbed the "breakfast bar." To complement some of the other mid-century elements in the home, the design team created a metal leg for the breakfast bar and incorporated metal cabinet pulls.

"The range hood also offered a great opportunity to create a unique element of interest that tied nicely into some of the steel elements throughout the house," said the designer. "Originally, my client wanted to use her old range hood, but we convinced her to go with something custom to create more of a statement piece that echoes the stairway's delicate metal detailing."



For the backsplash, Linnebach chose a 3D hexagonal tile that creates various visual patterns, depending on the time of day and from which direction you are approaching. He also added custom cabinets in the living room, as well as a steel entertainment center, that harmonize with certain aspects of the kitchen design.

SMART SOLUTIONS TO PROJECT HURDLES

The custom leg for the breakfast bar had two goals: be strong enough to support that portion of the quartz countertop and still fit the mid-century modern style of the home. According to the designer, there could be no fluctuation in the leg given the rigidity of quartz.

“The solution was to create a solid-yet-elegant, steel T-shaped leg that was set into the floor and tied into the adjacent cabinetry in such a way that it was stable yet looked like it was floating on the end,” explained Linnebach.

ABOVE Linnebach’s client wanted a modern, Zen kitchen that would blend with the rest of the mid-century details throughout the rest of the home.

Another challenge arose with the hand-fabricated cabinet pulls the client’s friend created. The designer admitted he was not expecting the degree to which each handle had to be bent to line up with the right angle so they would all look continuous, claiming that if one pull was the slightest degree off, it was noticeable. Linnebach and his team had to have the handles refabricated multiple times to get the perfect end result.

“We also created a new policy to never hand-bend continuous cabinet pulls ever again,” he said.

A third challenge came about with the cabinet veneers, which the designer says often have regularly repeating patterns, as one tree is sliced for the process. To achieve the look of one single plank of walnut, he and his team cut the panels to the cabinets’ horizontal lengths, and before they made the vertical cuts, the lower run was flipped 180 degrees, which eliminated any visual repetition in the wood pattern.

SOURCES

DESIGNER: Paul Linnebach, Mantis Design + Build LLC;
PHOTOGRAPHER: Mantis Design + Build LLC

BACKSPLASH: Quintessenza; **CABINETS & HARDWARE:** Custom; **COUNTERTOPS:** Silestone; **DISHWASHER:** Bosch; **FAUCET & SINK:** Kohler – InSinkERator instant hot; **FLOORING:** Existing; **HOOD:** Vent-A-Hood insert and custom exterior; **MICROWAVE:** Wolf; **REFRIGERATION:** Sub-Zero



“This created the unique and slightly random look we were after,” said Linnebach. “The grains between cabinet fronts were carefully matched between each panel to create a continuous flow from one cabinet to the next.”

ADDRESSING WELLNESS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Although the client didn’t specify any universal design elements in this kitchen, the undercounter refrigerator and freezer units and counter-height microwave are wheelchair accessible. In terms of wellness elements, the new kitchen includes a purification system for the hot/cold water dispenser and ice maker, no-VOC paint and quartz countertops for durability and cleanliness.

“My firm and I are really conscious about how we do things from a design perspective in terms of healthy materials and automatically incorporate those as a company philosophy,” said Linnebach. “We do not want to work in an unhealthy environment, and homeowners do not want to live in one. Our aim is to create a space that works really well for our clients, makes their lives easier and puts a smile on their face.”

The designer was able to fulfill all his client’s requests – and then some – by paying close attention to detail, creating tailored elements and coming up with thoughtful solutions to not-so-common issues. ●



ABOVE According to the designer, cutting the shelves at an angle helped maintain clear window views. Gray manufactured quartz countertops were chosen because they are easy to clean and maintain.

LEFT To conserve space in the new kitchen, double refrigerator and freezer drawers were installed side by side under the countertop in place of a full-height appliance.