



**Before and After**

# Space & Symmetry Lessons

*A chopped-up kitchen transforms into a well-balanced room that blends with the rest of the home*

DESPITE BEING IN A NEARLY 7,000-SQ.-FT. HOME, one Yorktown, Va., kitchen looked like it belonged in a much smaller house. Everything in the home had been recently renovated with the exception of the kitchen and dining areas, which were unused, dark and dated — all faux pas to its homeowners, one of whom recently retired from NASA.

“This vast space was like a bowling alley, with a span of almost 55 feet from end to end,” said designer Ebony Stephenson of Newport News, Va.-based Criner Remodeling, who completed the redesign.

The would-be open space was chopped through the middle by a peninsula with tall wall cabinets. A soffit above these cabinets made even the nine-ft.-tall ceilings seem short, while all the natural light from a large triple window was blocked out by a valance and curtains. The dark cabinetry and old lighting did not help the kitchen much either, but those were the easy-to-fix problems.

## DISCOVERING CHALLENGES

The homeowners wanted the new space to feel open and airy and have plenty of storage, but most importantly, they didn’t want to feel stressed during the remodel since the wife is a busy nurse practitioner. Despite these modest requirements, the team faced a number of challenges from day one. When the appliances were removed, a leak around the dishwasher and sink was discovered, and the existing hardwood floor and even the subfloor were damaged.

“Replacing all of the flooring was not an option since this prefinished flooring was previously installed on the entire first floor of the home,” said Stephenson. “The issue was made even worse by discovering that this floor had been discontinued since its purchase several years prior.”

Fortunately, the homeowners were able to track down just enough of the flooring to finish the job. The team then had to repair the subfloor and tooth in the new floors to make them blend seamlessly with the existing flooring.

**ABOVE LEFT** To tie the kitchen to the rest of the home — which featured dark-stained trim — the design team added a matching piece of stained valance molding to the bottom of the 60-in. wall cabinets.

**ABOVE RIGHT** “The appliances, with the exception of the new refrigerator, were dated and some did not work at all,” said designer Ebony Stephenson. “The dark laminate countertops had also seen better days.”

Other than repairing the water-damaged floors, there were thankfully no other structural challenges to the space. The soffits did not have any HVAC, electrical or plumbing hidden inside, so removing those was fairly easy.

## BLENDING WITH THE HOME

→ **Through Cabinetry.** An easy decision was the choice of cabinetry: a Shaker door style in white to fit the homeowners’ hopes for a clean and airy space. However, the home had a dark-stained trim throughout its entirety, and the room needed to incorporate some of that color to blend with the rest of the space.

“We toyed between white and stained crown to match the room, but something was off,” said Stephenson. She decided to add a matching piece of stained valance molding to the bottom of the wall cabinets to bring it all together. “When the homeowners and I saw this combination on my monitor, we all said, ‘Yes, this is it!’”

→ **Through Lighting.** The pendants above the kitchen island also help bring the spaces together. The homeowner saw them in a magazine, and Stephenson agreed that they blended well with the style of the home and the beach-inspired family room off the far end of the kitchen. The pendants’ bronze finish also accentuates the bronze hardware and faucet.

→ **Through Colors.** The dark island cabinetry beneath the pendants is contrasted by the white cabinetry around the perimeter, and Stephenson hoped to find countertops that blended the two.

“For the countertops, we looked at about 20 different options but finally decided on granite with a book’s spine edge,” she said. “It was a good mix of white, gray and brown to combine all the finish colors together in the kitchen.”

## ADDING SOME NECESSARY DRAMA

The clean, white kitchen still needed that pop of color to make it stand out, so Stephenson looked to a popular spot: the backsplash.

“I wanted a bit of drama under the stainless chimney hood, so I used polished glass tiles in a

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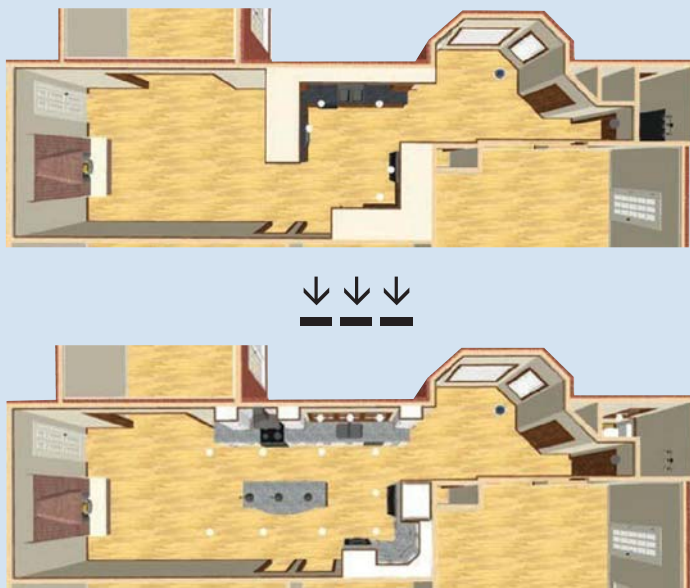
popular herringbone pattern,” she said, explaining that the dark gray tiles nicely contrast the pale gray subway tiles she used as the field tile.

Surrounding the backsplash and subway tile is a decorative strip of mini brick mosaic tiles that runs along the lower part of the wall. The brick, which includes colors like lavender, metallic pewter, silver and beige, are reminiscent of coastal Virginia.

Another dark accent is the island, which features an alder stain. Its center cabinet has a base with two doors and a drawer fitted with a two-tiered silverware divider. On both sides of this cabinet are two large, three-drawer bases. The left drawer base contains a knife block holder, and the right cabinet boasts a custom utensil divider. An open bookcase on one end and a lattice wine rack on the other top off the island’s symmetry.

“The last step was to dress up the island with furniture base molding, shoe molding and a large slab of granite with plenty of overhang so this tall family can sit comfortably,” said Stephenson, who said her favorite part of this project was still working with her clients. “[One of the] homeowners, was very particular about symmetry, so we got along very well,” she said. “The final outcome was amazing, but I really just enjoyed working with them.” ●

## Before and After



## SOURCES

**DESIGNER:** Ebony Stephenson, Newport News, Va.-based Criner Remodeling;  
**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Sheila Ponthieux, Virtual Tidewater and Alvin Tatum, A. Tatum Photography

**CABINETS:** Greenfield;  
**COUNTERTOP:** New Caledonia Granite;  
**DISHWASHER:** Bosch;  
**FAUCET:** Pfister; **GROUT:** TEC; **HARDWARE:** Hardware Resources;  
**HOOD:** Zephyr; **LED RECESSED LIGHTS:** NORA;  
**MICROWAVE:** Monogram;  
**PAINT:** Sherwin-Williams;  
**PENDANT LIGHTS:** Minka Lavery; **RANGE:** GE Profile; **REFRIGERATOR:** Samsung; **SINK:** Royal;  
**TILE BACKSPLASH:** Florida Tile, Schluter and Tile Bar;  
**WALL OVEN:** Monogram



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