



So Good to come home to!

Open concept kitchen offers entertaining ideas

BY MARGARET ANNE FEHR PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

SHIRLEY'S SMALLISH 1930'S HOUSE HAS SUITED HER WELL OVER THE LAST 17 years of home ownership. "I like the area, have lots of friends nearby, and the yard is small enough for me to handle on my own." Those are the positives.

On the opposite side of the ledger, the original kitchen was very dated with a deteriorating countertop, three layers of paint on the walls, and another three layers of linoleum on the floor. "I should know," laughs Shirley, because I was the one who contributed the last layers of paint and linoleum when I moved in."

So when the time came to consider the merits of moving as opposed to the temporary upheaval of renovations, Shirley chose the reno route. "I figured that I didn't want to give up what I liked about the area, and frankly, I don't think it pays to move these days."

After conducting some informal research, Shirley chose All Canadian Renovations (ACR) to handle her character home renovation project. Marcel Verrier, ACR sales and

project manager, helped Shirley to consolidate the items on her list of 'must-haves' into the kitchen she envisioned.

The most defining moment came when the existing wall between kitchen and living room and dining room came down. Fortunately, says Marcel, "No engineering was required in removing it, since it was not a load-bearing wall." At the same time, the living room and dining room carpets were lifted to reveal prize hardwood flooring that simply needed some refinishing to spring back to life, so things were off to a great start.

Meanwhile, the newly-liberated kitchen space was outfitted with a full-wall terrace door that replaced the old-style kitchen window, and also led to walling up the cramped back door entry that was part of the original house design.

Marcel explains that the advantage of a terrace door is "You can open the door and it opens in on itself towards the fixed door, so it doesn't block any walls and takes up less space." The door is insulated to a low-E rating and will not frost up in cold weather. Says Marcel, "We took the opportunity to add further insulation to the outside wall with six inches of insulation instead of the standard four."

The kitchen configuration was re-worked to maximize space both above and below the countertop. The sink was moved from one side of the kitchen to be near the dishwasher; the stove and vented overhead microwave oven formed a logical unit on the other side and freed up some valuable countertop real estate for a seamless, uncluttered profile.

The cabinets, constructed of MDF, are covered with a thermal foil finish that is economical, looks good and provides easy-clean up. Shirley chose a soft white to further brighten the kitchen and to add a satisfying contrast to the abundance of hardwood flooring in the adjacent living and dining room space.



Before

Above: the wide open space of the new kitchen provides ample prep room and is bathed in abundant natural light from the new double patio doors. Right: Pristine white foil finish cupboards frame the custom tile backsplash.



FEATURE RENOVATION



Marcel says, "There is about 50% more cupboard space than before and lots more counter space." Besides the extra space, Shirley enjoys the easy access provided by the cupboard drawers. "They glide out so easily and let you see everything at a glance."

The laminate bevel-edged countertop displays a 'crystal' finish, a mix of glossy and matte that imparts an organic pattern that also is resistant to scratch marks. Shirley chose a chic midnight colour for a touch of drama. The colour also works well with the earthy-toned, ceramic backsplash and inlay that is given extra dimension with a series of solitaire silver finish mosaic tiles placed at four inch intervals around the kitchen perimeter. Says Shirley, "They really come to life when the under-cabinet lights are turned on."

Shirley chose Dura-ceramic flooring for the kitchen which is a composite vinyl tile product that looks just like ceramic tile complete with grouting, but offers a softer, warmer, cushiony effect underfoot than traditional ceramic.

Shirley's favorite spot in the entire kitchen has become the wraparound counter and glass-fronted cupboard complete with counter lighting that's proving its worth as a cozy nook where she can read the newspaper and linger over a second cup of coffee.

Shirley's kitchen has been a turning-point for her in many respects. "I like cooking and this is making me cook more. I've had three dinner parties already in the last 2 weeks!"

Shirley said she was reluctant to invite people over before because she didn't feel very good about the old-style kitchen and old carpet.

"There was lot of upkeep. I was always vacuuming. Now, it's much easier with the hardwood floors and the new kitchen. It's just nice to come home." [®]



Top: the cozy wrap around eating nook is ideal for enjoying the morning paper and coffee. Above: the under cabinet lighting shows off the silver accent tiles on the backsplash. Right: detail of the smooth operating MDF cupboard doors.

