



STEEL IDEALS > The Kortus family gained the benefits of stainless appliances, above, and a five-top range with custom black splash, below, in their recent remodel.



Kitchen Confidential

A Lake Elmo family shares its secrets of remodeling success

BY REBECCA KORTUS PHOTOS BY TATE CARLSON

What happens when walls come tumbling down, barriers are removed and natural order is restored? What else but a beautifully designed kitchen that masterfully combines form, function and flow, the holy trinity of architecture.

It's just what Tim and Connie Keran of Lake Elmo were looking for when they realized their home of eight years was being outgrown by their family of five. While the entire house needed updating, they decided to focus on an update to their kitchen during this past year. And when it came to asking the tough questions, they turned to Michael Lee Remodeling, a division of Kootenia Homes (651.731.2345, www.kooteniahomes.com), to create their dream kitchen in accordance with their busy family lifestyle.

During the four-month refurbishing project, the kitchen was demolished and a wall

was removed between the kitchen and the living area. This included the dismantling of an awkward peninsula counter that jutted out as a half-wall between kitchen and living space and blocked the flow of foot traffic. In its place, two archways were built with columns made of knotty alder wood, and the result is an open, light-filled, usable space perfect for entertaining.

"Once the counter was gone, it really switched up everything," Connie Keran says. "Having a blockade right there never worked for me; the kids were constantly fighting it there trying to get out the side door."

Where the former island with its small cook top once stood, a larger granite island was installed that now houses the stainless-steel sink. "At first, I didn't think I'd like the sink in the middle of the island because of the water and the kids doing homework,"

NOOKS & CRANNIES

LOCATION: Lake Elmo

WHEN BUILT: 1992

WHEN PURCHASED: 1998

WHEN REMODELED: 2006

SIZE OF REMODEL: 182 square feet

BUILDER & DESIGNER:

Michael Lee Remodeling

SPECIAL FEATURES: New windows; fresh woodwork and oak flooring throughout the main floor; custom exhaust vent with faux-painted copper patina; tumbled-tile backsplash; wallpapered kitchen ceiling with an old-fashioned tin ceiling motif; large-radius granite island; pendant lights; double oven with food warmer; side-by-side stainless Kitchen Aid refrigerator.



ISLAND DREAMS > This granite slab is infused with topaz- and rust-colored veins studded with crystal to make it more than just a countertop—a piece of art.

Connie says, noting the couple decided upon a curved design to eliminate crowding and allow equal amounts of leg room. “This has become a family gathering spot. We hang, we talk, and kids are always here—I just love it.”

To showcase the granite’s wow factor with its topaz- and rust-colored veins studded with flecks of crystal, the couple selected a light-beige Silestone, a man-made product, for the remaining countertops. “We decided we wanted it to look like a piece of art instead of just a countertop,” Connie says.

Custom cherry cabinets with a rich walnut stain line the walls in the refinished kitchen, and to mix things up, the Kerans chose white-oak flooring to contrast the island’s dark-brown, aged cabinetry that

complements the custom wooden cooking vent on the opposite wall, which itself is faux painted to look like copper patina.

Above the island, three cream-colored pendant light fixtures drop from the bronze-toned wallpaper ceiling, emitting an inviting glow. Recessed lighting surrounds the edges of the ceiling, and sand-colored marble tiles tumble behind the updated five-burner gas stove to give it a rough look over the backsplash. New stainless Kitchen Aid appliances, including double ovens with a food warmer and a side-by-side refrigerator, complete the beautiful, functional kitchen that the entire family can enjoy. ●

Rebecca Kortus is a Stillwater-based freelance writer.

COUNTERTOP CHOICES

When the Kerans were faced with what type of surface to go with for their countertop surfaces, the decision was easy due to their desire to maintain quality despite the cost. Here’s a list of options available, listed in order of affordability:

PLASTIC LAMINATE

Advantages

- Many styles and colors
- Can stay clean with just a damp rag

Disadvantages

- Can burn or crack easily

WOOD

Advantages

- Easily matches cabinets
- Gives kitchens a warm, homey feel

Disadvantages

- Bacteria easily penetrates
- Must be treated every few months

CONCRETE

Advantages

- Various colors to choose from as well as the choice of embedding rocks, seashells or other objects

Disadvantages

- Can easily stain and crack
- Needs to be sealed continuously

CAMBRIA

Advantages

- Doesn’t need sealing
- Resists bacteria
- Will not scratch

Disadvantages

- Not very deep in shine or clarity

GRANITE

Advantages

- Beautiful in appearance with high polish and reflective stone
- Resistant to hot pans
- Each stone is unique in color, shape and size

Disadvantages

- Can absorb moisture over time
- Sealing is required

—AMANDA KNOWLES
[SOURCE: DOITYOURSELF.COM]