

Kitchen redo, done right

Homeowners transform “a little cave” of a kitchen into the functional, stylish center of their living space.

By Joel Gorthy
Photos by Kelly Lyon
THE REGISTER-GUARD

Eva and Wayne Schmidt loved almost everything about their Cottage Grove home when they moved there from Northern Virginia to be closer to family.

“Almost” didn’t include the kitchen.

A local builder had done an excellent job filling out the rest of the custom home — his own, initially — with quality materials, craftsman touches and well-planned spaces. But the execution of the kitchen appeared much less deliberate.

“They did such a great job with this house, and then it’s almost like they went ‘Oh, yeah ... we need a kitchen!’ They just sort of made a little cave over there,” Eva says.

There will be no more cave cooking for this avid chef, however, after the top-to-bottom kitchen overhaul overseen by Rainbow Valley Design & Construction of Eugene.

Functional, beautiful vision

“Rainbow Valley did about half a dozen different configuration options, so they gave us a lot of alternatives,” Wayne says. “She’s a serious chef, so this is a working kitchen, not a showcase. We emphasized that from the start; we’re not looking for something just to look pretty. It’s got to be functional.”

The end result is a workspace packed with functionality, to be sure, with expansive custom beech cabinets designed to suit the homeowners’ particular storage needs; new appliances including a high-end Wolf range in the kitchen (and a wine cooler in the laundry room/pantry); generous natural light as well as versatile accent and task lighting; and a lift-up, pass-through window (with retractable screen) to the grilling and entertaining area on the back deck.

But form doesn’t submit to function in the new kitchen, by any means.

From the darker-toned bamboo flooring to the stainless steel appliances, from the natural, elegantly grained beechwood cabinet faces to the Brazilian “Aquarella” granite countertops — with a rich earthen pattern of white-black-rust tones — the space emanates sleek modernity with a natural edge.

Subtle, distinctive artistic elements help bring it all together.

Three art tiles by Seattle ceramic artist Matthew Patton, set into a backsplash of natural stone behind the range top, burst with colors that complement the rest of the room’s hues.

And a twisting, organic-looking steel support column for the granite-topped bar seating area — forged by Springfield blacksmith Jack Frost — carries on the vine-like motif of overhead light fixtures with



After a complete remodel, Wayne and Eva Schmidt’s formerly uninspired kitchen now is a warm, brightly lit space with custom cabinets, high-end appliances and finishes, artful accents and functional touches such as a pass-through window to the backyard grilling area.



Wayne and Eva Schmidt in their redone kitchen. "It's so warm and inviting," Eva says, compared to the original kitchen (see before photo, below).

a wrought-iron finish.

"It's so warm and inviting," Eva says of the reborn kitchen. "My favorite thing is that it's just more part of our living space now, instead of an afterthought, and it's where we spend our time."

Doing it right, with a little help

The wish list for the reimagined kitchen had simmered a long time with the Schmidts before they enlisted the help of Rainbow Valley lead designer Scott Felsher and project manager Andrew Dumitru.

"We moved here nine years ago and we've been thinking about it since then," Wayne says. "We just had to wait until we had the money to do it right."

Doing it right, ultimately, started with enlarging the cramped corner kitchen by moving back a wall, then shrinking and reconfiguring the adjacent laundry room/pantry and small bathroom. This smarter use of space allowed the Schmidts to achieve what they wanted in the kitchen — including the addition of a big second window to brighten the room — without changes to the home's exterior footprint.

Even at that, "it was a huge construction job," Wayne notes. "It looks simple, but they had to take a load-bearing wall out and put up temporary bracing in the ceiling with beams, then take the floor completely out, put new concrete pillars into the ground, and a new laminated beam up above. For a small job, it



Changes to make the original kitchen bigger and brighter included moving back the wall at left in this before photo, and adding a second large window as seen in the after photo at top.

was pretty significant."

The Schmidts prefer not to share the cost of the job — other than to admit that it, too, was significant — but they were able to achieve some savings, for example, by having Wayne do the demolition and painting.

When it comes to choosing a general contractor, the Schmidts urge other homeowners considering a remodel to attend the annual Lane County Home Improvement Show, Oct. 9-11 at the fairgrounds in Eugene. Among the show's exhibitors this year are 18 remodeling specialists, including Rainbow Valley Design & Construction (booth 340-341).

"It was the home show that introduced us to Rainbow Valley," Wayne

says. "We looked at their portfolios and said, 'this is the aesthetic that we're looking for.' So I'm a huge fan of the Eugene home-and-garden shows, because they introduce you to what the options are. You can also tell a lot by how well you relate to the staff themselves."

The Schmidts both have construction industry or mortgage lending industry backgrounds, and say they considered serving as their own general contractor and hiring out subcontractors to do most of the work.

"It's very tempting to try to do that," Wayne says, "but you just have no control over schedules then, and you don't know the quality of the subcontractors you're getting. So find somebody you really trust to choose the right people. We just turned it over to Rainbow Valley and said 'use your people, do it right.'"

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 **View a video** at registerguard.com/homeandgarden

More project insights

Wayne Schmidt documented this kitchen remodel in detail, with insights into the decision-making processes along the way and helpful precautions for other homeowners, in a blog post just after completion of the three-month project in April 2015. See "Building our dream kitchen" at <http://rgne.ws/1Lw7FAJ>.



Rainbow Valley Design & Construction



From top: Stacking appliances and additional storage allowed making the adjacent laundry room, pantry and bathroom smaller to free up room for the expanded kitchen; art tiles in the backsplash and glass-fronted cabinets with accent lights add color and warmth; custom bar top support by Springfield blacksmith Jack Frost.