

One thing leads to another

Kevin and Lisa McCart's kitchen remodel took on a life of its own, happily expanding beyond its original boundaries

By Frances Carter
Special to Interiors

When Lisa McCart asked husband Kevin if she could replace their old kitchen appliances, she didn't intend to do a major makeover. However, "one thing led to another" and, before she knew it, they had undertaken a major remodeling project that included the entire kitchen and adjacent dining and family rooms. "You can't just do part of a room, or it doesn't look right," she says.

The McCart's have lived in their five-bedroom, four-bath-room Wilhaggin-area home for four years and had never done any remodeling before.

"Many people told us, 'This will test your marriage,'" says Lisa, "and expect the worst because it's going to take so much longer than whatever they tell you." Preparing for the worst, however, proved to be unnecessary.

Their designer, Steve Frkovich Casci of Design Works, repeatedly reminded them to have fun with the process and not get stressed out. "That advice really helped," says Lisa, "because you realize that this is such a big decision. Everyone is going to see this and evaluate it. We didn't have any of the stress that many people talk about. But it's true, you've just got to have fun with it."

"Having fun" starts with picking a designer you feel comfortable with.

A high school connection

They shopped around a bit in the beginning by getting a few quotes from designers but quickly decided that this project would require having a great deal of trust in the person they selected. So they decided on Casci, whom Kevin has known since high school. "It was really Steve who motivated us to finish off the dining room," says Kevin. "He had a vision of what to do, and he kept saying to us, 'If you don't do it right, you're going to be so unhappy with going half-way and not doing the rest.'"

Ease of mind was also provided by contractor Dan Cardenas and his crew, says Lisa, who not only finished "perfectly on time almost to the day," but "were so neat and clean. They vacuumed and cleaned every day, and we didn't have dust anywhere."

In approaching a project such as this, Casci says his first step is usually to educate clients about how the process works.



A good match: Nick Sideris of Sacramento Cabinet and Millwork revamped the look of Lisa and Kevin McCart's kitchen with alder cabinetry. The couple's new appliances sport matching front panels.

"Most people hope to spend as little as possible, and often they create some fictitious number that they think they are going to spend," says Casci. "Usually, the fine line in the beginning is getting them to let go of that fictitious number they have created. Then I try to get them more involved with the project itself, rather than in chasing numbers. When that happens, the creative process can be a lot more available, and the projects become a lot more interesting. Those people tend to be my happiest clients. They are the ones who are the most proud of their projects. The ones who chase numbers may bring it in on budget, but they are never the happiest clients. All they see are compromises and regrets."

Starting from scratch

Their kitchen was completely gutted, and Casci helped them redesign the room to not only look more contemporary, but also to provide a more efficient use of space. Out went the painted, hollow-paneled cabinets, vinyl flooring, outdated lighting and tired appliances. When the overhead cabinets that separated the kitchen from the dining room were torn out, the McCart's realized the two rooms enjoyed a new, organic flow.

"When the priority is cabinetry, I definitely take clients

to Nick Sideris at Sacramento Cabinet and Millwork," Casci says. There the McCart's selected painted alder cabinets that were custom designed by Sideris to fit their lifestyle and specific needs. Since Kevin is in the wine and liquor industry, the McCart's entertain often and needed storage for a variety of bottled spirits. They now have a special wine and liquor bar that was formerly a closet. Custom-made drawers hold large bottles and a refrigerated section holds all the wines which need to be chilled. "Filling up the refrigerator with bottles of wine took up a lot of space, so we decided we would have a separate area," says Kevin.

All the rest of the cabinetry was also custom designed to fit the McCart's pots and pans, platters, and coffee maker and other small appliances. They now have pull-out shelves and a corner cabinet with a revolving tray.

The kitchen's high-tech appliances, including a SubZero refrigerator, Dacor gas cooktop/oven and Miele dishwasher, were relocated to new locations custom-designed facades that match the cabinetry.

"We were able to set up the kitchen in terms of where we wanted everything," says Kevin. "Now, it's so much more efficient."



Going with the flow: Removing overhead cabinets that once blocked the space between the kitchen and dining room provided a nice flow between the two rooms and created more of a "great room" feel that extends to the family room.

Sacramento Bee photographs by David Henry

Lisa found restructuring the kitchen to be the most challenging part of the project. "It was hard for me, because I've never done this before," says Lisa. "Everything is now in a completely different place. I had to (ask myself), 'Where do you want your knives? Where do you want your pots and pans? Where do you want your spices?'"

Crackerjack countertops

Their next design decision was to select the granite for the countertops.

"It all seemed to look the same to us after a while," says Kevin. "We didn't want a dark granite. We wanted something a little bit different."

When Casci took them to Natural Stone Design Gallery, they found a granite in a silvery-green shade "that was way different from anything else," says Kevin. "This particular color is rare, and we bought three big slabs of it."

"It is a unique granite," echoes Casci. "I've never seen

that one before."

"Once we had the granite," says Kevin, "we began to develop the color scheme for what we wanted to do around it." They selected some green-and-gray glass tiles for the backsplash area, which they also found at Natural Stone Design Gallery. They then picked wall colors which tied in with the green of the granite.

"After looking at the windows," says Kevin, "we decided to replace the existing ones with Andersen windows because they are much more efficient. The insulation we get from the windows is absolutely worth the money."

They also replaced the sliding glass doors that lead out to the patio and pool area from the family room. Vinyl flooring was also replaced throughout the three rooms with 3/4-inch red oak planks. New wood flooring was the only thing Kevin says he knew he wanted from the very beginning of this project.

Along with new appliances

for the kitchen, the McCart's splurged on a new dining-room set from Macy's, which included black leather-covered chairs and mahogany table with matching hutch. The dining-room walls went to a deep hunter green.

With regard to the budget for the project, "It definitely went over," says Lisa, "but Steve kept reminding us that your kitchen, family room and eating area is where you spend most of your time. As we saw the bigger picture, we realized that if we were going to do this, we should do it right, and that's when the budget went in a different direction."

"At the end, I was a very satisfied customer," Kevin says. "It leaves you with the feeling that as much as it cost, it was worth it."

Frances Carter is a Sacramento-based freelance writer.

Daniel Cardenas
CONSTRUCTION