

INTO THE WOODS

Marrying all of this year's top kitchen styles nets a vibrant living space for a young family.

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hen designer Jaclyn Peters was hired to overhaul a 1970s split-level abode on a family farm in Randolph, Man., the last thing she wanted to do in the kitchen was recreate a typical country look. “I didn’t want it to be too literal or rustic-looking,” she says. “I wanted a refined look with a nod to farmhouse style – a sophisticated take.”

Jaclyn’s design brief from the recently married homeowners – Alex Nohlgren, a nurse, and Korey Peters, a farmer – was relatively straightforward: Make the dark, seriously dated space inviting for the dynamic young couple and their new baby. “They wanted tons of room for entertaining friends and family. And because they love to cook, the kitchen had to be functional,” she says. “Plus, we wanted to make it a fun interesting space they’d want to spend time in.” But form is always harder to pin down than function. “Alex loves colour, but Korey was hesitant. Originally, they wanted a white kitchen, but Alex kept saying she loves colour and wanted something different,” Jaclyn recalls. “Eventually, Korey agreed to the green.”

Now the showpiece of the newly open-concept main floor, the 200-square-foot kitchen exudes character and warmth. At first glance, the dramatic room reads as traditional, with classic Shaker-style cabinetry, wire-brushed white oak flooring, a panelled backsplash and a colourful Turkish runner. But look closer, and modern and bistro-inspired accents make themselves known. As in many modern cooking spaces, there are stretches of stainless steel, clean graphic lighting and lab-style stools. Open shelves, a huge free-standing island and restaurant touches – from the workhorse faucet to pots and pans on full display – imbue a friendly bistro mood. Here’s how to get the look of this winning hybrid.



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1 Create one-of-a-kind character with a unique palette

Jaclyn challenged convention by drenching the kitchen cabinets in a spruce green hue – a far cry from the white and grey kitchens so popular today. But how colourful is too colourful? “The fact that Korey was a bit afraid of colour nudged me toward a more muted tone. It’s not an in-your-face green; it’s subtle and greyed out.” It’s an homage, she says, to the prairie locale. “Being on a farm was the inspiration,” she says. “The house opens out onto fields and trees, and a big view of the sky.” And then there’s that runner. “It’s a feature, too,” says Jaclyn. “It adds fun texture and colour to tie everything together without being kitschy.” (And if Alex and Korey ever tire of green, the well-made custom cabinets can be repainted for a whole new look.)

2 Balance bold colour with quiet neutrals

To offset the dramatic green cabinetry, Jaclyn incorporated expanses of understated finishes that “give the eye a break,” she says. The pale tones of the new wire-brushed white oak hardwood flooring, the white-painted shiplap backsplash, clean fuss-free quartz countertops and stainless steel appliances shoulder the heaviest load, while the vintage runner in punchy pink injects playful colour and geometric pattern. Loads of natural light from new larger windows also boosts the space’s livability.

3 Cut costs by using unexpected materials

When planning a kitchen overhaul, sometimes outside-the-box thinking can net amazing results – as with this shiplap backsplash, which quietly provides a traditional farmhouse backdrop. “The backsplash is made from baseboards left over from the reno,” says Jaclyn. With the cost of the custom cabinets, quartz counters and apron-front sink eating up the budget, Jaclyn and the homeowners had to forgo the pricier cement tiles they initially chose. “Instead, we salvaged the extra baseboards, milled them a bit smaller and painted them. It was a big cost saver – plus, it was a fun way to get an interesting look *and* stay on budget!”

4 Consider entertaining needs when planning a kitchen

A huge island was a must for Alex and Korey. They frequently host get-togethers and holiday festivities and wanted to be able to accommodate hordes of friends and family, both at the island and in the adjacent dining space. Stools along the front of the island let guests grab a seat while the couple cooks.



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5 Open up monolithic elements to lighten the look

The glass panels on a handful of the cabinets break up large blocks of cabinetry. To make the island feel similarly less heavy, Jaclyn transformed one corner of it with open-concept shelving. "The wooden shelving in the island provides a break from all the green and adds texture and interest." Displaying pots, pans and serving pieces here puts a bistro spin on the space.

6 Use black to break up bold colour and ground the palette

We've all heard it before, but it bears repeating: Black is a key tool in grounding decorating schemes. "The hits of black - in the stools, lighting and accent pieces - help a lot in this kitchen. They're so bold that they distract the eye from all the green." Lab-style stools and austere barn lighting with industrial roots provide a modern balance to the room's traditional elements. The cost of the lighting assisted Jaclyn in balancing the budget: "None of it was more than \$120 apiece," she says.



7 Take wooden accents in a sophisticated direction

In her push to steer clear of farmhouse kitchen clichés, Jaclyn gave the potentially rustic elements here a decidedly modern look. "We did a few wooden features, but nothing barnboard or beat-up - this is a modern take on wooden accents." Simple floating shelves in a corner house serving pieces, and an open wooden shelf at one end of the island has thoroughly clean lines and joinery. These features add warm organic texture and balance the verdant cabinet colour without overly countering the look.

8 Capitalize on awkward corners

Jaclyn turned one of the room's biggest challenges into a handsome hard-working solution. "Corners are a tricky thing to design in kitchens, so they're often wasted space," she explains. "In the corner beside the wall ovens, I added open shelving and a cabinet with glass doors that sits on top of the counter." Beyond having just a pretty face, it's an ingenious update for the modern-day kitchen. "It's filled with everyday bowls, plates and cups - all easy to access."