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INSIDE A  
DESIGNER'S  
OWN DREAM  
KITCHEN  
RENOVATION

## hot KITCHEN TRENDS

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UP TO

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& CHIC:**  
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white palette  
elevates a  
bathroom*

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PRODUCT SHOWCASES: Kitchens and Exteriors



# designer KITCHEN

A designer learns first-hand that the road to a dream kitchen is filled with dust and decisions

BY SARAH ST. AMAND • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE CHAJECKI

**I**f you ask a designer what was the most challenging project they have ever tackled, most will respond “my own home.” For me, that couldn’t be more true. With unlimited choices and a library of samples to choose from at our fingertips, what might seem like the perfect choice one day will likely change the next.

After several months of planning and conceptualizing and daily phone calls to my designer friend to help confirm my selections, it was finally time to begin the inevitable demolition of our kitchen.



## DEMOLITION DAY

When my crew started to tear out the 1,200 square feet of 20-year-old ceramic tile, there was no turning back. It was the first step to the tornado of dust that became a part of everyday living. Next came phase two, which involved the removal of the stippled plaster ceiling turning our living space into a vortex of drywall dust.

## MAKE-SHIFT AND MAKE DO

With a busy household, a husband, three kids all under the age of 12 and a teenager, this renovation wasn’t fun. Two pails of paint with an old door on top of them became a table for cereal in the morning, and a crockpot became our best friend in the evening. The renovation was planned over the warmer months so we could utilize

the bbq, which became a saving grace. Paper plates and plastic cutlery were well stocked in our pseudo outdoor kitchen. The local pizza joint didn’t need to ask what we wanted on our pizza. By the third week of construction, we couldn’t wait for a homemade meal.

## THE ISSUES

The pre-reno space had dark, dated cabinetry, minimal lighting, an awkwardly shaped island and a wall that divided the living space from the kitchen. We decided to remove the wall in between the kitchen and living room to create an open-concept space. The kitchen is now more functional, brighter and expansive and suitable for keeping an eye on kids and entertaining friends.



### WHO'S ON FIRST?

Designing a fabulous kitchen requires more than just coming up with the perfect layout—the choices are endless—white cabinets, wood-stained cabinets, floating shelves, white countertop, dark countertop, chrome hardware, polished nickel hardware, appliances, and the list goes on. The decorative details inevitably are what make a kitchen special. Details like hardware, cabinet profile, upholstery and lighting capture the personality of a homeowner.

### STATEMENT LIGHTING

Most people would consider lighting to be the last decision to be made, however, it is imperative the electrician is given direction during the demolition phase so he knows exactly where to place the electrical boxes. The placement of lighting in relationship to the cabinetry is an integral part of the kitchen in the planning stages.

The oversized sconces flanking the hood and the pendant lights over the island were the jumping-off point for the style direction I wanted so I opted for outdoor sconces that gave me the scale needed to create visual impact. The sconces were also an unexpected element in the design of the kitchen. If you have the space for it, don't be afraid to do something unique.

### APPLIANCES

The next decision was appliance selection. It is important to choose them prior to the final design of a kitchen as the cabinetry is dependent on the sizes selected. Prior to the construction phase, electrical, gas and plumbing rough-ins must be decided based on the appliance specifications. After several hours of research I opted for professional appliances for the home from Fisher and Paykel.

### STELLAR SURFACES

The countertop selection is essentially the icing on the cake. It can be a showstopper or it can be an understated design element. There are numerous choices from granite, quartz, soapstone or marble, and the process of narrowing them down can be daunting. The size of slabs vary so it must be chosen at the beginning of the process. The size of an island is sometimes determined by slab size. Price per square foot can also be a factor but with careful planning and budgeting, it is possible to splurge where you want to and yet save without going over your overall budget.



*Details like hardware, cabinet profile, upholstery and lighting capture the personality of a homeowner.*

Onyx 2133-10,  
Benjamin Moore

Swiss Coffee  
OC-45,  
Benjamin Moore





*It is important to take the time to carefully consider your space and **how you see yourself living within it.***



Marble was my stone of choice but I did not want the maintenance of sealing it and worrying about guests placing a glass of wine on the surface and creating a stain. It is a very porous material and absorbs liquids, a beautiful choice, but there are many quartz options that mimic the look. After searching high and low for just the right piece, I came across one that was a creamy white with lovely fluid veining that was perfect for my cabinetry colour, Swiss Coffee OC-45 from Benjamin Moore.

### DEFINING DETAILS

The cabinetry is the part of a kitchen that is most noticeable. By adding details like crown moulding, beautiful hardware and furniture-base toe kicks, the look is elevated. If budget is an issue, keep cabinetry minimal and perhaps splurge on lighting or a decorative backsplash. In order to maximize the kitchen's storage capacity, the cabinets were extended to the ceiling with a five-inch crown detail taking full advantage of the nine-foot ceiling height. The extra space can be used to stow away off-season items and other specialty kitchenware.

### DISASTER AVERTED

If not precisely planned, a tiny kitchen or a grand kitchen can lead to chaos. There are so many aspects of a renovation that must be considered and without a plan in place and consideration of all aspects of a renovation, it can be a terrible experience and result in a disaster. It is important to take the time to carefully consider your space and how you see yourself living within it.

After many years in the industry, I have consulted and assisted many of my clients with their renovations and helped them through the process. After living through the chaos, I can now empathize with the chaotic way of living for months on end.

### NO PAIN, NO GAIN

But one thing is for sure, after a few meltdowns and the usual construction issues, I would go through it all over again. After all, in the grand scheme of life it's not a long time and the benefit is a beautiful dream space that transforms a house into a home.

One tip I can offer— brace yourself and learn to enjoy a lot of take-out!♦



### SOURCES

APPLIANCES: Fisher and Paykel **DINING ROOM**  
FABRIC ON SIDE CHAIRS: Kravet through designers  
HOST AND HOSTESS CHAIRS, ROMAN BLINDS: Joanne Fabric through designers  
PATIO DOOR: Dayside Windows and Doors  
CUSTOM FURNITURE AND CABINETRY, SINK, FAUCET, ACCESSORIES, custom hardware on back of counterstools and buffet through Sarah St. Amand Interior Design  
SINK: ACF Surfaces  
FAUCET: Aquabrace  
FABRIC ON COUNTER-STOOLS: Kobe fabrics  
PAINT: Walls & Cabinetry, Swiss Coffee OC-45, Benjamin Moore  
ISLAND AND COFFEE STATION: Swiss Coffee with Onyx accent, Benjamin Moore  
SCONCES BESIDE RANGE HOOD: Universal Lamp

Award-winning designer Sarah St Amand, principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializes in residential and commercial design. CDECA member, Sarah's work is nationally recognized and has most recently won the Best of HOUZZ 2016 award. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com), [sarah@stamanddesign.com](mailto:sarah@stamanddesign.com), Instagram @sarahst.amandinteriordesign 519.802.6328

