

# Garden Fresh

A BOUNTY OF BUDGET-FRIENDLY FIXES TRANSFORMED AN OUTDATED KITCHEN INTO A BEAUTIFUL WORKSPACE



The endearing wallpaper—"Kanchou" by Brunschwig & Fils—conjures the outdoors. 1x1 accent tiles give interest to the new floor, while pale counters, shiny appliances and cabinets with a high-gloss finish amplify light.



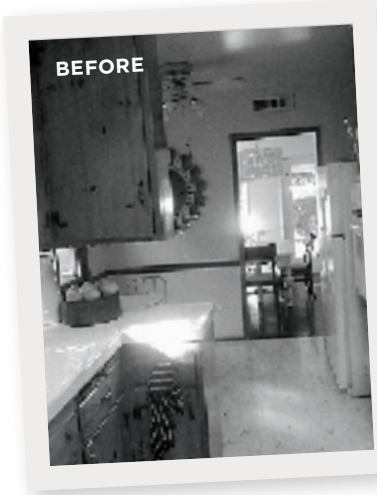
**ABOVE:** Once the wall between the kitchen and the porch was scrapped, Erinn could extend her counter two feet to install a wine fridge below and nest a microwave above. Built-in cabinets with frosted-glass doors occupy what was the porch's back wall.

**RIGHT:** Surrounded by tile, an original window becomes a focal point. Erinn popped an affordable 2x4-foot skylight above for maximum light. Chrome faucets and hardware provide unity between the cabinets and the Rohl trough sink.

**BELOW:** The original kitchen sported dark wood and a clumsy cabinet arrangement that blocked light, cramped cooking and hindered socializing.



Written by **Megan Fulweiler** Photographs by **Joe Schmelzer** Styling by **Erinn Valencich**



**W**hat a find! When designer Erinn Valencich, a stylist, popular HGTV host, and owner of OmniArte Design in Los Angeles, first spied her home, she lost her heart on the spot. The 1950 Sherman Oaks, California, ranch house not only had sweet diamond-paned windows, it was in mint condition. "There'd been only one other owner," Erinn says. "I felt like I was stepping back in time."

Despite the care, though, the place hollered for 21st-century updating. And, as usual in older homes, the kitchen warranted it most. Here,

storage was poorly conceived, counter space was limited, and the cabinets and woodwork were knotty pine (trendy back in the day, but not for the clean look Erinn envisioned). "I wanted to double the counter space and open the room to make it lighter and brighter," she explains. "And, of course, I wanted to do it cost-effectively." A tall order, but the creative designer made it happen. Her no-fail recipe for a fab and functional kitchen is as follows:

**Pare down and regroup.** Instead of replacing the cabinetry, Erinn reorganized and edited. ▶▶



**OPPOSITE TOP:** The old galley opened onto a dreary little porch used as a makeshift laundry room.

**OPPOSITE:** A beefy cabinet was ripped out to provide room for era-appropriate curved shelves. The new pendant occupies an aged ceiling fan's spot. Laid-back bistro chairs and a glass-top table ensure a casual, breezy tone.

**RIGHT:** Erinn grouped cooktop and wall oven in the same locale to create a dedicated cooking zone. "I had a huge industrial range in my previous home. But electric cooktops have won me over. I wipe mine once and it's clean," she says happily. Landing pads on both sides are handy as well as safety must-haves. A pullout board and drawers for pots and pans boost efficiency, too. But it's the sleek hood that delivered the biggest modernity note. "What a difference!" the designer exclaims.

Out went an awkward cabinet looming over a short peninsula countertop—a strategy that now affords a clear view from sink to sunny breakfast area. Two additional cabinets flanking the range were also banished, making way for more counter space and a streamlined vent hood.

**Borrow space.** The most dramatic step was demolishing the existing wall between the kitchen and back porch. This simple bit of construction enlarged the kitchen's dimensions to a comfortable 11x24 feet, which afforded room for another counter extension, a microwave and wine fridge. New built-in cabinets were also erected (some with matching vintage-style trim) to boost storage and house trash pullouts. Alongside, Erinn even managed to stack her washer and dryer behind pantry-like doors!

**Choose a contemporary palette and materials.** A favorite sunny wallpaper gave the breakfast area an instant mood change. Then, cueing from the paper, Erinn devised what she dubs a "non-boring scheme" for the cabinets: Upper models were painted Dunn Edwards "Whisper White," while the lower cabs were cloaked in Benjamin Moore's soothing "Gray Wisp." Yesterday's linoleum floor was swapped for durable porcelain tiles. Today, all the countertops are eco-friendly engineered quartz (Zodiaq from DuPont). Cool 1x2-inch glass tiles form a generous backsplash that in some places zooms to ceiling height. The gleaming appliances—a reward for Erinn's penny-saving planning—hail from Electrolux's Icon line.

**Focus on details.** Erinn upgraded the cabinets further with sleek chrome hardware. Sophisticated pendants crafted from antique mirrored pieces illuminate sink and table. And cheery flowers are always present. Erinn reserves the prominent display area for keepsakes. The dainty teapots and figurines look as beautiful in her stylish kitchen as they surely did in her grandmother's. ■



## Make It Personal and Practical

Designer Erinn Valencich devised a kitchen that's personality-filled and utilitarian with these ideas:

- PULL COLORS from a treasured tea set or a retro tile to concoct a palette. Then, look for complementary materials and finishes.
- INCORPORATE WALLPAPER or a mirror to give a breakfast nook pizzazz.
- STEP OUT OF THE BOX by painting cabinets two different colors.
- INCLUDE CONTEMPORARY HARDWARE and offbeat lighting in a traditional setting.
- HAND-PAINT (Erinn's mother painted the flowering branch, above), stencil or stamp a lively design on a cabinet or closet door.
- INVEST in efficient appliances to save energy costs.
- ADOPT A PLANT. "A \$30 orchid lasts for years," says Erinn.