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THESE PAGES Viewed from the dining area, the renovated kitchen draws vibrancy from an iridescent purple backsplash. To heighten the effect of the colorful, textured wall surface, architect-owner Bruce Wentworth specified that the glass mosaic tiles extend up the wall behind the range to the top cabinets.



PRODUCED BY CAROLYN WEBER STYLED BY NEELY BARNWELL SPRUILL PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERIK JOHNSON WRITTEN BY NINA PATEL



WASHINGTON DC

open to change

to launch a stylish redo, an architect demolishes a dividing wall between a kitchen and dining room

"If you have a period house, you need to respect its basic character," says Bruce Wentworth, a residential architect based in Washington, D.C. "You can't ignore up-to-date kitchen technology, but you have to be sympathetic to the site's past, so it feels like a happy marriage."

Stylishly wedding old and new is something he recently accomplished in his own home, located in a northwest neighborhood of the District. Purchased in 2000 with his wife, Eryl, an executive at an art-conservation association, the 1920s Colonial needed a complete overhaul to bring the interiors into line with the couple's contemporary tastes.

The kitchen and dining room, which occupy the back of the 2,800-square-foot residence, were significant parts of the 18-month, full-house renovation. To kick off the redo in this section of their home—and create a more open layout—Bruce knocked down a wall between the rooms and replaced it with a half-wall.

On the dining-area side of the new divider, panel and trim molding add traditional flavor and dimension, while the side facing the modern kitchen is unadorned; a contemporary

stainless-steel island fits flush against it. To utilize the space underneath the island, a custom cabinetmaker crafted a wine rack on one side and a microwave shelf and drawer on the other. Stainless steel legs anchor it and harmonize with the appliances and polished-chrome cabinet hardware.

Increasing efficiency within the kitchen was also key. In the old layout, a separate cooktop and wall oven—positioned on opposite sides of the room—wasted space and steps. In the new arrangement, a six-burner range combines the function of the two original appliances and makes a striking focal point.

The kitchen decor, last updated in 1967, had cutesy-pie scalloped-molding-edged cabinets, harvest gold laminate counters, and a ceramic tile backsplash with fruit and vegetable motifs on it—not exactly the Wentworths' style. When selecting new products, Bruce followed the advice he typically offers his clients. "Start with the cabinets, then choose the countertops and flooring, and leave the backsplash for last."

Since the renovated kitchen would be open to the rest of the house, the couple wanted the cabinetry to have a furniture

in the know painted floor

It took interior specialist Maxine Cohen seven days to paint the decorative, woven-look pattern on the white-oak strip floors in the kitchen and dining area. She used two shades of oil-based taupe paint, applied with squeegees that had notches cut out of them, to achieve the rustic "combed" look.

Cohen started by painting the sanded and primed floor with one coat of the darker base color. After the paint dried, she masked out one woven pattern with painter's tape, then squeegeed on a coat of the lighter-colored paint. The artist repeated the masking and painting steps for a second woven pattern, letting the paint dry in between. She finished by adding two coats of a clear, oil-based sealant.





BEFORE **LEFT** The former passageway to the dining room was narrow, and it blocked the light. **ABOVE** In the new, more open plan, sunshine and traffic flow easily between the kitchen and the dining area.



ABOVE The cooktop occupied the back wall where the sink now sits. **TOP** A new trio of casement windows above the sink admits light and allows the Wentworths to gaze out at the backyard garden while washing dishes.

look. "My wife's family has a house on the Caribbean island of Nevis, where they used mahogany cabinets," he says. The Wentworths knew that the rich tropical wood was perfect for their house and opted for custom cabinetry that would make the most of every inch in the small (13'10" x 10'3") room. This approach also allowed Bruce to lighten the look of the built-ins by varying materials and shapes. Upper-cabinet doors have frosted-glass inserts, and at the

very top there's a row of 15-inch-high cabinets. "Long cabinets that reached the ceiling would have looked too heavy and vertical," he explains. "Also, the taller the door, the more likely it is to warp."

Ensuring a perfect—in this case, contrasting—color scheme, the architect carried blocks of mahogany to tile showrooms, finally settling on countertops in a warm, beige-gray shade of acid-etched French limestone and a shimmering backsplash composed

of glass mosaic tiles in vivid shades of purple.

The taupe-colored floor is a standout as well. Hand-painted to resemble an antique floor the owners had seen in a magazine, it refers to the light-colored countertops, and helps balance the darker tones of the cabinetry and backsplash.

Unified at last, the kitchen and dining area glow with light and high-quality materials. "No matter what their style, those always have a place in any renovation," says Bruce. ■

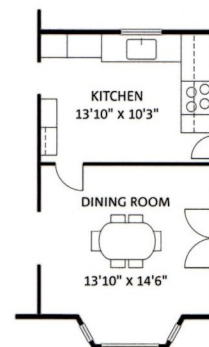


LEFT Prior to the redo, a wall oven took up valuable space. **ABOVE** Bruce designed a storage hutch with mahogany legs and interiors that match the kitchen cabinetry. The unit is bolted to the wall for stability and is topped with an angled strip of crown molding.



floor plans

1. The old kitchen was isolated from the dining room and lacked adequate storage and natural light.



2. Tearing down the wall between the kitchen and dining room improved the flow and brightened up the space. Eliminating a back door provided room for more counters and cabinets.

