

Once in a while, it's easy to say good-bye. This Austin, Texas, kitchen was so past its prime that homeowners Phil Tomlin and Hedrich Michaelson had no trouble kicking the old knotty pine cabinets to the curb, ditching ugly paneling, and getting rid of dated appliances. "I was not sorry to see a lot of the old stuff go," says Hedrich. "When you do a project such as this, you learn that anything can be saved and nothing is sacred."

To rescue this kitchen, architect Gregory Thomas dreamed up a redo that included stand-up-and-take-notice tile, limestone countertops, and a pretty mix of custom cabinetry. If the "best-if-used-by" date on your kitchen has passed, we have some innovative ways to whip it back into shape.

Tile Leads the Style

One trick to make your kitchen stand out from all the rest is to get creative with color. Here, the multiple hues of tile above the



PHOTOGRAPHS: LAUREY W. GLENN / STYLING: LISA POWELL BAILEY

CURE for the common kitchen

DON'T SETTLE FOR STANDARD. REV UP YOUR COOKING SPACE WITH THESE POINTERS. THEY DON'T ALL REQUIRE A TOTAL OVERHAUL, JUST SOME CREATIVE PLANNING.



before

right: Now that the cabinets are rearranged, pretty dishes in open shelving are the focal point—instead of a big, hulking stove.

after



Choosing distinctive materials can mean the difference between an average-looking kitchen and one that's extra special. Here, limestone countertops with a waxed finish and a backsplash of vivid tiles give the space top-notch style.

counters and behind some cabinets that can be seen from the living room make a strong statement. Gregory and Hedrich carefully chose the tile together—visiting the supplier and working (and reworking) the color combo until everything was just right.

Helping to guide them on their design quest was Hedrich's collection of colorful pottery. Once the kitchen was outfitted with the new cabinets that Gregory designed, Hedrich's pieces could be displayed prominently—with all the colors harmonizing beautifully.

A bonus with this tile design? It's budget wise, using standard-size ceramic tiles in shades of red, gold, green, and gray-blue. When working with multiple colors, it's best to have a basic pattern in mind, says designer Dawn Frank Hearn, who helped finalize color choices for this project. Collect pictures from magazines and

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books to give you ideas on a look you'll love.

Also, be sure to balance the color ratio of the tiles before installation day. "A random look can be good, but you want to create balanced randomness," says Dawn. For example, if you're working with four colors, order the same number of each. Or if you like one color best, order 40% of that one, and have the other three colors each represent 20% of the pattern.

Look! Art on the Floor

After tile shopping, the question was: What should the flooring be? The winner was colorfully patterned Marmoleum—linoleum with a marbled look. It's made from natural materials, including linseed oil, rosins, wood flour, jute, and finely ground limestone. The product has a warm, squishy feel underfoot and is an environmentally friendly option. Gregory and Hedrich picked a style that plays up the tile colors. "I saw it and thought it was just the coolest," says Hedrich. "It looks like a splatter-painted floor."

Marmoleum is available in sheet or tile form, and it's installed with solvent-free adhesives, so there are no harmful VOCs emitted. This kitchen features sheet Marmoleum, and with no grout lines to worry about, it's easy to keep clean. To learn more about Marmoleum, visit www.themarmoleumstore.com.

design dilemma SOLVED

Keys to Stellar Tile

- When creating a tile backsplash, make it at least 18 inches high. Work with a designer to sketch out the pattern, or round up magazine photos to show your installer.
- For a more neutral look than shown in this kitchen, try dusty blue, gray, cream, and taupe. Not afraid to go bold? How about olive green, burnt sienna, chocolate, and butterscotch?
- Unless you're just covering the area behind your stove in tile, you'll most likely want to carry it around the kitchen beneath all of the upper cabinets. Remember this as you plan your budget.
- To keep your tile backsplash looking new, apply a clear-drying grout sealer, available at home-improvement centers, tile stores, and hardware stores. Apply it with a paintbrush, and the sealer will prevent dust and dirt from discoloring the grout.



When custom-designing cabinetry, vary the look with seeded glass on some doors and solid panels on others. Plan some open storage, too, for displaying pottery and collectibles.

Smart Ideas for Easier Entertaining

Opening up the area was a major step toward improving it. Gregory redesigned the space so the kitchen and living room now share a generous pass-through. The tile on the outer part of the cabinet above the pass-through conceals the hood of the stove. "We needed a way to visually connect the two rooms," he

says. "Now when Phil and Hedrich have parties, people in the kitchen can talk to people in the living room, instead of everyone jamming into the kitchen."

Another clever design addition: An exterior wall was punched out to allow room for two glass doors that lead to the backyard and patio, making the space all the better for outdoor parties. A fixed glass panel



sits in between the two doors; this way, there's room for a table in the kitchen, and the doors have plenty of room to open on either side.

—SARA ANDERSON

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