

New This Week: 3 Elegant Dream Kitchens

See the materials and other design elements that put these kitchens into a league of their own



Mitchell Parker November 2, 2018

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1. Light and Luxurious

Designer: Michele Merz of MMI Design

Location: Kingwood, Texas

Size: 273 square feet (25 square meters); 13 by 21 feet

Homeowners' request. "Like so many others [in the Houston area], this client's home was flooded by Hurricane Harvey," says designer Michele Merz, whose client found her through the Houzz pro directory. "The damage done by the flood set into motion a complete overhaul, not only of the kitchen but also the entire first floor. The client requested a much larger kitchen to provide better flow, symmetry and storage to the ceiling, as well as plenty of seating options for family and friends to gather. Along with the practical elements, this client also wanted a beautiful and elegant kitchen which matched her love of all things shiny and elegant."

Elegant features. Mullioned cabinets with mirror panels. Large-scale [island pendants](#) in polished nickel. Large range hood of stainless steel and chrome. Light blue island (Cobblestone Path by Benjamin Moore) topped with a Fantasy Macaubas quartzite countertop. Polished-nickel cabinet hardware and faucet. Carrara marble subway tile backsplash that extends behind the range to the ceiling. Dark wood floors. "The color scheme of blue, white and gray also created a beautiful foundation for the chinoiserie accents so loved by the client," Merz says.

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Designer secret. “Long before we discussed paint colors or pretty hardware, we studied the layout and storage options,” Merz says. “I encourage any homeowner contemplating a kitchen renovation to consider the layout. Is it optimal for cooking, entertaining or day-to-day living? By reorientating the kitchen footprint away from the corner, relocating the range to take center stage and the fridge to the other side of the room, we created better flow and much-needed symmetry.”

“Uh-oh” moment. “When the homeowner requested a 6-by-10-foot island with no seams in the countertop, I knew we were in for a challenge,” Merz says. “Not many natural stone or quartz slabs come that large. After searching for several months, we found a beautiful quartzite. The next challenge was getting it in the house and installed without fail. The slab weighed several hundred pounds. With an army of installers at the ready, the slab was successfully put into place. Though it felt like the crowning achievement of the kitchen, the entire team sighed in relief once it was in place.”

*Morgan four-light foyer pendant in polished nickel: Capital Lighting Fixture Co.;
Chantilly Lace cabinet paint and Graytint wall paint: Benjamin Moore; builder:
Davanti Homes; project photographer: Jonathan Calvert*

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2. Black, White and Bold

Designer: Christine Vroom of Christine Kimberlee Designs

Location: Los Angeles

Size: 260 square feet (24 square meters); 20 by 13 feet

Homeowners' request. “The vision the homeowners wanted at first was classic and timeless white,” says designer Christine Vroom, who collaborated with her clients through Houzz ideabooks. “Well, as you can see, we started venturing into a much more glamorous and elegant version of that classic white. They wanted bespoke, unique, custom — something you don’t see on every corner in the Los Angeles area. The theme then became high-end, chic and edgy, yet still having classic roots with the high contrast of the black and white.”

Elegant features. Custom brass-and-zinc range hood. Black cabinet details (Black Knight by Benjamin Moore). Calacatta Michelangelo marble slab island countertop. Thassos marble backsplash in chevron pattern. “The features that give this kitchen grand luxury are definitely the tile selections, the high-contrast features and the scale of the appliances,” Vroom says. “Although the backsplash was a more modern pattern, the subtle glimmer and sparkles of the Thassos make it feel really ritzy and tone down the trendiness of the chevron.”

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Other special features. Dark schist perimeter countertops. Brass-and-black stools and light fixtures. Accent tile behind range is Calacatta, Thassos and bluestone marble, surrounded by a brass strip. Wide-plank French oak floors. “They were slightly wire-brushed for a little distressing and a lot of variation,” Vroom says.

Designer secret. “What wasn’t working was how the coffered ceiling was off center from the range and the room,” Vroom says. “But we maintained balance by weighing down the space with the wide span of the range and the custom brass-and-zinc hood, and then continued by drawing your eye toward the eye-popping elements of the room — the lighting, the black-framed cabinets and island, the brass hardware, the grandeur luxury of the appliance sizes and bling of the plumbing fixtures. One of the features I love about connecting on Houzz is that, as their designer, I’m able to get daily updates when [my clients] post to their ideabook. So I am constantly staying current on their thoughts, hopes and dreams.”

Christine Kimberlee Designs

“Uh-oh” moment. “A major ‘uh-oh’ moment was that there was a giant post that was going to project into the space on the end of the wall to the left side of the sink,” Vroom says. “It wasn’t a huge issue until we realized the post had to actually be 2 by 2 feet, and it completely closed in the room, making it feel more compartmentalized. With some magic between the architect, engineer and myself, we managed to replace the post with a beam and we were able to have that open, airy feel that the clients wanted.”



*Glendale 9-light foyer
pendant: Hudson Valley;
Super White cabinet paint:
Benjamin Moore*

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3. Tall, Dark and Handsome

Designers: Cindy King (interiors), Jessica Nelson and Stephanie Lindsey of Etch Design Group (furnishings and lighting) and Patterson Custom Homes (builder)

Location: Austin, Texas

Size: 330 square feet (31 square meters)

Homeowners' request. "The clients purchased this home newly constructed and ready for move-in," designer Jessica Nelson says. "The owners are a family of five, with three young girls between the ages of one and five. The furnishings they selected for the home are all family-friendly, with stain-grade fabrics that are easily cleanable."



Elegant features. Tall ceilings covered in tongue-and-groove pine wood stained dark (Pecan by Sherwin-Williams). Douglas fir beams also stained dark (Brazilnut by Sherwin-Williams). Stain-grade knotty alder wood cabinets and island, also in Pecan stain. Porcelain backsplash tile with marble look. Quartz countertop with marble look. Cast-stone vent hood. Oversize island pendants.



“Uh-oh” moment. “Some of the original selections for the home didn’t quite fit the clients’ style, so we upgraded many items in the kitchen, such as the pendants and dining chandelier as well as all cabinet hardware,” Nelson says. “The client wanted to add some brass accents throughout the home, so we upgraded all hardware to an antiqued brass finish. The lantern-style lighting we chose has a mixture of brass and black accents, which gives a subtle but elegant appeal.”

4-light foyer fixture in bronze (over island) and 8-light linear chandelier in

bronze (dining room): Hinkley Lighting; Chloe high-back bar stool: World Interiors; Greek Villa cabinet and wall paint in satin finish: Sherwin-Williams

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