

Recipes For (Reno) Success

If you can't stand the heat—or your cabinets, backsplash, or literally *anything* in your cooking space—sweat no more. We're here to help you make the most of the hardest-working room in the house.

by JESSICA LARUSSO

THE GUIDE:
**KITCHEN
MAKEOVER
EDITION**

CASE STUDY

The Classic Update

Cook Design House modernizes an outdated Greenwood Village kitchen in ways that are obvious and, perhaps more important, in ways that aren't.

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➔ When the family of five living in this 11,000-square-foot Greenwood Village home was just renting the place, the oh-so-'90s green granite countertops and orange-toned cabinets were bothersome. Once they bought the house, the dated design became unbearable. So, the owners called in Jodi Cook, owner and principal of **Cook Design House** in Denver, to help them bring the kitchen into the 21st century—and she quickly realized that the outdated finishes weren't the only problems she needed to solve. "The range faced the fridge," Cook says, "so if someone was cooking, you couldn't comfortably open it." Moving the range from the island to the back wall allowed Cook to rotate the island 90 degrees and extend it. Nixing the perimeter soffits, which Cook says made the kitchen feel "chopped off at the knees," opened up the space. Once the layout was fixed, it was time to have fun with the finishes. That meant gleaming subway tiles with beveled edges to "keep it from pulling too

farmhouse," Cook says; extra-thick, family-friendly quartz counters; and a polished nickel Rohl faucet paired with brass pendants and hardware. "My steadfast rule is you don't mix brass with chrome," Cook says. "Use polished nickel instead; chrome has blue undertones that feel amiss with brass." And even though it's a more utilitarian area, the existing butler's pantry got a glow-up as well, with wipeable vinyl wallpaper from Innovations, a hammered-metal sink, and glass-front cabinets to showcase the owner's collection of blue-and-white china. Yet, Cook reiterates, the jewelry is all for naught if the setup doesn't work: "Above all else, it has to function."

Steps away from the kitchen, an updated butler's pantry provides ample storage for special-occasion tableware and linens—and a secret space to stash messy dishes during dinner parties.



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CASE STUDY

The Total Overhaul

A collaboration between architect and designer results in a midcentury ranch kitchen with gorgeous materials on the front burner.

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→ Where most people would have seen a 1960s ranch that hadn't been updated since the '70s, **Laura Medicus**, owner and principal of her eponymous Denver-based design firm, saw a blank canvas. "These homes tend to have clean palettes and to be pretty well-made," she says. "You can kind of take them anywhere you want, design-wise." When the homeowners and architect **Ernest Cordova** decided to move the kitchen from the back of the Cherry Hills Village home to a galley layout

adjacent to the front door, Medicus worked closely with Cordova to blend simple midcentury-modern design elements with nods to the homeowner's Japanese heritage (see: several slatted-wood installations, reminiscent of shoji screens). A flat-front profile and minimalist edge pulls allow African mahogany to shine in cabinets by Oak Tree Classic Woodworks in Sterling, Colorado, and the light Nurazzo terrazzo tile floor contrasts with Absolute Black granite countertops, a relatively budget-

friendly, classic choice that Medicus notes can lean more "farmhouse" if honed instead of polished, as it is here. With windows serving as the backsplash, Medicus had to get creative with outlets, embedding them on the undersides of the upper cabinets. She also realized Cordova's vision for an enveloping "cloud structure" to conceal the range hood. "As you walk in through the front door, everything is low and lean, encircling you," Medicus says—which means the space feels as good as it looks *and* cooks.

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CASE STUDY

The Chic Face-Lift

A Virginia Village kitchen proves that little changes can go a long way toward making you feel at home.

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→ “The existing tile was what started the whole project,” says Anna Elyce Smith, founder of Golden’s **Annabode** interior design firm. Even though the house was brand new, the developer-chosen cyan backsplash was “too much, too bright” for the owners, recent transplants from the East Coast, who wanted a warmer, more neutral aesthetic. Step one, of course, was swapping out the offending backdrop for skinny, stacked, gray-with-just-a-hint-of-blue tiles—in keeping with the home’s mid-mod vibes—handmade by Northern California’s Fireclay Tile. Unglazed ceramic pendants from Folk in Portland, Oregon, introduce a rough texture, while wood stools crafted by Boulder Furniture Arts add another organic element. And, although a custom wood treatment on the island (designed by Smith and built by Lakewood cabinetmaker Jeff Faine) was conceived as an eye-catching focal point, it’s also functional: One of the squares is a removable cover for an electrical outlet. Those updates aside, the room remains mostly the same—and that’s OK by Smith. “You can totally transform the look of your kitchen without gutting everything,” she says. “Our company is all about reducing waste and maximizing design with minimal interference and buying of new materials.” Less time, less money, and less impact on Mother Earth? That’s three key ingredients for a winning kitchen.

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THE PROS

Who You Gonna Call?

Some kitchen-renovation projects are best left to the professionals. We spoke with Jeremy Parcels, president of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) and a designer at Christopher's Kitchen & Bath, about when you should bring in the reinforcements (and who's the best expert for the job).

PROBLEM	"These stained laminate countertops are killing me."	"I wish my kitchen wasn't so closed off from the rest of the house."	"Two words: pine cabinets."	"Who puts the sink this far from the range? And why is the island so close to the fridge?"	"Everything is fine—but I'm bored."
<p>SOLUTION</p>  <p>▲ Caesarstone 5031 Statuario Maximus quartz countertop</p> <p>If you're not willing or able to invest upwards of \$5,000 to upgrade the material, consider an epoxy coating, Parcels says. For less than \$500, enterprising DIY-ers can buy epoxy kits that will give existing surfaces a glossy, durable finish, but they can be tricky to work with, so consider bringing in professionals from a company like Denver Epoxy. Ready to spring for granite or quartz? Start with a stone fabricator and a plumber, and set aside some of your budget in case you need a carpenter to modify cabinetry or touch up finishes.</p>	<p>Before you start swinging a sledgehammer, have a contractor or engineer determine if the wall you want to remove is load-bearing. (That evaluation can cost as little as \$300, Parcels says.) If it's not, an interior designer might be able to create a plan for whatever labor (plumbing, electrical, etc.) your project requires; if the wall is load-bearing, you'll need to enlist an engineer or architect to add a support beam. You'll definitely want to hire an architect for any additions or changes to the exterior of your home, and it can also be a smart move if you want to alter your home's interior bones, like door openings or columns.</p> 	 <p>In about one week, and for about a third of what new ones might cost, a cabinet refinisher can stain, paint, or reface your existing cabinetry; larger companies often have designers on staff to help you with specific selections. But before you choose this route, Parcels says, consider your cabinets' condition: How are the hinges functioning? Do the drawers glide smoothly? If your cabinets aren't in great shape, you might be better off saving up to replace them—ideally by working with a custom cabinetmaker, whose designs will cost more than mass-produced units, but suit your space and needs perfectly.</p>	 <p>Amazon. A design-build firm can be a good one-stop option for involved remodel projects, but be prepared for a serious investment (plans alone often start at \$1,500) and life disruption, as you might be out of a kitchen for six to 10 weeks. Tip: Schedule the work during fair-weather months so you can cook on your grill.</p>	<p>"Layout issues are where you need that professional opinion," Parcels says, noting that homeowners can access industry safety standards and dimension recommendations via the NKBA's <i>Kitchen and Bathroom Planning Guidelines</i> book available on</p>	<p>There are many things you can do to boost your kitchen's visual appeal without spending a ton of money or tearing the place apart. Some of Parcels' favorite upgrades include swapping incandescent bulbs in recessed can lights for LED versions with higher color rendering index values (which will more closely resemble natural light); changing the hardware on your cabinets (be sure the new pulls match the existing holes in your door and drawer panels); and hiring a tile installer to make an inexpensive backsplash look like a million bucks. And whether you opt for a traditional or online service, an interior designer can help you dial in your selections and create a cohesive look you'll love for years to come.</p> 

IT'S A MATCH! Now that you know which pro can get the job done, how do you find the one? We asked Parcels for his top five tips for sorting through all those online profiles and deciding when to take the relationship to the next level.

- 1** **Narrow your search to professionals with interior remodeling certifications**, through the NKBA or the American Society of Interior Designers. Also, make sure your contractor is licensed and insured.
- 2** **Look for a company that specializes in kitchen remodels** and has a solid roster of past clients you can interview.
- 3** **Find someone you get along with!** Remodels can take months or even years of planning, permitting, and execution; hiring someone whose personality aligns with yours will make things run much more smoothly.
- 4** **Ensure the company you choose carries products with a style and function that appeal to you** and will work well with the rest of your home.
- 5** **Get into the nitty gritty when interviewing contractors and their clients.** Are they punctual? Do they finish jobs on schedule? Do they keep jobsites as clean as possible? A high-quality contractor will prioritize those things to minimize disruptions to your life.

FROM TOP: LEFT, COURTESY OF CAESARSTONE; MAXWELL TIELMAN FOR DESIGN SPONGE; COURTESY OF THE CABINET DOOR STORE; ANNE SCHLEIFER FOR COUNTRY LIVING; COURTESY OF SCHOOLHOUSE

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MOOD BOARD

The New Neutrals

“I love a bright white kitchen—but with warmer tones and a focus on texture, the eye has so much more to explore,” says Kelly Reed, who co-owns Denver’s year-old kitchen design and cabinetry manufacturing company Harlan Jasper with her partner, Elliot Grayden. “We love the idea of ancient and timeless paired with modern and functional.” Here, Reed gives us a peek at the earthy design elements she’s been pinning—and pining after—lately.



Schwinn 44702 Series Cabinet Pulls
“These are textural and mechanical and feel fantastic to touch,” Reed says.



Sherwin-Williams Anew Gray
Used here on a pantry door, the warm hue adds interest without being too distracting.



Venetian Plaster
Reed and Grayden are using this luxe, water-proof finish “everywhere anyone will let us!”



Visual Comfort Boston Wall Sconces
Try installing these over glassware on an open shelf for a jewelry-box effect.



Clé Weathered White Zellige Tiles
“You can just imagine these baking in the sun and being hand-cut,” Reed says.



Island Banquette Seating
This design (with cabinets in Farrow & Ball’s Pigeon shade) combines the coveted corner booth with the hangout-friendly island.



Shaker-Style Cabinets
Reed attributes the rising demand for this look—pictured here in a creamy mushroom hue—to “a return to traditional, bespoke style.”



Malibu Wide-Plank Engineered Hardwood
This versatile flooring works with a variety of styles and warm or cool palettes.



Benjamin Moore Alabaster
Reed calls this milky paint color that’s reminiscent of bone china her new favorite white. 🏠

FIRST COLUMN FROM TOP: COURTESY OF SCHWINN; COURTESY OF VISUAL COMFORT; COURTESY OF DEVOL; KITCHENS: COURTESY OF DECOR PAID; COURTESY OF CLÉ; COURTESY OF HOME DEPOT; THIRD COLUMN: COURTESY OF DIGGS DIGS; AMY BARTLAM; COURTESY OF JENNY FELDMAN; DESIGNS: COURTESY OF BENJAMIN MOORE.

Decorate



SHOWCASE TALENT: For this colorful playroom, designers at Studio LW created a gallery wall from framed kids' art—an easy and affordable way to decorate and to inspire young Picassos' creativity.

FOREVER YOUNG

Three youthful children's rooms that blend durability, functionality, and a playful punch. Plus, design tips from the pros for creating kid-tested, parent-approved spaces. • by JULIE DUGDALE

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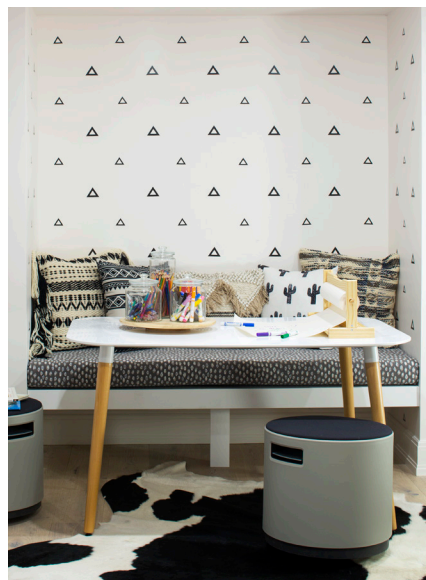
GET CREATIVE: A DIY project made with plywood, black paint, cut aspen logs, and epoxy glue fills an unusable fireplace.



KEEP IT LIGHT: Basements almost always come with recessed lighting; enhance it with additional fixtures like this Palecek pendant from CAI Designs.

Rec Room Revival

➔ Basement playrooms don't have to be an afterthought. Case in point: This cheerful, imaginative space created by **Studio LW** is the perfect blend of whimsical fun and practical details. The design firm's co-owners, Liz Lorentzen and Marcy White, began with a blank canvas of white walls, light flooring, and a neutral rug already in place—all courtesy of Alvarez Morris Architectural Studio, which designed the Hilltop house. To this, Lorentzen and White added pieces with fabrics and patterns that would hold up well to little hands, including a daybed from Design Within Reach in dark Pebble Weave upholstery, stools in a wipeable polyester, and a patterned bench cushion in the craft nook. The triangle wall decals break up the swath of white walls and, Lorentzen says, draw attention away from the inevitable kids' fingerprints. "The triangles on the wall hide dirt, in a way, because your eye isn't drawn to it," she explains.



For major creative bonus points, Studio LW transformed an adjacent nook into a puppet-show theater with custom curtains—a cozy escape for a creative kid.

Bright splashes of color—including a gallery wall of kids' artwork—breathe playfulness into the room. Throw pillows in vibrant hues



are meant to be tossed around and used as fort cushions. "[The room] doesn't have to be all 'in place' for it still to look cute," Lorentzen says. In other words, when thinking about your youngest family members, you're better off designing a place that accommodates play; leave the fuss for more formal spaces.

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GO BOLD: A grasscloth wallcovering (designer Jodi Cook used Phillip Jeffries' Manila Hemp in Honeysuckle) is an easy way to add texture and color.

REIMAGINE: Reupholstering the vintage chair (with fabric from Pindler) and painting its wooden legs white transformed it into the perfect nursery accent.

Pretty In (Not Just) Pink

→ Feminine, but not too girly; baby-chic, but not too infantile; fun, but not too distracting—this clever combination comes to life in a nursery designed by Jodi Cook, principal and owner of **Cook Design House**. “It’s a charming little space,” Cook says of the top-floor room with angled walls, which was previously a home office.

While many designers develop a color palette by starting with the rug, Cook took the opposite approach and created the wall scheme first: “I love a crisp white paired with saturated colors,” she says. “We wanted it to be girly, and the bright pink grasscloth feels fresh and playful.” But, she adds, the room was starting to skew “a little monotone,” so when she stumbled across a feminine rug with a darker base, she knew it was just the thing to pull the room together and tie in other hues for more dimension (see: denim pouf and beige grasscloth shades). “It’s amazing what a

rug can do to make everything jibe.”

Cook’s strategy for dreaming up young kids’ rooms: Consider how long you want—or expect—furnishings or decor to last. Choose investment pieces that can be reassigned to other rooms or work as the bedroom changes, and don’t stress about less-pricey items lasting only a few years. “People get hung up on making sure it’s completely bulletproof,” Cook says. “This client’s attitude: By the time the kids ruin this grasscloth, it’ll be time to change it anyway. Kids’ rooms grow and change as kids grow and change.”

SPEND STRATEGICALLY: The framed Cartier hearts from Natural Curiosities were an investment, but they can easily carry through many iterations of a feminine bedroom.



TIE IT TOGETHER: A bright rug with a large-scale pattern like this one from Caitlin Wilson (Kismet in Navy) can ground a room and give the eye a lovely landing place.

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CREATE SPACE FOR MULTIPLE KIDS: The triple-faucet trough sink means that more than one teen can get ready in the morning at once—saving time (and preventing possible squabbles).

CHOOSE A LARGE-PRINT WALL-COVERING: A kids' bath is an ideal space for playful patterns—and an oversized whimsical floral is a fun option that complements the straight lines of a hardworking room.

OPT FOR WAINSCOTING: The wood paneling—painted here in a hue pulled from the wallcovering—adds a textural element and spunky detail.



Splash Zone

➔ Making three teenagers happy is tough. Making three teenagers happy in one bathroom? Nearly impossible. Nonetheless, when Littleton-based **Duet Design Group** pitched in on an in-progress renovation of this kids' bathroom—taking cues from the existing wallpaper and sink—co-principal Miranda Cullen embraced the challenge.

The main problem, Cullen says, was the organization of stuff. “When you’ve got multiple children sharing a bath, you can’t put one towel in there or they freak out,” she says. “But there was nowhere to put three sets of things.” The solution: a smart storage strategy in a custom-designed vanity built around the already-installed Kohler Brockway triple sink. Painted in Benjamin Moore’s Hale Navy to complement and ground the hand-painted wallpaper, the vanity has three towel racks and three drawers for toiletries, plus

under-sink bins for extra towels and a utensil holder for the hairdryer and other tools. A multi-globe light fixture from Visual Comfort contrasts nicely with the walls. “I gave it an aesthetic boost,” Cullen says of the space, “but more importantly, I created a functional aspect.” The result: a youthful, cheery place where siblings can rub elbows in the morning—and still make it out of there alive. ■

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: To tour a teen’s coastal-inspired bedroom, find this story at 5280Home.com.