

The Home Designer

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A dark and cluttered kitchen in desperate need of a new layout, appliances and updated finishes.

To illustrate my point, let's look at an actual project (see photos). I was commissioned to design a kitchen for a client who loved contemporary design, but who lived with a kitchen more in the style of early-California ugly - Saltillo flooring, tile counters from hell and a sad layout all conspired against the home's potential.

My client wanted to be inspired, and asked me to create a beautiful room for his frequent guests to relax surrounded by a clean lined, modern space. I was given a budget of \$50,000 (well below the national budget average) to create an entirely new environment incorporating a rather long list of "must haves." I knew from the start I would have to employ my strategy of mixing high ticket items with less expensive options to achieve a cohesive look. I believe I did just that.

To balance out my client's luxury requests like the built-in, Italian espresso

Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design

machine, vaulted ceiling and Wolf range, I went to work configuring a new layout utilizing all new cabinetry from IKEA (a fantastic choice), inexpensive ceramic floor tiles cut in a more interesting, large-scale paver and a floor model refrigerator that saved me nearly 50 percent! Hint: try to use more ubiquitous materials in interesting ways – it saves you a bunch.

By choosing less expensive, but well-designed cabinets with a mix of glass and wood fronts I was able to give my client solid slab quartz counters, a custom mosaic tile backsplash imported from Spain and even a chandelier to light the island in style.

Since space was at a premium, I utilized every inch. I incorporated trash and recycling into deep drawers in the island (no one wants to look at a trash container), I kept the microwave close to the fridge (most micro use is for reheating foods anyway) and I made a bold move to close up a window with



Utilizing inexpensive, larger scale ceramic floor tiles extended the budget while adding high impact.

an uninteresting view to achieve added counter and pantry space. Remember, it's just a box until you create a room that works for you.

Additional features include a chimney hood over the range for an added focal point, an unexpected stainless steel toe kick to trim out the island base along with an industrial style

faucet for the sink. What I hope I accomplished was an altogether reinterpretation of my client's kitchen into something functional and artful. Looking at it as a whole, you'd never guess where I economized to achieve the look, and I know my client and his guests will enjoy this heart of the home for years to come.

Brandon Neff is a Bay Area based Interior Designer. He can be reached at BrandonNeffDesign.com or at brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com.

