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Case Study: Dream Kitchen Renovation

This flawless white and walnut concept is all thanks to an inspired Studio Thomas and Aspen Leaf Kitchens collaboration. Take the tour and read on for tips!

BY JULIE DUGDALE | 5280 HOME FEBRUARY/MARCH 2019

When designer Kristen Thomas and her team at Studio Thomas first set foot in this Lone Tree home, they had a hard time reconciling the kitchen’s dated look with the way the owners wanted to live: in a bright space with a clean, modern feel, where their grown children could hang out and where they could invite guests to get comfortable with a beverage while they cooked. The problem? The owners needed space to do all that. And the original kitchen setup—disconnected from the home’s other living areas...
by its awkward, diagonal island configuration and a color palette overwhelmed by '90s-era browns, blacks, and tans—needed a complete gut. “So we knocked out a wall between the formal dining room and the kitchen,” Thomas says, “and expanded everything.” By focusing on clean lines, an innovative two-island workspace, and luxe finishes—like rich walnut cabinets and softly marbled quartz countertops—Studio Thomas and the cabinet pros at Aspen Leaf Kitchens crafted a modern and timeless space with effortless functionality.

A built-in coffee and espresso station was built near the dining table. Photo by Kimberly Gavin.
Tip: Design for Your Needs

Clutter-free countertops were a priority for these clients, but they also “love their morning rituals,” interior designer Kristen Thomas says—so easy access to the coffee maker was a must. A built-in coffee and espresso station, which also hides the toaster in a drawer, was built near the dining table. “The tendency is for everyone to hang out at the islands,” Aspen Leaf Kitchens’ Chad Nichols says. “This brings you over to the table as a place to sit down and make your toast.”

Before & After: How the Design Team Solved a Few Major Kitchen Challenges

The problem: Choppy floor plan

The fix: Removing a wall. “The whole room is now one big entertaining space,” interior designer Thomas says. A second island provides a prep area and more space to gather. “Friends can hang out, help, and see what’s going on, but not be in the cook’s way,” Nichols says.

Tip: Go Casual

The chic lounge area adjacent to the kitchen was previously a formal living room. But, Thomas says, “few people use a formal living room anymore, so we pushed the walls back, opened up the space, and made it flow with the kitchen so it doesn’t feel separate.” Wool-upholstered Bernhardt chairs and a circular wooden coffee table by Vanguard invite lounging.
The problem: Wall-to-wall red-oak cabinetry

The fix: Fresh white cabinets with designer pulls from Rocky Mountain Hardware. “We pulled a door style from a French designer,” Nichols says. “It has the detail of a traditional kitchen but a modern profile. Like the architecture of the house, it’s a little more subtle.”

Tip: Less Is More

A low-key color scheme comes via sleek Caesarstone quartz countertops, walnut cabinets, and a few well-placed black fixtures, like the Hinkley pendants over the islands and a custom hood. “We choose texture over color any day,” Thomas says of her team’s approach.
The problem: Countertop clutter

The fix: Smartly designed storage. The doors on the wall behind the second island hide a bar. “When you open them up for cocktails, you’re ready to be social,” Nichols says. “But you can close it down for business, and it’s all tidy, no clutter.”
The New Layout

Before and after plans show just how this kitchen became the social hub of the house.

Before: A choppy floorplan leaves the kitchen isolated in a corner of the home, and the island’s diagonal configuration feels dated.