

FIX IT OR SELL IT?

Silver Spring kitchen gets makeover with Italian bistro feel

Couple chose not to sell, but to renovate their dated space

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to The Washington Examiner

Rosemary Gomez hated the kitchen in her Silver Spring home so much that she wanted to sell the house and move. But she and her husband, Lewis, chose to renovate instead. Now she can't imagine living without "La Cucina."

"If it were up to me, we would have left a long time ago," said Gomez. "I hated that kitchen. Hated it! But this is a nice neighborhood. I love my neighbors. Now that I have this beautiful kitchen, where am I moving to?"

"La Cucina," Italian for "the kitchen," describes the room's decor, an homage to Rosemary Gomez's Italian roots. Beaming across the golden Cayman granite countertop of her spacious kitchen island, Gomez marvels at how the new kitchen changed her opinion of the entire house. "This feels like it's always been here. That's what I love about it," said Gomez. "It fits with everything. It fits better than the old kitchen."

The old kitchen never seemed one with the 1980s Colonial and the Gomezes' love for antiques and old world charm. Patched together through a series of superficial upgrades, it had dark oak cabinets with odd farm-style doors with mini, square inlays. "One weekend I got so sick of looking at them I painted the cabinets white," she said.

But no amount of paint addressed the kitchen's poor layout. A tiny closet in a room outside the kitchen served as a pantry. "I had to walk out of the kitchen, get food and then walk back to cook," she said. Most bothersome to Gomez was a wall that separated the kitchen from the primary eating area, a casual dining room. This fragmented the family at gatherings.

"A big portion of their family lives locally," said John Audet, the senior project manager at Case Design/Remodeling, the contractor that handled the renovation. "They are a family-oriented couple; they have family gatherings quite often. They wanted to open up the space so that when people came over it would be easier to gather everybody."

Case removed that wall and expanded the kitchen. The contractor installed the large island with a small overhang to accommodate bar stools. Case also fitted the wall across from the island with floor-to-ceiling cabinets designed to look like



BEFORE:

This kitchen in Rosemary Gomez's Silver Spring house was so bad that she was considering moving. But she and her husband decided to renovate the room instead.

a giant armoire. The wall of cabinets, 2 feet deep, conceals a chimney that runs from an antique wood-burning stove on the opposite wall.

While the island has black-stained maple wood cabinets, the perimeter cabinets are finished in a deep honey color and topped with pearl black granite.

They removed soffits to accommodate 42-inch cabinets above the counters. Previous cabinets were only 30 inches tall.

"The key is maximizing storage," Audet said, "even if it means making things less accessible. If there is a way to get things out of the way, out of sight, to make it look cleaner, neater and more open, that's basically the goal."

The Gomez kitchen has so much storage, she can store brooms and sweepers upright, large platters and small appliances. "We have space for everything. It's never completely full," she said.

All the old appliances were replaced with KitchenAid stainless steel appliances, and a wine refrigerator was added.

After construction Rosemary added elements of La Cucina, includ-



COURTESY PHOTOS

AFTER: A wall was removed to expand the kitchen, a large island was installed, and the space was fitted with floor-to-ceiling cabinets. After the construction was complete, Rosemary added elements to make it feel like an Italian bistro.

ing checkered black valances, Italian plaques, a gargoyle and Tiffany pendant lights. "I wanted it to look like an Italian bistro."

This past Thanksgiving she hosted the first large gathering since the kitchen was completed. "We had 21 people over for Thanksgiving and everybody was sitting down. It was amazing."

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